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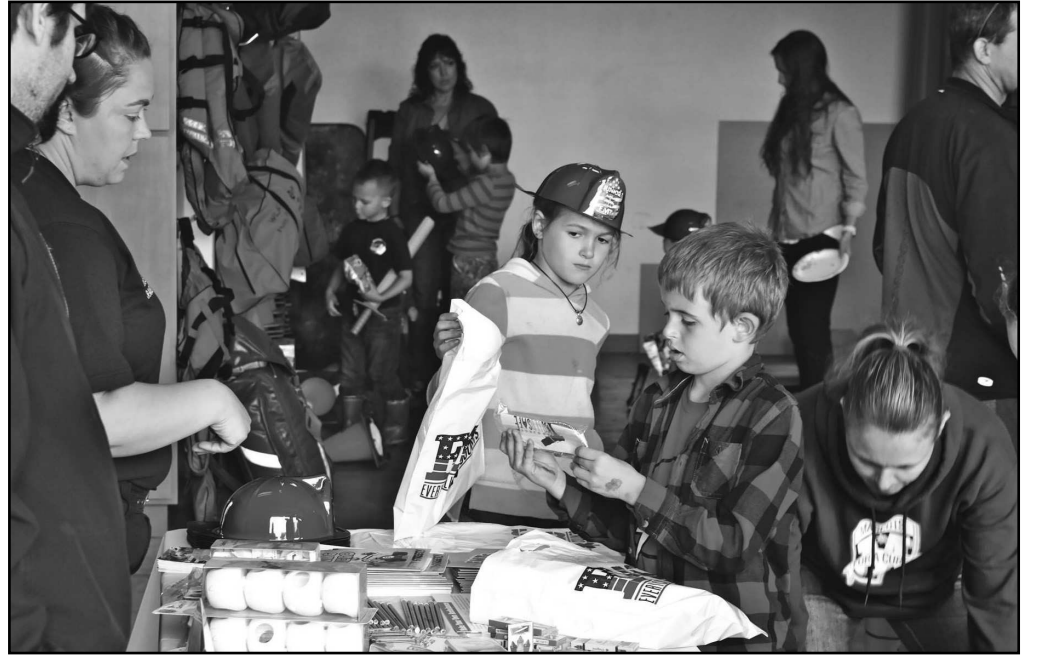


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## Western Lane draws interest of young and old

**D**anielle Hanson, an EMT with Western Lane Ambulance District, gives information to a young attendee at the organization's annual Open House on Saturday. The district gave out free information on emergency preparedness and home safety while serving up a lunch of hamburgers and hot dogs. "Thank you to everyone who came to our Open House today," a representative said. "It is nice to be able to open our doors and meet our neighbors in a better setting than when medics are needed." Western Lane is at 410 Ninth St. For more information, visit [wlabulance.com](http://wlabulance.com).



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

## Town Hall from 1A

"This is the first president in 40 years to not disclose his taxes. For four decades, disclosing your taxes was the lowest ethical bar."

Wyden explained the difference between the function of newly-appointed Special Council Robert Mueller and Wyden's role on the Senate Intelligence Committee.

"Bob Mueller's job is to work on criminal matters," Wyden said. "My job is to tell you how our democracy was attacked by the Russians. These are really troubling issues that are going to accelerate in the next couple of weeks."

Wyden then pivoted to discuss former FBI director James Comey.

"One of the first questions I will ask Mr. Comey is, 'Did the president ask you to sign a loyalty pledge?' If that is the case, then that is an attack on an American institution. As Oregon's man on the Senate Intelligence Committee, I will not let this be swept under

the rug. Period," Wyden said.

A question was asked about the administration's proposal to sell off the Bonneville Power Authority's (BPA) infrastructure.

Wyden said a former Republican president had also proposed to privatize the BPA.

"I said it then and I will say it now — on my watch that will not happen. I will shut down the Senate if that's what it takes," Wyden said.

When a question was asked about impeachment, Wyden explained that it was the House of Representatives, not the Senate, that had the power to impeach.

"I'm not in charge of impeachment, but I will use every ounce of my power to stand up for your rights and to stand up for the values and principals that are important to us," Wyden said. "A free press is more important now than ever. Our founding fathers said that a free press was probably more important than the government. What I tell people is to get a good cross section of everybody's opinions. ... We are obligated under the law to do vigorous oversight and to ask questions about key issues."

He went on to say the Medicare and Medicaid agency were "in complete stonewall mode and don't get back to us on anything. They are trampling on the separation of powers."

Wyden said that because of an agreement with the chairman and vice chairman of the Intelligence Committee, there is subpoena power.

"The Finance Committee works a little bit differently," Wyden said. "The Chairman and the ranking member (Wyden) have the authority to have the treasury disclose the president's tax returns, which could be used to what amounts to an executive session of the committee. Democrats and Republicans could meet privately and then, if we voted after the private meeting, we could vote on whether or not to publicly disclose them. Suffice it to say the Republican chairs are not really moving in that direction."

