

# WALDEN: Favorite to win 2nd district, again

Continued from 1A

could run into trouble in parts of Bend and Medford. And Hood River, Walden's home county, is firmly blue. The latest voter registration statistics from the Oregon Secretary of State show Dems have almost twice the votes there as Republicans.

Walden is less likely to run into trouble around Klamath Falls in the south or Pendleton to the north. But a "slow transformation" is coming over the district, Lunch said. The high tech companies setting up shop along the Columbia River bring employees that tend to be Democrats. Local governments, including Umatilla and Morrow counties, want those workers to move into the Oregon, buy homes and get on the tax rolls.

Hood River County, then, could either be on the leading edge of change, or just an outlier as other counties in the Gorge remain Republican strongholds.

Morrow County Commissioner Jim Doherty said he sees political change in the district and thinks a Democrat could get some traction. Walden's views still represent the majority of voices in the district, Doherty said, but this year his margin of victory could drop to 60 percent, maybe lower.

Lunch said Walden's margin taking a significant drop would not be a surprise, but "it is a real stretch to see him losing."

Walden's closest margin of victory was 61.2 percent in 1998, the first time he ran for Congress. Two years ago he won with almost 72 percent. A 12-point drop would show significant erosion of support, maybe enough to embolden Democrats and donors in the next election cycle.

Democrats nationwide have the opportunity in 2018 to pick up as many as 110 seats in the U.S. House. But Lunch said that's not going to happen.

"I can see them picking up 50 seats," he said, in a wave akin to 2010 when Republicans gained 61.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris  
U.S. Rep. Greg Walden talks with attendees after a contentious town hall meeting about health care May 8, 2017, in Baker City.



Staff photo by E.J. Harris  
Rep. Greg Walden, right, listens to swing shift team leader Richard Lewellen talk about the veneer production line at the Greenwood Resources tree farm Jan. 22, 2016, near Boardman.

In 80-90 percent of the races, he said, Republicans have better funding. Federal Elections Commission campaign financial summaries show Walden has more than \$3.1 million, while Jamie McLeod-Skinner leads the Democrats with just \$37,000.

Some of the Dems have not even met the \$5,000 threshold to report finances. Walden has spent more than \$930,000 already this election cycle, about six times as much as the entire field of seven Democrats has raised.

Walden came into office as a moderate Republican, but how moderate he is today is debatable. Walden is firmly ensconced in Republican leadership, supporting both House Speaker Paul Ryan and President Donald Trump. Walden supported the health care bill that dropped coverage for pre-existing conditions after he said at Oregon townhalls that he would not.

That kind of backtracking should give challengers an opening

to attack. But Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock said the emotions surrounding the health care vote along with tax reform have subsided to some degree, even if the issues have yet to play out. Murdock, who is plugged into the area's politics, said the race has one overriding theme: No one is talking about it.

For challengers, silence does not bode well, and Walden's name recognition alone gives him a huge advantage in the race. Walden's seniority and leadership position in the House also help him to deliver on key issues, such as more funding for wildfires in the budget that passed the House on Thursday. And the needs in the district vary so much from one area to the next that single-issue candidates cannot cobble together a majority.

Still, as Lunch noted, nothing in politics is certain.

The seven Democrats running for the 2nd District take the stage for a forum starting at 6 p.m. Friday in the Bob Clapp Theatre at Blue Mountain Community College, Pendleton. Ballots land in mailboxes in about five weeks, and the primary takes place May 15.

# BUDGET: Deal includes wildfire disaster fund

Continued from 1A

The new plan sets aside \$2 billion per year — outside the regular budget — so officials don't have to tap money meant for prevention programs to fight wildfires.

"Common sense has finally prevailed when it comes to how the Forest Service pays to fight record-breaking forest fires that devastate homes and communities in Oregon and the West," said Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., who helped broker the deal with Sens. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., and Mike Crapo, R-Idaho. GOP Reps. Mike Simpson of Idaho and Cathy McMorris Rodgers of Washington also played key roles, along with other lawmakers from both parties.

The Western lawmakers have been fighting for years to end "fire borrowing," a practice they say devastates rational budgeting for the Forest Service and other agencies.

