

NARROW,

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The legislators also spoke to healthcare issues such as funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the funding of rural medical centers as well as a resolution for the 800,000 non-residents registered under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program but, in all three cases, the issues were tied to the passage of a federal spending bill. Congress and President Trump had until Friday, Jan. 19, to come to an agreement or risk a government shutdown.

Schrader, who voted for CHIP funding in committee and on the floor, said the rumor is that CHIP funding would be included in the budget deal.

"But if DACA is not included, that's a big deal. You may find Democrats voting against a budget deal that includes CHIP because of other factors," Schrader said.

Pressed on whether a DACA deal was something they were willing to shut down the government over, Merkley put the ball back in the Republicans' court.

"If there is a shut down, it's not because Democrats are doing it. It's because President (Donald) Trump is shutting it down. He said if it takes shutting government down to get a wall, then he wants to do that. Anything the Democrats have put forward has been moderate, reasonable positions. There are no extreme requests here," Merkley said.

"It's the Republicans job to do the budget and if they can't get the votes within their party, they have to reach out and accommodate Democrat concerns. And they had difficulty getting their own votes within the party," added Schrader.

Merkley emphasized the need for funding federally-qualified health centers as one of his main budget priorities.

"We've added about 30 front doors to the health care system throughout Oregon in rural and urban areas. I want to make sure that is part of the deal for the budget," he said.

Both legislators supported border security, but not a contiguous wall across the country's southern border.

"In the 2013 immigration bill that was passed in the Senate, there were a lot of funds in it for border security — more than is being talked about now.

But, at the heart of that, was spending it in the most cost-effective ways," Merkley said. "Drugs come in as part of cargo containers and they come in through tunnels. Plus, you can throw drugs over the top of the wall."

Sensors, detection-and-response systems and fencing in places where it might make sense were a more cost-effective approach, he said, "but let's not abuse the federal treasury."

Schrader said the most recent figures he'd seen from the Department of Homeland Security suggest a net drop in the number of undocumented immigrants coming over the southern border.

(Editor's note: Schrader asked us to fact-check him on this point, but Keizertimes could find no readily available recent statistics. The one source we did find was a study by the Pew Research Center from 2015 showing that 140,000 more Mexicans left the United States between 2009 and 2014 than arrived.)

Given the seemingly constant state of upheaval in the nation's capital, the legislators were asked how difficult it was to operate in the maelstrom. Merkley suggested rapidly moving targets were the main problem.

"It occurred Thursday. The Senate Ds and Rs worked out a deal on DACA and called up the president to go over it fully expecting he would say, 'yes,' because it fit with the conciliatory tone the previous day with a gathering on the Hill," Merkley said. "The Senators went over to the Hill and were surprised to find Sen. (Tom) Cotton in the room, he is against any sort of immigration reform. And the president was totally uninterested in a compromise and working out a deal."

Schrader said it was a matter of the Republicans tripping over themselves.

"Republicans spend too much time worrying about what the president wants. He'll sign anything that's brought to him and pretend it's his idea. I don't think it's difficult, but the Republicans are making it difficult," Schrader said. "It's the same with tax reform, the same with healthcare, the same with infrastructure, he has no plan. He'll sign what's put in front of him and make it his idea."

Merkley said the tax reform package that passed along party lines and was signed into law at the end of 2017 was going to hamper efforts in many areas.

"It's hard to get your hands around just how much money moved. If you take the main components of the tax bill benefiting the wealthiest it's \$3.2 trillion. Some of that is to corporations and some of that benefitted people other than the wealthiest, but two-thirds of that is \$2 trillion. If you divide that by the number of people in America, men, women and children, it's \$6,000 for every single person in this country being redirected to the wealthiest," Merkley said. "Health, education and jobs are the foundations for families to thrive and that's the kind of money that would have laid a foundation for those things."

Both men wanted to see Congress put more resources into preventing forest fires and attacking them once they are burning.

When asked whether President Trump's language when talking about other countries mattered, both were put off by recent reports that Trump called places such as Africa and Haiti "s---holes."

"I think it matters in the world perception and the gravitas of our influence whether we are working on Iran, North Korea or international trade. The president

needs to write the Pledge of Allegiance 1,000 times on a chalkboard — and focus on the word indivisible. He wants to continue being the divider-in-chief rather than representing a country that is united and indivisible despite extreme diversity in terms of where we come from," Merkley said.

"It's horrible. It's not the way people think or act in this country. Our state in particular is known for its civility. We need to get back to that and we need to represent the best in people, not the worst," Schrader added.

CITIZEN,

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Keizer Fire Chief Jeff Cowan will emcee the festivities. The McNary High School jazz band and the Whiteaker K-Town Sound choir will provide music.

In 2017, Jim Trett was honored as the Keizer First Citizen, Bob Shackelford was named Merchant of the Year, longtime Keizer coach Larry Smith was picked for the Service to Education Award and Dave Walery received the President's Award.

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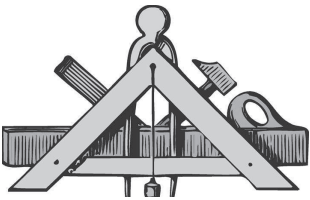
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