

# Rep. Walden's town hall turns testy in Athena

By ANTONIO SIERRA  
East Oregonian

ATHENA — The Athena-Weston area has typically been friendly turf for Rep. Greg Walden.

Amid a series of raucous town halls hosted by GOP members of Congress, the Hood River Republican got a polite reception in Weston in early 2017, even as the forum turned to hot button issues.

When Walden accompanied Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai on the Eastern Oregon leg of his tour of rural communities, a roundtable discussion in Weston on rural internet access went smoothly while the pair was greeted by protesters at a stop in Pendleton.

A Sunday afternoon town hall in Athena followed much of the same script until some pointed questions at the end of the event led to some contention.

In his opening remarks and his interactions with the audience, Walden talked about his work on multiple bills that would allow federal agencies to thin out federally managed forests further.

He said a thinner forest would decrease fuel loads



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

**Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon, answered questions Sunday, during a mostly friendly town hall at Athena Elementary School.**

and keep forest fire from getting out of control.

Assisted throughout the town hall by a staffer who cycled through a slideshow presentation, Walden cited a statistic that states that 95 percent of the acres burned in wildfires in 2017 was in U.S. Forest Service land.

"We're 80 million acres behind," he said. "We're going to lose it all if we don't (do the work)."

Josh Walker, a town hall attendee, pushed Walden to acknowledge climate change's role in forest fires and asked him if he supported the Green New Deal, a proposed resolution that would cut greenhouse gas emissions to a net zero over 10 years through

a job guarantee, universal health care and investment in green technology and infrastructure.

Walden said he believes in climate change, but opposed the Green New Deal.

After noting its monetary expense, Walden brought up an FAQ for the Green New Deal that referenced banning cows and air travel while promising "economic security for all who are unable or unwilling to work."

Media fact checkers have noted that the text of the Green New Deal resolution does not explicitly reference airplanes and cows or the "unwilling to work" line.

Instead, the resolution calls for "overhauling transportation systems"



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

**Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer, left, listens during Rep. Greg Walden's town hall on Sunday at Athena Elementary School.**

and investing in high speed rail, and "(w)orking collaboratively with farmers and ranchers in the United States to eliminate pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector as much as is technologically feasible."

Aides for Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., the legislator who co-sponsors the resolution, have said a draft FAQ was mistakenly released and have since taken it down.

As Walker and Walden sparred over the Green New Deal and "Medicare for All," some members of the audience grew agitated and directed that agitation at Walker.

But Walden urged the

audience to be respectful and the town hall eventually moved on.

Sue Petersen of Pendleton, a member of the Umatilla County Democratic Party, asked Walden about the "concentration camps" that house immigrant asylum seekers near the U.S.-Mexico border.

Walden disagreed with calling the detention centers "concentration camps," and later added that "we need to secure our borders."

He recalled a trip he took to an Office of Refugee Resettlement facility near the border, describing a place where minors receive medical and mental health services, attend classes, and are allowed to call family in

their home countries.

But Petersen continued to push Walden on the conditions at the facilities, saying that there were babies who were going without diapers.

Walden said he wasn't familiar with that specific complaint, and later expressed sympathy for the people running the detention facilities.

"Can you imagine running any kind of facility where you have no control of who comes in the door every day, and that you're responsible for?" he said. "It's a humanitarian crisis. It's a border that's not secure and it's a broken immigration system. We have a lot of work to do."

Amid some of the contentious exchanges, Wayne Kostur, a retired educator and Athena city councilor, asked about why there couldn't be more bipartisan agreement.

Walden said there's plenty of bipartisan legislation that passes through Congress, it just doesn't get the same kind of attention that the more polarizing issues do.

At the beginning of the town hall, Walden highlighted his work to combat robocalls, which he said has bipartisan support.

## Eastern Oregon sweep finds 12 violations at job sites

Oregon Construction Contractors Board investigates job sites from Ontario to Boardman

By PHIL WRIGHT  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Spot inspections in early June at construction jobs sites in Eastern Oregon found a dozen possible violations of contracting regulations.

The Oregon Construction Contractors Board reported the sweep was part of an 11-state action the National Association of State Contractor Licensing Agencies coordinated to target the construction industry. The Oregon agency concentrated its investigators at job sites from Ontario to Boardman and is sending notices of intent to issue civil penalties for violations.

Chris Huntington, CCB administrator, stated the board's efforts to protect consumers and business throughout Oregon.

"All Oregonians deserve protection from unlicensed contractors," he said, "just as all legitimate contractors deserve to benefit from a level playing field."

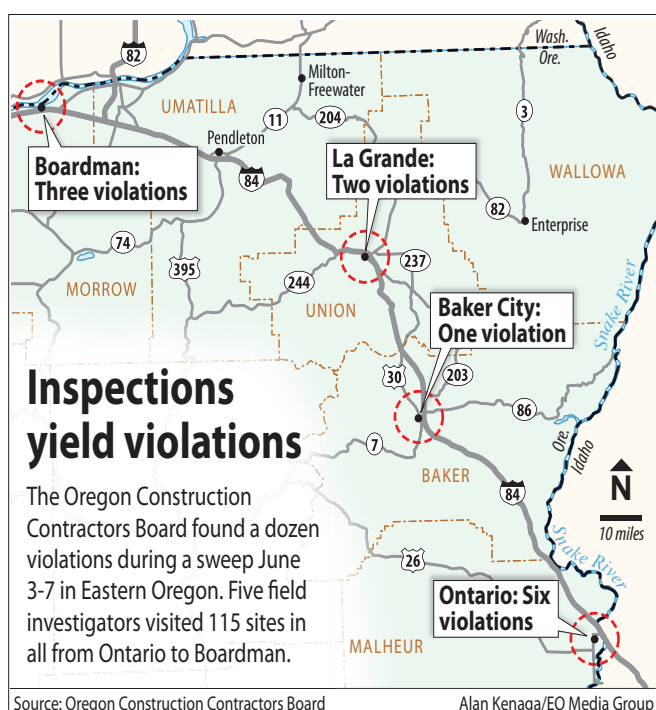
Stan Jessup is the enforcement program manager for the Oregon board. He said five field investigators visited 115 sites June 3-7 and alleged finding an even dozen violations of contractor laws or rules.

