

Wyden: 'We must never forget we are a nation of immigrants'

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Environment

Asked about protecting the region's environment, Wyden said, "Clean air and water is practically in Oregon's gene pool. This is what we treasure. This is a big reason, for example, that a lot of companies want to come here or grow here, because their workers want clean air and water."

Wyden said people will have to be vigilant about watchdogging the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under Scott Pruitt, playing defense to hold on against proposed rollbacks in protections while finding innovative ways to play offense through new technologies such as renewable energy.

"What's going to drive

the environmental policies of the EPA?" he asked the audience. "Is it going to be adhering to strong environmental standards, or is it going to be the wish list of powerful special interests? That's the question, and watchdogging that agency is going to take a lot of our time."

Immigration

The son of Jewish immigrants who fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s, Wyden said "We must never forget that we are a nation of immigrants."

He voted for failed overhauls of national immigration policy in 2007 under President George Bush and in 2013 under President Barack Obama. He said both bills were based on a compromise of strengthening borders and better-enforc-

ing existing immigration laws, while providing the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. a path to citizenship if they came forward voluntarily, paid a fine, learned English and had not broken other laws.

"We can either keep playing the blame game in a system that is a broken, dysfunctional mess, or we can decide we're going to fix it on a bipartisan basis," he said. "That's what I voted for in the United States Senate, and that's what I'm going to keep pushing for until we get it done."

Transparency

A member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Wyden in 2013 asked then-Director of National Intelligence James Clapper whether the

agency was collecting data on Americans.

Clapper's denial helped galvanize former National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden to leak millions of documents, starting a national dialogue on mass data collection by the government. Wyden, subsequently a co-founder and chairman of the of the Senate's whistleblower caucus, said any potential whistleblowers can still come to him.

"That's what open and transparent government is about," he said.

He rebuffed Trump's efforts to discredit and shut out news outlets critical of his administration. "The reason you know about (resigned National Security Adviser) Mike Flynn and his involvement with Russia is

because of the free press."

Wyden said he would push for a public hearing of the Senate Intelligence Committee on Flynn and the Trump administration's connections to Russia, while digging into controversial right-wing adviser Stephen Bannon's appointment to the National Security Council.

As for the administration's claims of widespread voter fraud, Wyden said he hasn't seen a shred of evidence. He and U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon, introduced a bill last year calling for a national vote-by-mail system like Oregon's, which Wyden said Friday would provide a better paper trail and help avoid potential fraud.

Getting involved

Asked by a 15-year-old

and a Coast Community Radio staffer alike how people can best get involved, Wyden said those who cannot vote can still volunteer, and that coming to such meetings as the town hall is a good start. He said change very rarely comes from the government down to the people.

It comes from the bottom up, he said. "It's as people get mobilized all over the country and start speaking out about issues that they care about."

Before ending the town hall and snapping photos with attendees, Wyden made one more promise. "If somebody brings up something that steps on Oregon values and what we've heard today ... I will be pushing back every single step of the way."



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Fisherpoet John Elliot from Saltspring Island, British Columbia, reads a passage of his work at Fort George Brewery to a large crowd during the 20th annual FisherPoets Gathering on Friday.

FisherPoets: 'It's casual. It's comfortable. It's real.'

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Broderick, who founded the event in 1997 and attracted about 40 presenters, said his original intent was to gather friends who don't often get the chance to see each other.

"If you told me we'd have seven venues, I probably would have laughed you," he said.

Range of emotions

Laughter was a constant throughout the weekend as presenters told stories to which many in the crowd could relate. Danny Keyser of Astoria recalled his early memories as a commercial fisherman in his poem, "Yesterday," at the Event Center.

"I seem to fit in with this rowdy bunch: fist fights in the morning, drunk before lunch," he read.

But even in the same poem, Keyser touched on some of the lonelier moments that come with the profession. "From the banks of the river so close to my home, to the far-reaching ocean: so cold, so alone."

John Elliott of British Columbia read a short story recalling a time a member of his crew died at sea. Despite the tragedy, the crew quickly needed to collect themselves and continue their work.

"The takeaway from it



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Gary Keister from Port Townsend, Wash., reads a selection of his work at the Wet Dog Cafe during the 20th annual FisherPoets Gathering on Friday in downtown Astoria.

leaves me no illusions as to how the world will stop when my time comes," he read to an audience at the Lovell Showroom.

The range of emotions the fisherpoets evoke is what continues to draw people each year, said Jay Speakman, a member of the gathering's planning committee.

"It's casual. It's comfortable. It's real." Speakman said. "People are genuinely interested in their work."

Connections

Some in the audience were interested despite not having a connection to the fishing industry. Sandy and George Bush from Lacey, Washing-

ton, heard fisherpoets Pat Dixon and Geno Leech present one time a few years ago near their hometown. For the second consecutive year, they decided to drive down to Astoria for the weekend to hear more fisherpoetry.

"It's a fun getaway," Sandy Bush said. "It's a good escape."

For those who do have connections to the industry, the gathering represents an opportunity to reconnect with old friends, Warrenton fisherman James Seitz said.

"This is the only way I get to see some of my friends from up and down the coast," he said.

Hobe Kytr, director of Salmon For All commercial fishing advocacy group, played a song written by Irish-American immigrant J.J. Corcoran in the 1880s. He found the song, called "Old Miller Sands," while rummaging through archives at the Columbia River Maritime Museum.

