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OUR VIEW

How to reach your congressmen

Members of Congress are hearing from their constituents in record numbers as controversial cabinet members and executive orders blast through Washington and out into Oregon and the world at large.

Some voters want their representatives to resist President Donald Trump at every turn, while others want the president to be given an opportunity to enact his vision.

Either way, federal representatives should hear from their constituents. And Eastern Oregon is lucky in that each of its federal representatives make themselves available to the public and welcome comment on a range of issues.

And those comments are coming in droves.

Sen. Ron Wyden said his recent Oregon town halls drew his largest crowds, and noted recently that “in just a few weeks I received more than 14,000 emails from Oregonians expressing their concerns about Betsy DeVos ... that is the quantity of mail I would normally receive over four months on all subjects.” He tweeted Jan. 26 that his office phones were “jammed” because of a high volume of callers.

It can be hard for a constituent to break through that jam, and have your voice resonate amid 13,999 other messages. Yet it can be done.

Hank Stern, communications director for Wyden, said email — which has increased “1,000 percent” over year prior — is the easiest way for the office to convey constituent information to the senator.

Martina McLennan, communications director for Sen. Jeff Merkley, has also seen an uptick in constituent contact.

“Since the beginning of this year, our office has seen an unprecedented outpouring of Oregonians contacting Senator Merkley to express their views about what is happening in D.C.,” she said. “Typically, our office receives fewer than 100 calls per day, so it sends a huge message when we see thousands upon thousands of Oregonians reaching out to our office to express their views about the cabinet nominations and policy positions that are being considered by the new administration.”

McLennan offered some tips about how to contribute to the conversation.

She said the office does track emails and physical mail, the opinions in which are tallied and shared with the senator. McLennan said if you do telephone the office, callers should give their location then note the issue and their opinion — the more concise the better — and you’ll be added to the tally.

If you are visiting the office in person, she recommends making an appointment and giving notice so staff can have an appropriate person at the office to speak with an individual or group.

The calls and letters headed toward Republican representatives are just as numerous.

Andrew Malcolm, communications director for Rep. Greg Walden, said the representative’s office has responded

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Representatives

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to more than 1,400 messages in the last month while receiving many more. Last year, Malcolm said the office responded to 26,000 messages.

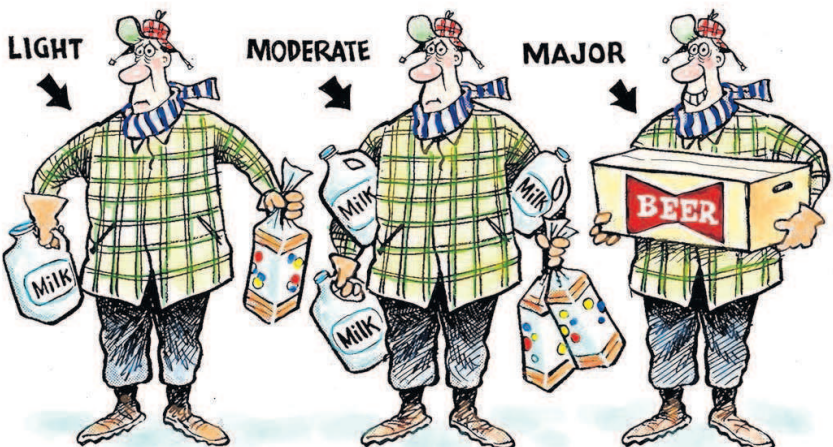
Constituents can visit Walden house.gov, like Walden’s Facebook account and follow his Twitter. Malcolm said those are good ways to pass along information to Walden and get information directly from him as well.

Modern electronic communication, along with old fashioned letters and telephone calls, is efficient and useful. But some of the most honest and fruitful interaction is done face to face. And while a trip to the nation’s capital is a once-in-a-lifetime trip for many Oregonians, all three of our congressmen travel home often.

On Friday, Rep. Walden will be in Weston at 11:30 a.m. and Boardman at 2:15 p.m. for town halls. They offer the best opportunities for local people to have a conversation with a congressman.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of publisher Kathryn Brown, managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, and opinion page editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

Snowstorm indicators...



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OTHER VIEWS

Judge Robart’s national security expertise

Judge James Robart, of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington State, believes there is no basis for President Trump’s executive order temporarily suspending non-American entry from seven terrorism-plagued countries.

In court last week, Robart questioned Justice Department lawyer Michelle Bennett about the administration’s decision to confine the moratorium to Somalia, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Iraq, and Iran.

“Have there been terrorist attacks in the United States by refugees or other immigrants from the seven countries listed, since 9/11?” Bennett said.

