

Walden meets with veterans in Enterprise

By Katherine Stickroth
For The Chieftain

Greg Walden, Congressional representative for Oregon’s 2nd District, met with Wallowa County veterans at VFW Post 4307 in Enterprise on Friday as part of a district-wide tour. Rep. Walden opened the meeting with an overview of the intent of Congress and the Department of Veterans Affairs to serve veterans.

“In Congress, we do the policy,” Walden said. “We are not the day-to-day managers of the VA, but we are finding ourselves drawn into it more and more. We try to learn about the problems and try to find solutions. This is what led to the VA Choice program, intended to provide timely medical care to our veterans.

“If you’re scheduled more than 30 days or more than 40 miles away from VA care, then you can see someone local.”



Rep. Greg Walden, left, discusses issues with veterans Ann Gosnell, ret. Army, and Everett Roberts, ret. Marines.

The Veterans Choice card, currently in its initial phase, is intended to meet veterans’ emergency needs. Later, the program will include ap-

proved local providers, who will meet veterans’ health care needs. Then the VA can provide specialized care.

Walden also described the accountability measures added to recent bills the House passed before adjourning for the elections.

“It astounds me that it takes two years for an appeal to a veteran claim to be processed,” said Walden. “The VA funding bill we passed calls for VA employees to report their daily work, same as my sales representatives did when I owned a radio business.”

Walden also discussed veterans’ mental health care, especially in regards to the suicide rate.

“The Vietnam veterans, in coming out of Vietnam, were told to get over it and go home. That was wrong. We learned we want to provide better mental health care services to veterans, especially in regard to (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). “But I’m not here to talk, I’m here to listen.”

Around 20 veterans voiced their concerns and often praised the VA services they had received. Overall, the consensus was that once a veteran entered the VA system, the facilities at Walla Walla and Boise were very helpful.

Walden heard comments and received documentation from Brian Wizard, ret. Army, regarding his frustration in attempting to receive proper dental care. Ann Gosnell, ret. Army, brought up an unresolved claim she is dealing with.

Connie Guentert represented the services provided by Community Connections. She brought up the limited funding for veteran transportation to VA facilities and for caregivers of veterans.

The relaxed conversational atmosphere allowed open discussion about veterans’ issues.

“It was a good meeting. We should have more of them,” said George Aguilar, ret. Army.

Crary challenges Rep. Walden for District 2 seat

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

Jackson County Democrat Jim Crary is challenging popular Republican incumbent Greg Walden for the U.S. representative seat for Oregon’s 2nd congressional district. It’s no small task, considering Walden has held the seat since 1998.

Crary is a native of Fargo, N.D., and a Vietnam War-era Army veteran. He earned a business degree at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma and a law degree at the University of San Diego.

Crary first appeared in Wallowa County as a candidate for the 2nd district seat during the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo parade in July. That was followed by an appearance and speech at the Labor Day picnic held by the Wallowa County Democratic Party at Wallowa Lake State Park.

After 14 years of working for the city of Anchorage, Alaska as a municipal attorney, Crary took his legal talents to the Procurement Department of British Petroleum. He and his family moved to Jackson County several years before he retired from BP in 2013. He is married and has four children.

As a first-time candidate for the office, Crary — who is running on a “Citizens, not special interests” platform, sat down with The Chieftain to discuss his views.

Campaign finance reform: I’m so upset with how much money is in politics right now. I just think it’s obscene. On my website you’ll see I’ve drafted a constitutional amendment. Only citizens who live in the district where the candidate or issue is on



Democrat Jim Crary, left, is looking to defeat Republican Greg Walden for the Congressional District 2 seat.

the ballot can contribute. I’m totally about representing the people in District 2 and not special interests.

Climate change: I worked for BP. It’s a fossil fuel company, but I’m a total believer in climate change.

