

Keizertimes

SECTION A

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In Conversation with Kurt Schrader



Rep. Kurt Schrader (D-Ore.) graciously dropped by the *Keizertimes* office last week to talk about issues local and national. We packed as much as we could into 40 minutes with the representative and the stories below and on Page A9 are the result.

By Eric A. Howald | Of the *Keizertimes*

Smoking out a solution on preventing wildfire

Unlike other natural disasters, such as hurricanes, flooding and tornadoes, the fight against wildfires that now seem ever-present along the West Coast has been largely overlooked at the national level.

However, with the passage of an Omnibus spending package in March, wildfire outbreaks will now have access to the same Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds that are used to offset the costs of wildfire damage.

“Why are other natural disasters allowed to access that budget and not the fire guys? The answer is Paul Ryan. He would not allow that to happen and that was an act of discrimination against the West. The good news is the West ganged up on him and said we should have access,” Rep. Kurt Schrader said.

In addition to providing

access to FEMA funds, new policies will end “fire borrowing.” Fire borrowing is the name given to the longstanding practice of borrowing from the Forest Service’s wildfire prevention funds to pay for suppression once a fire breaks out. The result was funds to do the work of prevention were not available during the low-risk seasons.

While it’s good news for the communities affected by wildfires, Schrader said the work needed to continue “putting people back to work in the woods with a thoughtful,

congressional approach. Not clear cutting, let’s thin and do Please see WILDFIRE, Page A9

The good stuff you don’t hear about

Despite the seeming disarray in Washington, D.C., Oregon Rep. Kurt Schrader said there are recent accomplishments worth talking about. Here are some of the high points:

- For the first time in more than a decade, Congress passed a federal budget before the end of the year. “We have seven [budgets] completely done and congressional review with the other four or five, but at least it’s all done before the fiscal year ends so people and business can plan their damn life,” Schrader said.
- In 2017, Schrader co-sponsored a successful bill known as the FDA Reauthorization Act. The bill accelerates the review of generic brand drug alternatives and takes aim at companies seeking to pad their bottom lines through exorbitant pricing schemes.
- The Career and Technical Education Bill, signed into law over the summer, allows state leaders to allocate federal funds to promote programs that address job needs within the state and local communities. “You get an education where you can get a job and it reaches down into middle school to help keep students engaged and improve graduation rates,” Schrader said.
- The Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Predation Prevention Act, which allows for the culling of sea lions in areas where they pose a threat to endangered salmon and other fish species, recently passed out of the U.S. House of Representatives and Schrader expects support in the Senate to see the bill through to becoming law.

Answers were slow to arrive. However, Schrader said the primary stumbling block has Please see INDIAN, Page A9

On the growing trade war: ‘Republicans, businessmen and farmers. They are all terrified.’

Oregon Rep. Kurt Schrader thinks President Donald Trump’s efforts at trade negotiation are foolhardy at best.

“You don’t throw everything at the wall and end up isolating everybody. You look foolish and you cause bad results for the people you are, theoretically, trying to help,” Schrader said.

Since the beginning of the year, President Trump has unilaterally enacted new or higher

tariffs more than 1,000 goods imported into the United States. It includes a number of raw materials, like steel and aluminum, used in other U.S.-produced products.

“I’ve talked to a lot of Republicans, a lot of businessmen, a lot of farmers. They are all terrified. They are terrified of what the tariffs will do to American businesses – and that will filter down to the employees,” Schrader said.

Schrader said the impacts of the trade war are being felt most in Midwest and Rustbelt states, but it’s only a matter of time before the ripples reach Oregon.

Please see TRADE, Page A9

A plan to break gridlock

As a member of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, Rep. Kurt Schrader is backing changes to rules in the U.S. House of Representatives that, he hopes, pave the way to getting more done in Congress.

“The changes we are asking for are probably what every American already thinks is going on. They don’t realize it’s a total dictatorship run by the speaker of the house,” Schrader said.

Currently, Schrader said, the speaker of the house can be held “hostage” by a handful of members of the house who can threaten to “vacate the chair,” until the speaker concedes to their will. The “Break the Gridlock” proposals would require such a motion to be signed by a third of House members.

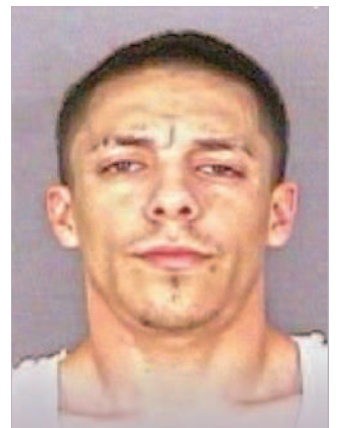
“It’s a much higher bar so it prevents the speaker from having to kowtow to the far right or far left,” Schrader said.

The proposal would also rework the election process for the speaker of the house and require an absolute majority of the members of the House of Representatives.

“Instead of having the speaker be the representative of just one party, our goal is to Please see GRIDLOCK, Page A9



Defense leads Whiteaker over Walker
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Keizer man arrested for murder
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Kentucky Derby comes to Keizer
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Celts rolled by Tumwater
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