“Your honor, I don’t know the specific details of attacks or planned attacks,” Bennett responded. “I think — I will point out, first of all, that the rationale for the order was not only 9/11, it was to protect the United States from the potential for terrorism. I will also note that the seven countries that are listed in the executive order are the same seven countries that were already subject to other restrictions in obtaining visas that Congress put in place, both by naming countries, Syria and Iraq, and that the prior administration put in place by designating them as places where terrorism is likely to occur, or — the specific factors are whether the presence in a particular country increases the likelihood that an alien is a credible threat to U.S. security or an area that is a safe haven for terrorists.”

Bennett was obviously improvising a bit at that point and did not have the facts at her fingertips. Robart would have none of that. “Well, let me walk you back, then,” Robart said. “You’re from the Department of Justice, if I understand correctly?”

“Yes.”
“So you’re aware of law enforcement. How many arrests have there been of foreign nationals for those seven countries since 9/11?”

“Your honor, I don’t have that information. I’m from the civil division, if that helps get me off the hook.”

“Let me tell you,” Robart said. “The answer to that is none, as best I can tell. So, I mean, you’re here arguing on behalf of someone President Trump that says: We have to protect the United States from these individuals coming from these countries, and there’s no support for that.”

In that brief moment, Robart declared there is “no support” for Trump’s decision. And with that, the judge from the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington State ordered a nationwide — actually worldwide — halt to enforcement of the



BYRON YORK
Comment

president’s executive order. Now, it turns out Robart might not know as much as he let on. Last summer, the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and the National Interest analyzed public sources of information, seeking to learn more about people convicted of terror-related offenses. The Justice Department provided the subcommittee with a list of 580 people who were convicted — not just arrested, but tried and convicted — of terror-related offenses between Sept. 11, 2001 and Dec. 31, 2014.

At least 380 of the 580 people convicted of terror-related offenses since 9/11 were foreign-born.

The subcommittee investigated further and found that at least 380 of the 580 were foreign-born and that an additional 129 were of unknown origin. Of the 380, there were representatives — at least 60 — from all of the countries on the Trump executive order list. And with 129 unknowns, there might be more, as well.

In addition, since the Senate list was compiled, there have been others involved in terrorism in the United States from the seven countries. One highly publicized example was the case of Abdul Artan, a Somali refugee who last November wounded 11 people with a machete during an attack on the campus of Ohio State University. In fairness to Judge Robart, Artan was shot and killed by police — not arrested — so perhaps the judge didn’t count him.

In a report Monday, the Associated Press, relying on the research of University of North Carolina professor Charles Kurzman, reported that “23 percent of Muslim Americans involved with extremist plots since Sept. 11 had family backgrounds from the seven countries.”

The bottom line is, Robart’s confident assertion to Bennett was wrong.

In her exchange with the judge, Bennett tried to argue that the Constitution and the law make clear that the president is the person charged with making national security decisions like those in the Trump executive order.

“Your honor, I think the point is that because this is a question of foreign affairs, because this is an area where Congress has delegated authority to the president to make these determinations, it’s the president that gets to make the determinations,” Bennett said. “And the court doesn’t have authority to look behind those determinations.”

Robart strongly disagreed, and stopped the president’s order. After all, he knew best.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.

YOUR VIEWS

Trump a president of action, targeted by the press

What makes the average taxpayer more outraged — the food stamp-carrying, paid protest marchers or the “know-it-all” media telling industrious working-class people what they should do or think?

Thank goodness the majority of everyday citizens are too busy making ends meet while also doing what is best for their families and community or the whole nation could implode. By what unquestionable mandate does the authority to declare “a man unfit for the task” when talking about the President of the United States? The vetting process for political office is sometimes a farce. Along with others, Nixon was forced to resign and then there was the impeachment proceedings for Bill Clinton. We gave Obama eight years to get things right and very little was accomplished while the national debt soared and a health care mandate proved to be a burden for many. Yet the media lauded Obama’s presidency even when both he, then-Secretary of State Clinton and his whole administration lied to the public about the Benghazi disaster.

Now the liberal press is determined to destroy Trump without even giving him a chance even though he has already proven that he is a man of action.

Merlyn Robinson
Heppner

EOTEC saved county millions in upgrades to old fairgrounds

The Pendleton City Council must be relieved. Pendleton’s expert on everything Rick Rohde has paused in criticizing Pendleton city government and turned his crosshairs on the county commissioners, the city of Hermiston and EOTEC. His tortured arguments are hard to follow, but I deduce he dislikes the commissioners doing anything monetarily to assist EOTEC.

Mr. Rohde’s ignorance about EOTEC is profound. A major reason EOTEC is being built is to provide a home to the Umatilla County Fair. If left at the old fairgrounds, the county would have had to expend \$8 million of county money to bring a woefully inadequate site up to code. He also overlooks \$9.8 million in state grants contributed to build EOTEC and \$2 million raised from private donors.

Over the last eight years, I have attended almost every meeting related to EOTEC. To my knowledge, Mr. Rohde has never been to one of them.

George Anderson
Hermiston

LETTERS POLICY

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