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EAST OREGONIAN

PINION

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OUR VIEW

Walden brings methodical purpose to political work

Oregon may not know it yet, but in 2021 it is going to lose a tremendous amount of influence in Washington, D.C. That’s because longtime federal lawmaker Greg Walden will step down that year from his slot in the U.S. House of Representatives. Walden, 62, announced earlier this week that he will not run for re-election in the huge 2nd Congressional District. That district includes large chunks of Eastern and Southern Oregon — including Umatilla and Morrow counties. First elected in 1998, Walden’s coveted position will be up for grabs in the next election. It also means that when Walden departs, 20 years worth of experience and political know-how will go with him. That isn’t a good thing for Oregon, and it is especially bad news for the constituents of his district. As the only Republican in Oregon’s congressional delegation, Walden, for the most part, delivered a type of moderate center-right balance to a field dominated by Democrats.



AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite
U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, the top Republican on the House Energy and Commerce Committee and Oregon’s only Republican in Congress, announced Monday that he will retire in January 2021.

While Walden met criticism from the political fanatics on both sides of the political fence, overall his track record shows he looked out for Eastern Oregon on a consistent basis. Whomever replaces Walden will face a long road to achieving the kind

of influence the Hood River native built over two decades of work in Congress. Walden also strived to raise the voice of the rural areas of the state in the federal arena. His successes during his tenure are many and the

state — especially the moderate GOP — is going to miss his leadership. Political voices of reason — the adult in the room, if you will — are sadly missing on the American political stage as of late. The country is bitterly divided along political fault lines where there is a constant grinding of rhetoric and dogma that ignites sparks that burn bright. Politicians who, for the most part, stick to party alignment yet seek always to find compromise to help the nation and their state seem like a vanishing species. As Walden has pointed out before, that perception is quite correct. Lots of good work is done in the hallowed halls of Congress by both Democrats and Republicans on a regular basis. But it is the smoldering fire of fanatical doctrine that gets headlines and seems to snake throughout the political collective consciousness like a main circuit cable. Walden brings a sense of methodical purpose to his political work and he did a lot for Oregon. Once he leaves the American political stage, he will be sorely missed.

YOUR VIEWS

School district bond is transparent

Sometimes it gets so frustrating when people spout things that they have no knowledge of. Example: the new Bond for Our Kids. Yes it’s about our kids, Mr. Teide. As a member of the facility planning committee for over a year, I know the facts. The last bond did not pass due to money, but the lack of clear explanation of how the money was needed. Yes, that board could have done a better job at that. That is the past, and we should always look forward to the future. That’s where it counts. So we as a committee actually went to the different schools, asked the principals, and other staff members, what the issues were, and based our judgement of what was a priority, and what could wait. Yes, we as a committee actually went to all of the schools, and saw and heard for ourselves the issues and challenges our district was facing. Did you, Mr. Teide? No, you did not. We have such a dire need to expand current schools and capacities, and create an environment that will enable our kids to learn in a safe and lasting environment. Yes we need a new school at the Rocky Heights location. It is the oldest school with the most inefficient systems in it, and clearly becoming unsafe for our most precious commodity — our kids. We need a new school on Theater Lane to help with our increasing elementary population. But Mr. Tiede, you do not know that the district has already saved us money by having the plans from West Park and Sunset as the template for building the two new schools. This is a wise, fiscally responsible, and prudent move. Hermiston has grown so fast we need to keep up with it, and we are only going to get bigger. Go to the high school and you can see the need for an expansion. We had numerous public hearings in regard to the bond, but not once have I seen you there, Mr. Tiede. Then you could see the facts, and the conclusion we as a committee came up with from the facts. No smoke, no mirrors. It came from a projector to a screen from good faith, and hard work, from 34 of us who volunteered to try for the betterment of our kids. Every one of us on the committee owns homes and we were there to make sure that our taxes as well as yours would not go up, and meet the-

district’s needs, which are serious and needing addressed now. The bond is not the same, but tens of millions less than the last one. So I will make that clear. Just the facts. Everyone please support our school district, these are our kids. You cut down Greg Smith and his wonderful wife, Sherrie, for support of our schools. Greg Smith is our representative, and has done numerous projects in our area to bring businesses with good paying jobs through economic development. Greg Smith every day works for the betterment of Eastern Oregon as well as for Hermiston, and other cities. So Hermiston is his business and I thank him for his consistent, and honorable, efforts to make Hermiston a better place to live and work.