Wyden said he has proposed the Presidential Tax Transparency Act. It would require a presidential candidate to disclose three years of taxes prior to their running, and then the president would have to disclose taxes annually.

Then Wyden segued from the president's taxes to the administration's proposed tax reform proposal.

"The president has not disclosed his tax returns. But you may have heard his administration has proposed a tax reform proposal — a one-page outline that is shorter than a Fred Meyer receipt," Wyden said.

"Many businesses pay their taxes as pass-throughs," he explained. "What the administration's tax proposal has done is create a gargantuan loophole in the pass-through law that people who make lots of money can convert ordinary income into these pass-throughs and be eligible for the 15 percent low rate and get out of paying Social Security and

payroll taxes.

"Based on press reports, President Trump seems to have a lot of his business activities structured as just this kind of pass-through. A number of Republicans have said recently that they think the president should release his returns for his next campaign in 2020. The point is, we need that accountability now," Wyden said.

The most contentious moment of the meeting was when Wyden said he had decided to support the elimination of the Electoral College. Some in the audience did not agree with this position, claiming it was a violation of the Constitution.

Wyden said, "If the votes of Oregonians were going to count to the maximum degree in this very different political climate, I felt it is time to go to the popular vote."

Wyden took a question concerning consumer protection rights and pointed it back to healthcare.

"To me, consumer protection right now starts with holding down the cost of prescription medicine," he said. "I'm leading the fight to lift the restriction on Medicare so that Medicare can bargain to hold down the cost of medicine. I don't know anybody that goes to Costco and buys toilet paper one roll at a time. Everybody uses his or her bargaining power."

He also talked about eliminating pharmaceutical benefit managers.

"They are the middlemen. The people in the healthcare area we should be most concerned with are the middlemen. I propose lifting the veil of secrecy on these pharmaceutical managers," he said.

In referring to the attack in Portland last week, Wyden said, "We must say as Oregonians, whether you are a Republican, a Democrat, a liberal or a conservative, in our great state there is zero tolerance for hate."

Wyden spoke about states rights and said he supported Oregon's Death With Dignity Law when other senators wanted to criminalize the act.

"Some of these people, when it comes to things like death with dignity and the like, they believe in state's rights if they think the state is right," Wyden said. "Some of these issues that have generated so much passion and anger over the years are really matters of individual privacy."

When the issue of climate change was brought up, Wyden said, "I think the problem is very real and what I base this on is the data from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency. These are scientists, not politicians."

Wyden gave the audience his sobering views on the current healthcare situation.

He said, "The next week to 10 days are going to be really crucial to the future of American healthcare, because Mitch McConnell, the Republican senate leader, is trying to figure out a response to the house bill. It is very unpopular and Republican senators do not want to vote for it. They are trying to figure out a response. They will probably

try to come up with some cosmetic changes, but the basic frame is going to stay the same. That is \$800 billion cuts in Medicaid. Then hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks for those at the top.

"I'm doing everything I can to derail this. The Affordable Care Act is far from perfect, but I do not want to turn back the clock to the days when the insurance companies could discriminate against people with pre-existing conditions."

The final major topic Wyden talked about was illegal immigration.

"The first thing we need to do is tighten up the visa waver program. I am supportive of the proposition that George W. Bush and the late Ted Kennedy came up with," Wyden said.

He listed:  
1. Toughen up what you do on the boarder.  
2. Enforce the laws on the books.

"We believe in the rule of law," he said.

3. "If illegal immigrants come forward voluntarily, pay a fine because the law has been broken, demonstrate that they have not broken any other laws and demonstrate that they have mastered English, they should be able to go to the end of the citizenship line," he said.

Wyden said it was not practical to administer the deportation of 11 million undocumented individuals.

Wyden also talked about doing things "the Oregon way."

He said, "When the Trump administration says that it is for cutting Medicaid \$800 billion and have all these tax breaks for the wealthy too, I look back at Republicans (Oregon Sen.) Mark Hatfield and (Oregon Gov.) Tom McCall and others who had a great sense of fairness. They would not have been for this, nor am I."

Wyden then said he supported the president's response to the Assad attack.

"The president decided it was important to have a military strike to send a strong message," he said.

Wyden ended the town hall with an explanation of how bipartisanship works.

"My first choice is to try to find common ground. My view of bipartisanship is not about taking each other's crummy ideas. It's about taking good ideas. That's what I have tried to talk about today with immigration and healthcare," he said.

After the town hall, Wyden said, "This is vintage Oregon. These are people who feel strongly about issues. Obviously there was concern about a number of the policies of the Trump administration, like the failure to disclose tax returns. People saw that I call them as I see them. I agree with the president on his (military) response to Assad. This is the Oregon way."

Wyden said he was surprised to see so many people at a Sunday morning town hall meeting, his second in Florence in 17 months.

Over his 20 years as a senator, Wyden has conducted 822 town hall meetings.

# TIRE EVENT

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