Infrastructure: One thing the Chamber of Commerce and labor can agree upon is that we need to refurbish and repair it. Better infrastructure means better paying jobs. It’s a win-win. We can pay for it by increasing the gas tax. It hasn’t been raised since 1993. Is there anything you’ve bought since 1993 that hasn’t gone up in price?

Social Security: It will be short on money by 2034. All of a sudden, people depending on it are not going to get 100 percent on the dollar — they’ll get 75 cents. Crary suggested three possible solutions: 1. Raising the retirement age for those currently under age 40, unless they are honorably discharged veterans. Charge a flat rate of 6.2 percent for all people paying into Social Security. 3. Means testing by reducing payments to singles with a retirement income of more than \$125,000 and couples with retirement income of more than \$250,000 per year.

Medicare part D: Medicare part D was passed under George W. Bush, and it’s a

giveaway to the huge pharmaceuticals. It tells the government it can’t negotiate drug prices, although the VA can. It’s a \$50 billion-per-year giveaway to the pharmaceuticals. How much money for school, roads and libraries could we have?

Gun control: I’ve hunted since I was 11. In the Army I shot an M-16, an M-60 and a .45. An AR-15 is a semi-automatic version of an M-16. It’s made for one thing: To kill a lot of people in a short amount of time. I hunt with a .270 now. If you can’t kill an elk or deer or moose by the second or third round, you’re not going to get it. A 30-round clip is designed to kill people.

Federal forests: I’m all for sustainable logging, but if anyone thinks we’ll go back to the employment levels of the ‘60s and ‘70s — it ain’t gonna happen because the old growth isn’t there and because of automation. A forest is a renewable resource. Let’s use it as such. Start harvesting so at least a set amount of people have good-paying jobs.

Grazing/federal land management: In Harney County they have the High Desert Partnership, which is private people working with the BLM and Forest Service. I think local people should have a really strong voice and be at the table and have their input. Will they get everything they want? No, but they should be heard and accommodated within reason.

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Thank you again and God Bless you all.

Ruby Frazier & Family

THANK YOU

Thank you to all my family and friends for taking time from their busy lives on a rainy, blustery day to help celebrate my 90th birthday. There were 5 generations present. God is good. You all made it a very special day. Thanks again.

Love you all, Jeanne

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U.S. Rep. Greg Walden

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee from Oregon’s Second Congressional District, is seeking re-election and believes his record speaks for itself.

Walden, who was first elected to the large district encompassing all of Eastern Oregon in 1998, said in a statement he has passed more bills through the U.S. House of Representatives than any other member of the Oregon House delegation in this term and all terms.

This term, he said he’s passed seven bills, more than 94 percent of the other House members, including helping bring commercial air service back to Klamath Falls, accessing funding for bridges in the Columbia Gorge and helping improve rural internet service for consumers.

Walden said federal agencies need to do a better job listening to local communities affected by land management decisions. He said he is strongly opposed to a proposed 2.5 million-acre national monument in Malheur County and gained House approval to prevent funding for a monument declaration.

He said he will continue to work on efforts to better manage public lands. He said the House has passed bipartisan legislation “to fix broken federal forest policy,” including using wildfire prevention funds to pay for fire suppression, for the fourth year in a row. He said the Senate should pass the plan but pointed to some successes in the area, including increasing funding firefighting and hazardous fuel reduction.

He said veterans are a top priority and that he has helped more than 5,000 in the Second Congressional District with issues involving benefits. He

said senior Veterans Administration officials should be held accountable and veterans should have access to care outside the VA in the communities in which they live.

He said protecting seniors and improving health care in rural Oregon is also important. He said he helped prevent a spike in Medicare premiums and cuts to Social Security disability payments. He said drug addiction and mental illness also need attention.

He said he worked on legislation for a long-term transportation funding plan to improve the safety of roads, highways and bridges. He said he has also fought to improve the safety of railroads and rail tank cars and will continue to do so.

The Blue Mountain Eagle contributed to this article.

M. C R O W & C O.

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