

Greg Walden opts not to run for another term

Cites desire to move on to new work and challenges

Molly Jenkins

HOOD RIVER, OR — Today, Greg Walden (R-Hood River) announced that he will not seek a new term in Congress in the 2020 elections.

Walden announced his decision in a video statement. <https://www.dropbox.com/s/xdldk571bdsp9yx/screenshot.m4v?dl=0>

“At the end of this term,” he said, “I will have devoted 30 years to the important calling of public service; of helping bring people together to solve problems and leave our communities, our beautiful state and our great nation better off for the next generation.

“Together we’ve worked to find solutions to the opioid crisis, improve forest health, and increase access to high speed broadband.

“My team and I have helped thousands of Oregonians get the Social Security, Medicare, and veterans’ benefits they earned and deserved.



Oregon Congressman Greg Walden fields questions on timber salvage and other topics at his town hall meeting June 30 at the Wallowa Senior Center.

“I fought to save the fire-fighting tanker base in Medford, the VA facility in White City, and I’ve stood up for the ranching and farming way of life that is eastern Oregon.

“Rural Oregon values run deeply in my veins. My ancestors arrived here in 1845 and I grew up on a cherry orchard in The Dalles with parents who survived

the Great Depression. They taught me the true meaning of community; the importance of giving back; and the value of hard work. That’s why I’ve given it my all for the people and the way of life we so enjoy in Oregon.

“Based on recent polling, strong fundraising, and the backing of my wife and family, I am confident I could earn the support

of 2nd District voters for another term. I’m also optimistic that a path exists for Republicans to recapture a majority in the House, and that I could return for two more years as chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

“But I also know that for me, the time has come to pursue new challenges and opportunities.

“So, I will not seek re-election to the U.S. House of Representatives, nor election to any other office, but instead I will close the public service chapter of my life, thankful for the friends I’ve made and the successful work we’ve done together.

“It’s been an honor and privilege to represent the people of Oregon’s 2nd District in the U.S. House. Know that I will continue to work hard on their behalf as long as I’m in office. Thank you.”

Walden is the former chairman, and now top Republican, of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. Under Walden’s leadership, 93 percent of the bills approved by the committee received bipartisan support on the House floor, with the bulk of the work becoming law. He led efforts to tackle the opioid crisis, increase access to high speed broadband service, modernize the energy sector and move forward on medical research and innovation.

Walden and his wife, Mylene, owned and operated radio stations in Hood River and The Dalles for more than two decades. They are the parents of two sons, Anthony, 29, and Garrison, who died of a congenital heart defect in 1994.

He served six years in the Oregon House, (1989-95), including as House Majority Leader during the 1991 and 1993 sessions, before serving two years in the Oregon Senate, (1995-97).

As Deputy Chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, (NRCC) Walden helped Republicans regain control of the U.S. House in 2010 and keep it in 2012. His colleagues twice elected him Chairman of the NRCC (for the 2014 and 2016 cycles) which produced the biggest back-to-back GOP majorities in U.S. history.

Walden was elected to Congress in 1998 with 61 percent of the vote. He held every challenger to less than 40 percent of the vote in every election including in 2018.

“I am deeply thankful to my supporters who made such a difference at the grassroots level to help achieve huge victories in each election. Likewise, I could not have run or served effectively without the support of my wife and family who backed me every step of the way. To them, I owe the most special thank you,” said Walden.

WILL AMTRAK RETURN TO NE OREGON?

La Grande group wants passenger train service back

By Dick Mason
The Observer

Cook Memorial Library’s community room was probably as crowded late Saturday morning as the Union Pacific Railroad depot in La Grande was on Sept. 27, 1937, when people gathered there for the train carrying President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to arrive.

FDR was asleep when his train stopped in La Grande around 12:30 a.m., but First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt did appear and spoke briefly to the crowd.

Few if any of the more than 100 people at La Grande’s library Saturday were the same ones who saw FDR’s train arrive in 1937, but many lived here when La Grande had passenger train service. The desire to see passenger rail service return to Northeast Oregon is what drew the crowd to Saturday’s Eastern Oregon Rail meeting, which was held to inform people how they could help bring back Amtrak’s passenger service.

Those in the audience included an individual who explained why he wanted passenger train service to return: “I’m 79 — don’t know how much longer I can drive long distances. I need to travel monthly to Boise and Portland.”