"The violation count is low probably due to the distance between sites and the fact that contractors will gravitate to areas with higher volumes of work, such as the bigger towns," he said.

The team ran 20 checks for state Building Codes Division licenses, visited 30 homes for lead-based paint renovation and found 52 "unattended active job sites." Jessup provided the following breakdown of the local inspections:

### Ontario

Three advertising violations (all advertising must include the contractor's



**The Oregon Construction Contractors Board found a dozen violations during a sweep June 3-7 in Eastern Oregon. Five field investigators visited 115 sites in all from Ontario to Boardman.**

license number.)

One for not carrying employees and not having workers' comp insurance.

One for not listing all Assumed Business Names on the license record.

One for not having a license to conduct lead-based paint renovation.

### Baker City

One for not listing all Assumed Business Names on the license record.

### La Grande

One for not having a license to conduct lead-based paint renovation.

One for not meeting minimum contract standards.

### Boardman

Two for not carrying employees and not having workers' comp insurance.

One for advertising violations.

Jessup said it was the board's policy not to publish contractor names until there is a final order. He also stated the board does not track specific sweep outcomes after recording the original allegation.

According to the contrac-

tors board, "Nearly everyone who repairs, remodels or builds a home needs a CCB license, meaning they are bonded and insured and can pull required building permits."

To verify licenses, visit [www.oregon.gov/ccb](http://www.oregon.gov/ccb), and type the license number or name in the orange "Search" feature. You can see if licenses are active, whether the contractor carries the endorsement for residential work and if the name and other information on the license matches the contractor you are considering. You also can call 503-378-4621 for help searching or understanding the results.

Contractors and consumers can report unlicensed contractors and other illegal activity on the CCB's website or by calling 503-934-2246. Additionally, the contractors board provides mediation services to help iron out disputes that arise between homeowners and licensed contractors. And people who use unlicensed contractors don't have access to the service.

## BRIEFLY

### Program highlights new landlord tenant laws

TIGARD — The Oregon State Bar will host a free public seminar addressing significant changes to landlord-tenant laws in Oregon

"Legal Q&A: An Update to Landlord/Tenant Law in Oregon" is Wednesday, July 10 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The presentation is designed for non-lawyers, both landlords and tenants. It will explain key legal changes that affect those who live in or own Oregon rental properties.

The program is available via live webcast or in-person at the Oregon State Bar center, 16037 S.W. Upper Boones Ferry Road, Tigard. While the event is free, pre-registration is required.

To register for the live webcast, visit [www.tinyurl.com/LandLordTenantWebcast](http://www.tinyurl.com/LandLordTenantWebcast) or for the in-person event, go to [www.tinyurl.com/LandlordTenantUpdate](http://www.tinyurl.com/LandlordTenantUpdate). For questions, call 503-431-6413 or 1-800-452-8260, ext. 413.

### City prepares to reapply for \$25 million grant

PENDLETON — The city of Pendleton is set to take another swing at a big federal grant.

At a meeting Tuesday, the council will consider approving a \$2 million match for a \$25 million BUILD grant that would significantly alter the Interstate 84 Exit 209 interchange to ease traffic.

The city unsuccessfully applied for the grant last year, but according to a staff report, Oregon Department of Transportation told city officials that Pendleton's project just missed the final cut.

With ODOT also providing a \$2 million match, the city would use the grant to pay for the \$26 million first phase of the project.

The first phase is focused on the north side of the interchange and would involve access improvements, right-of-way purchase, street widenings, and a new signalized intersection.

The staff report states that the city and ODOT don't have enough money for the second and third phases of the project, which would include improvements to the Tutuilla Road-Southwest Hailey Avenue intersection.

If the council approves the match, the \$2 million would be paid for by borrowing money from the Oregon Transportation Infrastructure Bank. The council would need to decide on a funding source and the payment terms at a later meeting.

The grant application is due at the end of July and the U.S. Department of Transportation will make a decision in the fall.

The council meeting will be held Tuesday at the council chambers in city hall, 500 S.W. Dorion Ave.

### Driver cited after crashing into commercial truck on I-82

UMATILLA — A two-vehicle crash on Interstate 82 Friday morning resulted in one driver being transported to the hospital and cited for following too closely.

According to Oregon State Police Sergeant Seth Cooney, Michael P. Coulson, 22, of Mattawa, Washington, was driving a red Nissan Rogue eastbound on Interstate 82 near milepost 2 when he struck the back of a commercial semi-truck driven by Edward T. Garduno, 70, of Thornton, Colorado, shortly before 11 a.m.

After striking the truck, Coulson's vehicle traveled across the median into oncoming traffic on the westbound side, struck an orange construction barrel, traveled back to the eastbound side and stopped in the median.

"He narrowly missed a bus (on the westbound side)," Cooney said.

Coulson was transported with minor injuries to Good Shepherd Medical Center and was cited for following too closely.

Oregon State Police, Umatilla Police Department, Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District and Umatilla County Fire District 1 and the Oregon Department of Transportation assisted at the scene.

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