"This long-overdue, bipartisan solution to the madness of 'fire borrowing' will at last treat these infernos like the natural disasters they are, with the benefit that millions of dollars will now be liberated each year for essential wildfire prevention," Wyden said in a statement.

The wildfire deal "puts an end to fire-borrowing and is a start to giving the Forest Service the predictable resources they need to reduce hazardous fuels" such as small trees and underbrush that exacerbate wildfires, Cantwell said.

"This funding boost will allow the Forest Service to prioritize work in areas closest to communities, in order to save lives and reduce the risk of property damage, while still protecting essential public lands and existing environmental laws," said Cantwell, the top Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

The measure establishes a contingency account through 2027, with annual deposits starting at \$2.1 billion and increasing to \$2.9 billion.

Money from the account would only be used after funds from usual firefighting accounts are exhausted.

Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, slammed the wildfire measure as a missed opportunity. The bill "slightly improves the Forest Service's flexibility," but it "does very little to restore the health of our nation's forests," said Bishop, chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee.

"Democrats, especially in the Senate, stood in the way of forest reform that could have prevented future catastrophic wildfires," said Bishop, who supports a House-passed bill that calls for faster approval of logging projects to reduce the risk of fire in national forests.

"We are not looking forward to the Schumer fires of 2018," Bishop said, referring to Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, who played a key role in the spending bill.

Wildfires have burned across dried-out Western forests and grassland in recent years, causing billions of dollars in damage in California, Oregon and other states. The Forest Service and Interior Department spent more than \$2.7 billion last year fighting fires — the most expensive wildfire season on record.

The budget deal includes \$100 million for fire prevention projects and recreation programs and enables utilities to work with the Forest Service to prevent trees from touching power lines and starting wildfires.

Simpson, a senior member of the House appropriations panel, called the wildfire fund one of his most significant accomplishments in nearly two decades in Congress.

"It is long past due that wildfires in the West receive equal treatment with other natural disasters, and this bill delivers the necessary budget changes to stop the dangerous practice of fire borrowing that has led to catastrophic wildfires in Idaho and throughout the West," he said.

# PENDLETON: Commissions concept art for convention center hotel, sports complex

Continued from 1A

Before switching to a different segment of his presentation, Chrisman told the business and community leaders that had assembled at the Wildhorse Resort & Casino that it was only a matter of time before these projects happened.

In an interview more than a week after Chrisman's presentation, City Manager Robb Corbett cautioned against reading too much into the presentation.

The concept art was meant as a colorful "development wanted" advertisement, a pitch to developers to explore investing in hotel and sports complex projects in Pendleton.

Given the city's other financial commitments and responsibilities, Corbett said it's unlikely that the city would fund these projects and would rely on private entities to make them happen.

Although the concept art was prepared last spring by Seder Architecture and Urban Design, a Portland firm that has produced drawings for the Pendleton River Quarter plan and the Gem Theatre in Athena, the sketches are meant to be tentative. Both renderings of the sports complex have a "subject to change" disclaimer on them.

The city commissioned the concept art because visuals are the best way to stoke excitement in an idea, Chrisman said in an interview Friday.

"I've been accused of being overenthusiastic sometimes," he said. "I feel like that's kind of my job."

Chrisman admitted it would take a "band of citizens" to make these projects come to fruition, but the economic possibilities from developing them should make them attractive investments.

In the form of the



Round-Up grounds, Happy Canyon Arena and the Pendleton Convention Center, he said Pendleton already has the largest stadium, arena and convention center between Portland and Boise, and a convention center hotel and sports complex would only continue to solidify Pendleton's status as a tourist destination.

The "Round-Up Inn & Convention Center" concept already has the support of Pat Beard, the convention center manager.

Although the Pendleton City Council has long discussed using a patchwork of land it owns on Southwest Byers Avenue for hotel development, the concept of combining the public convention center with a privately operated hotel

If he could "wave a magic wand," Beard said he gladly add a hotel to the convention center's services.

Beard said having an on-site hotel would greatly expand the amount of events the convention center could bid for.

With the concept displaying a second-story bridge connecting the hotel to the western grandstands, Chrisman said the hotel would also be a boon for the Round-Up's VIPs.

As the father of a 14-year-old daughter, Chrisman said he's traveled to some "obscure towns" to

see his daughter play sports.

