

OPINION

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WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

Ghost of campaign past revisits Walden

It is amusing that Democrats mounted a “Where’s Walden?” campaign over the Labor Day weekend, targeting U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon.

The congressman has come under fire for his habit of holding semi-private, under-the-radar appearances in his district, as opposed to more traditional town hall gatherings open to all. The activist group Indivisible held rallies in protest, saying it’s been more than 500 days since Walden last held a town hall meeting.

The tactic is also ironic, because the Republican who won the same Eastern Oregon seat in 1980 used a similar strategy.

That candidate — a Willamette Valley newspaper owner named Denny Smith — ran television ads that depicted the Post Office box of the incumbent Congressman Al Ullman — his virtual Oregon residence.

Formerly a Baker City real estate broker, Ullman had been the 2nd Congressional District representative for 24 years. He rose to the rank of chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee. From that platform in 1980, he mused aloud about a federal value-added tax. Smith seized on that concept as tantamount to a national sales tax. The sales tax is anathema to Oregon voters.

Unlike Ullman, Greg Walden sees his Democratic challenger Jamie McLeod-Skinner coming. But he is carrying a load. The yokes around Walden’s neck are twofold: One is the colorless political persona he has built; the second is Donald Trump. Walden’s great asset is the Republican margin of registered voters in the sprawling 2nd District,



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite

House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Greg Walden.

‘Health care is the target Walden has painted on his back.’

America’s seventh-largest.

It is an exceedingly long-odds bet that McLeod-Skinner will upset Walden in the November election. But she has been working hard at connecting with far-flung voters.

As a Washington correspondent in the 1980s, I covered Congressman Smith and I met his aide, Walden. I remember vividly

the week when two Oregon political novices — Smith and Ron Wyden — showed up in Washington during the spring of 1980. A handicapper would quickly discern that both of these guys, in different ways, had the drive and personal magnetism to be serious contenders. Wyden took out the incumbent Bob Duncan in the Democratic primary and Smith

took out Ullman.

The current issue of Portland Monthly carries an article titled “The Strange Rise of Greg Walden, Oregon’s Only Republican Congressman.” Nigel Duara describes Walden’s “... thick glasses, and familiar air of hey-how-are-ya folksiness.” Writes Duara: “If you walked into an H&R Block looking for last-minute tax help, you would be thrilled to see such a figure.”

For all of his 20 years in the House, Walden resembles the House staffer I routinely contacted decades ago. As Duara evokes, Walden is there to help you. One cannot imagine Walden expressing outrage or disgust. If Walden has mastered one technique, it is the art of saying nothing in a convincing manner.

He also has been absent at critical moments. When Klamath County was on the verge of an historic compromise on water, Walden acceded to right-wing sentiment and the deal collapsed. And it was Sen. Wyden, not Walden, who patiently pushed the Forest Service’s economic shot in the arm for Grant County — the 10-year stewardship contract at Malheur National Forest.

If Walden has painted a target on his back, it is health care. The 2nd District is dotted with small rural hospitals that have benefited from Obamacare. When Walden moved the repeal of Obamacare out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee that he chairs, he enabled a mortal threat to those Eastern Oregon hospitals. This was a congressman at odds with his district’s self-interest and welfare.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of *The Daily Astorian*, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

LETTERS

Please vote ‘yes’ on Sunset Empire bond

Vote “yes” on the Sunset Empire Park Recreation District bond. We live in a wonderful community that supports our youth in all sports and fitness endeavors. We just don’t have the indoor space to support all of these activities. The expansion that the SEPRD has planned will create a much-needed addition to our community.

I love the youth programs that Sunset Empire offers. All three of my kids have participated in the peewee sports programs. These programs help kids learn the importance of fitness and practice, and have given them a great foundation for the competitive sports that they now participate in.

Right now the peewee sports program is held in the Broadway Middle School cafeteria because gym space is quite limited in our area. It isn’t a large enough space, and the tables held in that room encumber the little athletes. We also have fifth-grade basketball teams practicing at 8 p.m. due to the lack of indoor facilities. We need more indoor play space for kids.

It just makes perfect sense for our area to have more indoor fitness facilities. Our community will benefit from more fitness options and a better quality of life in the long rainy season. Please vote “yes” in support of this bond measure.