This 79-year-old and many others at the meeting learned what steps need to be taken to make this dream become a reality during a program put on by the all-volunteer nonprofit Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates, with help from All Aboard Washington. AORTA is proposing to revive at least the Portland to Boise portion of the old Amtrak Pioneer route, which was discontinued in 1997 because of funding issues.

“We need your help if (the return of passenger



Photo courtesy Oregon Department of Transportation

An Amtrak Cascades train leaves Portland’s station in this file photo. A La Grande group wants to reinstate Amtrak service in eastern Oregon.

train service) is going to happen. It will be a longer term effort,” said AORTA President Joe Nuxoll of Eugene.

The need for passenger train service in Northeast Oregon is greater now than it was in 1997, Nuxoll said. A big reason is that Greyhound Bus now provides one westbound and one eastbound bus a day, while 22 years ago at least two westbound and two eastbound buses made daily stops in La Grande.

Nuxoll would like to see as much of the Pioneer route, which ran from Portland to Salt Lake City, Utah, restored as possible. However, he said it is more realistic to start small by first attempting to restore the Portland to Boise part of the Pioneer route.

The AORTA president said that when people are speaking up in support of Amtrak, they need to address one of the most common criticisms of it — that its subsidized with

government funding. This is a weak and unfair argument, according to Nuxoll, because all modern transportation receives substantial government funding.

“All transportation is subsidized,” he said.

He explained that virtually all highway construction and maintenance is funded by the government and that air travel is possible because of airports, which receive significant levels of government assistance.

Nuxoll emphasized that the best way to get members of Congress to begin looking into expanding Amtrak’s routes is for local city councils and county commissions to pass resolutions in support of having local and regional passenger rail service. He said that when senators and members of congress learn of the

importance of communicating with legislators about restoring Amtrak service in Northeast Oregon.

“Your first step should be contacting your legislators,” he said. He said that part of the problem Amtrak faces is that it received a weak mandate from the government when it was created in 1971. This makes it difficult to get large sums of money from Congress.

“It is a fight for it to get funding from Congress each year,” Broderick said. Many of those attending the meeting Saturday talked of how much they miss passenger train service, and the atmosphere in the library’s community room was one of hope and excitement.

“You have priceless enthusiasm,” said Louis Musso, a member of All Aboard Washington.

resolutions they will know that the people they represent want passenger trains to return.

Mark Meyer of Portland, an AORTA board member, said he believes there is strong bipartisan support in Congress for expanding Amtrak.

One of these leaders is Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Portland), who is a supporter of Amtrak, according to Jeff Broderick, a graduate student at Portland State University who is earning a master’s degree in urban planning. He also noted that Rep. Peter Defazio (D-Eugene), who is chair of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, is in a good position to help boost Amtrak’s expansion.

Broderick, like other speakers at Saturday’s meeting, emphasized the

Enterprise Elks offer free dinner for Wallowa County veterans

Non-veterans eat for \$10

On Saturday, November 9, the Enterprise Elks will host a dinner for Wallowa County veterans. This dinner will be from 5:00 pm until 8:00 pm at the Enterprise Elks Lodge, on 211 W North St. Proceeds from the evening will benefit local Veteran’s programs.

The Elks are committed to honoring veterans and their service, and this is one of the ways we honor veterans for Veteran’s Day. The Elks established the Elks National Veterans Service Commission in 1946, with the pledge, “So long as there are veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will never forget them.” The Elks nationwide have made serving veterans in need, a special focus.

We also wish to thank VFW Post #4307, for their generosity and kindness when they opened their building to us as a meeting place, while the Elks building was being renovated. The members of the VFW Post graciously allowed us to meet there for the last five years. We can’t thank them enough.

The dinner is open to veterans, and their families, as well as Elk’s members and their families. Doors open at 4:30 PM, and the cost will be \$10 per person for non-veterans. If you wish to become a member, or you wish to reinstate your lapsed membership, please respond to our email address: bpoe1829@gmail.com, or come join us for dinner.

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This month we are recognizing Kala Linville for her role in the creation of The Caring Closet at Building Healthy Families - a community resource for foster children and families in need. Kala has spent countless hours gathering, washing, folding and organizing clothing donations for The Caring Closet. Thank you for your dedication and passion Kala!

BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH KALA LINVILLE

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