He said other cities have established sports complexes, and with Pendleton's plethora of entertainment and lodging, Pendleton could be a youth sports destination.

There does appear to be some local support for a sports complex.

When the city council issued a ballot to the public to gauge which issues it should prioritize, building a sports complex garnered 22 percent of the vote out of the 245 votes cast. That was, however, well behind the top four issues that made it into the council goals and was among the lowest vote getters among the 12 issues that were voted on.

Chrisman said people sometimes get too caught up in comparing developments in other communities in the region to Pendleton.

With the goal of Pendleton becoming an international tourism destination, Chrisman said he's working to do more tourism coordination between communities because a rising tide lifts all boats.

He said Pendleton fits in comfortably with other regional attractions like the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort and the city of Joseph.

Contact Antonio Sierra at [asierra@eastoregonian.com](mailto:asierra@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0836.



# \$450 OFF

## SAMSUNG GALAXY S9

— WITH TURN-IN —

# AT THE SAMSUNG SALE

No Hidden Fees. No Activation Fees.



Prices vary. Offer requires purchase of a new qualifying Samsung Smartphone and Postpaid Plan on a 30-mo. RIC with 0% APR and \$0 down. Credit approval required. Taxes, fees and restrictions apply. \$450-off and \$250-off promotional pricing also requires Total Plan with Unlimited Data, new customer port-in or upgrade eligibility, Device Protection+ and comes via monthly bill credit. \$450-off promotional pricing also requires qualifying Samsung turn-in. \$250-off offer does not require Smartphone trade-in.

Things we want you to know: New consumer or small business (20 lines or less) port-in or upgrade eligibility and Total Plan with Unlimited Data or Unlimited Data Plus required. Purchase of device via 0% APR, 30-mo. Retail Installment Contract, credit approval, qualifying Smartphone turn-in (for \$450-off promotional pricing) and Device Protection+ required. Tax due at sale. A Regulatory Cost Recovery Fee applies; this is not a tax or government required charge. Additional fees, taxes, terms, conditions and coverage areas may apply and vary by plan, service and phone. Offers valid at participating locations only and cannot be combined. Unlimited Data Plan(s) will stream at speeds of up to 1.5 Mbps and will automatically shift to 2G when each line reaches 22GB. Minimum monthly price of Device Protection+ is \$9.99/month per Smartphone. A service fee/deductible per approved claim applies. Property insurance is underwritten by American Bankers Insurance Company of Florida and provided under a Master Policy issued to U.S. Cellular. You will be the certificate holder on U.S. Cellular's Master Policy for loss/theft benefits. Service Contract (Oblig. to Federal Warranty Service Corporation in all states except CA (Sureway, Inc.) and OR (Assurant Service Protection, Inc.)). Limitations and exclusions apply. Ask an associate for more details. Smartphone Turn-In: Smartphone must power on and cannot be pin locked. Device must be in fully functional working condition without any liquid damage or broken components, including, but not limited to, a cracked display or housing. Qualifying turn-in devices include: iPhone 6, 6 Plus, 6s, 6s Plus, 7, 7 Plus, 8, 8 Plus and X; Samsung Galaxy S® 6, S® 6 Edge, S7, S7 Edge, S8, S8+ and Note 5; LG G6™, LG G6™ LG V20, LG V30™ and LG V30™. Offer applies to base memory model only. Offer with qualifying turn-in: Samsung Galaxy S9 \$450 off; Bill credit amount is \$15/mo. off the regular price. Samsung Galaxy S9 S250 off (no trade-in); Bill credit amount is \$8.34/mo. off the regular price. Balance comes via monthly bill credit on a 30-mo. Retail Installment Contract; 0% APR. Bill credit applied within three bill cycles and ends when balance is paid. Line must remain in good standing. In the event of cancellation of service, customer will be responsible for the entire Retail Installment Contract balance. The early upgrade program is not available with this offer. Kansas Customers: In areas in which U.S. Cellular receives support from the Federal Universal Service Fund, all reasonable requests for service must be met. Unresolved questions concerning service availability can be directed to the Kansas Corporation Commission Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection at 1-800-862-0027. Limited-time offer. While supplies last. Trademarks and trade names are the property of their respective owners. See store or uscellular.com for details. ©2018 U.S. Cellular