In front of a packed crowd in the Voodoo Room, Kytr sang the song's lyrics and strummed his guitar. With a galvanizing tone, the ballad chronicles one example of a typical journey for fishers.

"We'll capture the steelhead, the sturgeon and salmon that frequent the waters 'round Old Miller Sands."

Rathmell: 'It's cool to bring something back to life'

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The program's curriculum includes numerous classes on building design, codes and construction. It offers three certificate tracks and allows students to restore some of Astoria's numerous historic structures.

Meanwhile, she researched what markets existed in the area and if companies had already been performing similar services. In 2014, she quit her job as a researcher and founded her own historic preservation company, Pacific Window Restoration.

"Seeing the classes and

knowing there were tons of old homes here, I knew it was a niche waiting to be filled." Rathmell said. "I was kind of burnt out doing what I had been doing, so I made the jump."

Window on the world

As her company's name suggests, Rathmell mainly spends her time as a general contractor restoring or recreating decades-old windows in Astoria and parts of Washington state and Portland.

Her work includes stripping paint, pulling glass out of frames, repairing rotted areas and reglazing window frames

before finally replacing the window. She works with sustainable material like linseed oil-based paint.

Each home has its own challenges and particulars, Rathmell said.

"I think that I have built up a nice name for myself," she said. "It's not always possible to please everyone 100 percent, but I do try as much as possible."

One of her favorite projects took place at the Hiram Brown House on Franklin Avenue, where she restored some of the home's Gothic windows. Built in 1852, the house is the oldest dwelling in Astoria.

She has worked on more than a dozen homes overall and currently is restoring windows on the east and north sides of First Presbyterian Church.

Rathmell said her business has benefited from a recent trend in the Northwest to restore, rather than replace, features of older homes. She said she sees herself continuing in her second field for the rest of her working life.

"It's also cool to bring something back to life that looks terrible, like there's nothing left of it," Rathmell said. "It's not something you can buy off the shelf anymore."

— Jack Heffernan

Sandy Hook: Parents had face-to-face with Adam Lanza's father

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kidding me? ... I am so angry right now."

Grief and pain

Though the couple rededicated themselves to their beliefs, the peace that came with it did not last.

"It did not take long for a lot of feelings of anger and depression and anxiety to just completely overwhelm me," Robbie Parker said. "My heart was broken. It was just shattered."

Soon they became acquainted with an insidious internet subculture: the Sandy Hook "truthers," who spread the lie that the shooting was a hoax perpetrated by the U.S. government as a pretext to enact strict gun control measures. The Parkers were accused of being paid "crisis actors."

"We would get emails, we would get letters to our house, phone calls to friends of ours, death threats — I mean, you name it," Robbie Parker said, adding: "There's things about grief and there's things about pain that I knew would probably happen. But not that."

Alissa said the "truthers" haven't been as much of a nuisance since the couple relocated to the Pacific Northwest in 2014 with their two younger daughters, Madeline and Samantha, now 9 and 7.

Robbie works as a physician in the newborn intensive care unit at Oregon Health & Science University. Alissa, a stay-at-home mom, co-founded Safe and Sound Schools, a nonprofit working to improve school-site safety. Her book about Emilie is scheduled to be published this year.

Together, they run The Emilie Parker Art Connection, a nonprofit that promotes art therapy for children who have suffered trauma and abuse.

'Child of God'

While he tucked their middle daughter, Madeline, into bed one night, Robbie told her they could one day be with Emilie in heaven if they made "the right choices" in this life.

Then Madeline wondered aloud about Emilie's killer. Robbie, not wanting to betray that he didn't know how to respond, asked Madeline what she thought of the boy.

"And she said, 'You know, he was probably a good boy. I

just think he made some bad choices,'" Robbie recalled.

He asked her what she thought God felt about the boy.

"And she goes, 'Heavenly Father loves him, but he's probably not very happy with the choices that he made.'

"Here I was, trying to work so hard about being a good example, about how I was supposed to feel about that boy," he said. "And here was my ... 5-year-old daughter being an example for me."

He said the conversation with Madeline taught him that, "if I was going to develop any type of forgiveness in my heart, then I needed to start to see him how Heavenly Father sees him, as a child of God."

Alissa Parker said that, for her, seeing the shooter a different way was "eye-opening."

"It wasn't just softening my heart, and telling myself to soften my heart, it was changing my viewpoint. It was putting on the glasses of our savior, and seeing (Lanza) through his eyes, that changed the way I saw him," she said.

The empathy she began to feel toward Lanza scared her, she said, "because I wanted to be mad at him. I wanted to be angry."

But she came to consider her compassion as a sign of help from God — a step in the healing process.

'False sense of security'

Another step came when they arranged a face-to-face conversation with Lanza's father. Not only had Adam Lanza committed suicide after the massacre, he is believed to have murdered his mother beforehand.

Through that exchange, the Parkers learned that Lanza was not a monster, or at least that he hadn't always been one.

It is tempting, Robbie Parker said, to write off someone who commits an atrocity as a "monster"; it distances the object of hatred from the rest of humanity, seeming to isolate the problem.

"That feels good, and it's very easy to do, just throw that label out there, and then just kind of wipe ourselves clean of it," he said.

But it provides "a very false sense of security," he said, "because if that person is over there, and they are a monster, then I don't have to worry about monsters over here."



Erick Bengel/The Daily Astorian

At Astoria's Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Robbie Parker, whose oldest daughter, Emilie Parker, was murdered at Sandy Hook Elementary School, discusses the obstacles he faced while trying to forgive his daughter's killer.