AMBER CLYDE
Seaside

Sunset Empire needs support to be successful

I have been deeply troubled by the negative letter to the editor in the Seaside Signal about Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District (SEPRD), specifically the derogatory remarks about Executive Director Skyler Archibald (“Vote no on Rec District ballot measure,” Sept. 14). It is clear that someone has a personal ax to grind. This is troubling because it only hurts our community, and seeks to reduce needed funds for programs.

My experience with SEPRD has been exceptional. My kids have learned through their preschool program, after school programs, swim lessons and summer camps. The activities enrich our community. My children were able to do some awesome things like pottery and martial arts. The cost of the programs are affordable.

As far as changes since Archibald has taken over, I couldn’t be happier. He is an honest, kind, respectable person. He has brought and implemented many enjoyable family friendly activities. He also is very conscious of safety and promotes this in all he does.

In response to the “never clean” arguments, this has just not been my experience. The women’s bathrooms are clean, and I like how they have added private changing curtains.

I urge the community to support SEPRD. It needs our support to be successful.

RACHEL ROLLINS
Gearhart



Rethink position on Clean Energy Jobs

As someone who has spent much of my life fishing, hunting, and crabbing along the Oregon Coast and Coastal Range, I was disappointed to see my “home away from home” newspaper take a position against Clean Energy Jobs, a cap-and-invest program being considered by our lawmakers for passage in 2019 (“Oregon’s carbon plan should be nonstarter,” *The Daily Astorian*, Sept. 13).

Oregon may be a small state, but we lead big. By embracing clean energy, we can set up our businesses and people for success in a competitive future. In Astoria, Clean Energy Jobs can fund job readiness and career opportunities, reduce utility bills for low-income households by weatherizing homes and increasing energy efficient heating and cooling, and help homeowners install on-site solar or electric vehicle chargers.

The city of Astoria is already seeing how cap-and-invest Astoria can help the community; they are already rewarded for protecting trees and clean water. Right now, the money they receive comes from large emitters in California. With Clean Energy Jobs proceeds, the city can invest even more in capital improvements that the residents of Astoria will benefit from.

Oregon can’t catch enough crab to feed the entire world. Does that mean we don’t put out our crab pots here? Of course not. We do our part. Or we can sit back, as the editorial sug-

gests, and watch while others seize the opportunity as it passes us by.

I urge the editor to rethink his position on Clean Energy Jobs.

BRYCE BAKER
Forest Grove

Vote Jones for Astoria mayor

I am writing to simply say we need Bruce Jones for our mayor of Astoria.

I have known Bruce for eight years, and have been impressed with his even-handed and contemplative approach to Astoria’s issues, and handling them as an Astoria city councilor. He listens to all sides, and with research and an open mind, makes positive decisions.

Bruce has a vision for Astoria that will enhance our city. His goal is to have an economy that is diverse, vibrant and gives opportunities to all. He’s willing to make the tough choices required to address the shortage of affordable housing.

I have seen Bruce’s leadership first-hand. His style is neither divisive nor egocentric. Bruce leads by example, and listens to his constituents. He has been a steady force on the City Council, diving deeply into issues and sharing his findings with the other council members. I have seen him determine his position after thoroughly understanding the issues of municipal concern.

His vision, his stellar career as a commander in the Coast Guard and his love for

our city are what we need to keep Astoria the community we love and protect.

I urge you to vote for Bruce Jones for mayor.

JEFF DALY
Astoria

Vote Herman for Astoria City Council

I wholeheartedly support Joan Herman for Astoria city councilor in Ward 3. I have known Joan since the late 1980s. At that time, she was a reporter for *The Daily Astorian*, she had started Bikes and Beyond with Rich Fencsak, and she was an impressive athlete. Joan faced obstacles with grace and courage, and she has stretched her boundaries.

After her master’s degree from the University of Oregon, and teaching English at Lower Columbia College for 10 years, Joan returned to Astoria. She got involved by serving on the Astoria Planning Commission, the KMUN Coast Community Radio Board, which she now chairs, the Lower Columbia Diversity Coalition, Friends of the Library and Indivisible North Coast Oregon.

Joan loves Astoria, and she is a team player who is bright and personable and has the integrity and drive to make a great city councilor. Please vote Nov. 6 for Joan Herman.

WENDELA HOWIE
Astoria