Perry Hawkins
Hermiston

It’s time for Republicans to step up

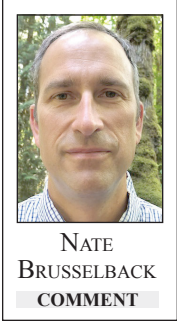
Surely it’s time to stop pussy-footing around the issue. In addition to the obvious array of obscenities perpetrated on the nation, its people, and the world by this president, Trump is also behaving consistently as an agent of a foreign adversary. Trump is waging a full-throttle war against our environment by attacking our clean air, clean water, climate, and health. By ignoring science time after time, he is risking the very survival of human civilization. All this is undertaken in the interests of short-term profits for the wealthy few. What is equally obscene is that Republicans from D.C. to Salem are displaying a parallel lack of concern for protecting us from this assault. If only one Republican in Congress were to exhibit some integrity and spine, and stand up against the disgusting performance in the White House, we’d have reason to think there remains in that party some semblance of decency. If only one Republican in Salem were to exhibit an ounce of honesty in addressing climate change in the state instead of promoting the lies and misinformation propounded by industry and the timber barons, we’d have reason to think there remains some semblance of decency within the Oregon Republican Party.

Trisha Vigil
Medford

OTHER VIEWS

Meddling with free market doesn’t really help anyone

The multifamily and single-family housing markets are closely related. What’s good for one can be good for the other. In a normal free market housing cycle, jobs drive both markets. When new jobs come to town, it brings in more people, driving up rents. When rents get high enough the top renters move up to buy single-family homes and apartment developers move in to build more apartments, filling the shortage. This supply and demand cycle has historically driven the single-family market with a steady stream of home buyers who have proven they can make a monthly payment. Pendleton’s lack of new jobs and bleak population growth estimates, an increase of 21 people for 2020 and only a 0.3% annual increase over the next 20 years, means this town has some of the lowest rents and lowest growth projections in the state for a town of its size. With low rents come low housing prices and less development. Low rents and low housing prices are not enough to drive meaningful population growth. There must be substantial job growth to make a real difference. When city officials dropped a grenade on the multifamily market by incentivizing the next 20 years worth of market rate apartments in only a couple of years, they not only wiped millions of dollars in value from current apartment owners, they also stunted the growth of the single-family market. A real twofer. With massive oversupply of market-rate apartments, there will be no driver of rents and less reason for someone to move up and buy a starter home. As the city council’s version of rent control takes shape, landlords will be fighting for the limited number of people capable of paying at least \$1,200 or more per month in rent. All of the 305 newly taxpayer-subsidized apartments will be targeting this price range. This is a full 200 more units than was recommended by the 2016 Sabino housing study. This is a category of apartment already with a surplus, according to a more recent housing study. Putting downward pressure on rents does not



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help existing landlords, new development or single-family builders. None of the taxpayer land or money thus far is going to address the shortage of \$500 a month and below apartments, which has been identified as in great need by the same report. City officials need to know that meddling with the free market every step of the way doesn’t really get us ahead. Through a free market, whatever needs to get built will get built. There is no need to pick winners and losers to solve these problems. If the city needs tax dollars for street improvements, then bring in some well-paying jobs. Supply and demand will increase the tax base through appreciation of the existing housing stock. If there is a need for more single-family homes, then bring more jobs and the demand will push prices to the point that builders can build profitably. If the city wants to fix blighted houses, then bring more jobs and those houses will become too valuable to sit idle. Want more kids in the schools to stop declining enrollment? Bring more jobs. Nearly all these micromanaged problems can be solved through the free market and it starts with jobs, jobs, jobs. Attacking each problem from the back end leads to free market destruction and city officials becoming the referees deciding who wins and who loses. Increasing the tax base on one hand is great, but if you’re shrinking it on the other hand by devaluing existing property and destroying someone’s business, that is bad policy. The city council has been treating a symptom and not the root cause of the disease. Since city officials are unwilling to develop a fair and equal building incentive program for everyone who is building in all parts of town, why doesn’t the city council get out of the housing subsidy business altogether? Why not form a jobs committee instead? Bring well-paying jobs to Pendleton, then step back and get out of the way as market forces do the work.

Nate Brusselback is the owner of the Triangle Apartments in Pendleton.