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Town hall audiences question Rep. Greg Walden on health care bill



Staff photos by E.J. Harris

ABOVE: U.S. Rep. Greg Walden talks about the bills that have been passed recently in Congress during a town hall meeting Monday in Baker City. BELOW: Walden speaks with constituents after the Baker City town hall.

Legislators offer \$5B roads plan

Calls for increase in fuel tax, vehicle registration fees

By **PARIS ACHEN**
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Legislators on Monday announced a blueprint for raising \$5 billion over the next decade to pay for projects to relieve congestion and maintain roads and bridges.

The plan represents the first comprehensive framework for crafting a transportation package this year.

“We are running the most transparent transportation process I think this building has ever seen, so now it’s time for public input,” said House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland. “We still have plenty of time to work out the details, but this is an important turning point in terms of having specifics

See **ROADS/8A**

PENDLETON

Hawthorne, high school won’t merge

By **ANTONIO SIERRA**
East Oregonian

Pendleton’s Hawthorne Alternative High School will remain its own entity for at least one more year.

The Pendleton School Board took no action on a proposed motion to merge Hawthorne into Pendleton High School, effectively postponing such a move for at least a year, if not longer.

Interim superintendent Matt Yoshioka said merging the schools would not cause the alternative education program to fold.

“It is not a decision, in any way, shape or form, on what the alternative program will look like,” he said. “The alternative program continues, regardless of the decision tonight.”

The most significant change under the reconfiguration is that instead of the two schools producing separate diplomas, state

See **HAWTHORNE/8A**

Walden answers for vote

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
East Oregonian

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden faced vocal and passionate crowds during three town hall meetings Monday in Eastern Oregon, with most of the discussion centered on the Republican-backed American Health Care Act that passed the House of Representatives last week.

Walden, who serves as Oregon’s lone Republican congressman, has been at the forefront of repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act, commonly referred to as Obamacare. A number of local constituents angrily opposed the GOP bill and relayed their concerns during assemblies in Baker City, Elgin and Wallowa.

Not all feedback was negative in the strongly conservative counties. Boos mixed with cheers



as Walden laid out his positions on health care, natural resources, rural infrastructure, Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and the latest federal appropriations bill that includes full funding Payments in Lieu of Taxes.

Inevitably, however, the topic shifted back to the AHCA, which Walden defended as an effort to make health care sustainable and affordable.

“People are being priced out of the market today,” Walden told the audience of more than

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100 people Monday morning at Baker High School. “We’re trying to figure out how do we save these exchange markets so they will work.”

When asked how many Oregonians stand to lose coverage under the new proposal, Walden said he did not think it would be easy to predict at this point, drawing jeers from the crowd. Walden was also asked why lawmakers did not wait for an updated analysis from the Congressional Budget Office before passing the AHCA.

Walden said the CBO did provide guidance on the base bill, and while Congress values that

See **WALDEN/8A**

Drone delivers food to hunters during rescue

By **PHIL WRIGHT**
East Oregonian

Rescuers brought two local bear hunters across the rushing Umatilla River, and a drone brought them a snack after a long night in Blue Mountains.

Tony Bolin of Umatilla and Jacob Perry of Hermiston were a little worn out and hungry after the ordeal, said Sgt. Dwight Johnson, who heads up search and rescue for the Umatilla County Sheriff’s Office, but were otherwise OK.

The pair went hunting Saturday and crossed the river east of the Umatilla Forks Campground, Johnson said, then drove along the south side of the river before setting out on foot to mountain ridges, which offer expansive and clear views of the territory.

They spotted and shot a bear, Johnson said, and the wounded animal fled down the ridges toward the river. They tracked it, field dressed it and decided they could hike along the river to their

See **RESCUE/8A**



Hermiston celebrates Cinco de Mayo

TOP: The Hermiston Cinco de Mayo court, Daisy Cardenas, Natali Armenta and Jaleslie Torres, waves from a convertible during the parade that kicked off the two-day event Saturday afternoon.

LEFT: Isabel Vargas, of the Aztec Dancers, of Yakima, dances with her troupe during the Hermiston Cinco de Mayo celebration on Saturday.

The two-day celebration at Butte Park included music, food, and an appearance by Mexico’s consul general for Oregon, Francisco Maass Peña.

For the full story see page 3A. More photos online.

Staff photos by Kathy Aney

More photos online



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