

Rallies, demonstrators flood Lane Community College

By Caitlyn May
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When Congressman Peter DeFazio asked those in the audience who had never been to a political event to stand, the bleachers of Lane Community College shook with the movement of the crowd getting to its feet.

For the second weekend in a row, the gymnasium of the college was at capacity with residents coming out to hear a government representatives speak on issues, both national and local. The town halls are part of a wider effort across the county with dozens of state representatives returning to their districts to take questions from constituents in similar events.

On Saturday, Feb. 25, DeFazio joined Senator Jeff Merkley for a day that quickly centered around health care.

A separate rally in defense of the Affordable Care Act was scheduled for noon but well before 12 p.m., DeFazio took several questions concerning coming changes to health care at the federal level and the subsequent effect on Oregon.

The issue has sparked a national debate after President Donald Trump campaigned on the promise to repeal the law, also known as Obamacare. Congressional republicans had echoed the sentiment throughout former President Obama's last term in office but plans to repeal and replace the law have yet to be disclosed.

"They're saying quietly, don't do this," DeFazio said of his republican colleagues in the House in regards to their desire to overturn the law.

On Feb. 23, former speaker of the house, John Boehner furthered the conversation over ACA when he said a replacement of the law was "not going to happen." Instead, he said the law would be "fixed."

Current estimates show 23 million Americans losing their health care if the Affordable Care Act were repealed.

During a 90-minute question and answer, DeFazio fielded several questions on the state of health care in Oregon and the state's budgetary shortfall's effects on the issue. A member of the crowd, and stage four cancer patient, informed DeFazio

that his treatments cost \$24,000 per month and without them, he would die.

DeFazio sympathized but said residents should look forward to the 2018 elections and taking back the house.

Currently, republicans control both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, meaning they have a majority in both houses and, if members vote along party lines, democrat-supported bills would be defeated while republican-supported legislation moves forward.

While health care questions loomed large, the first question DeFazio received echoed the majority of questions Senator Floyd Prozanski fielded the weekend prior. "How do we get rid of Donald Trump?"

DeFazio admitted that the current make up of Congress did not allow for democrats to win many votes but urged residents to continue speaking out. "We have to keep the pressure on them and coming out and doing what you're doing today," he said.

In speaking on the national discourse, DeFazio told the crowd there was work to be done at home. "My district was the most narrowly divided district in the country," he said of the 2016 election, citing the close vote count between President Trump and democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.

Other questions included worry over the environment with audience members citing the appointment and confirmation of Scott Pruitt to head the EPA.

"They've already changed laws with regards to water," DeFazio said, noting that Pruitt had spent his prior career suing the EPA over environmental rules.

DeFazio also addressed the issue of the electoral college and whether or not it should be abolished.

"If they do the popular vote, candidates would have to visit everywhere, not single out a few states," he said.

Tensions over the electoral college rose after the 2016 election results showed Clinton winning the popular vote by an estimated three million votes but losing the election. The loss mirrored the court-fought battle between former president

George Bush and Al Gore after Gore won the popular vote but lost the election. Currently, each state is given a number of electoral college votes based on its population. The number is identical to the number of senators and representatives a state has in Congress. To win the presidency, a candidate must earn 270 of the 538 electoral college votes.

"I am in favor of abolishing the electoral college," DeFazio said.

"I met a woman earlier today, who came up to me, in tears. People are worried," DeFazio said of the current political debate.

The apparent worry spilled over to a budget hearing held by the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, aimed at taking suggestions and hearing concerns over Oregon's nearly \$2 billion budgetary deficit. The most recent predictions have estimated that Oregon will bring in \$200 million more than was expected which will cut the \$1.8 billion shortfall to \$1.6.

Lawmakers are currently working to create a budget that, currently, would see cuts to higher education, K-12 education, health care, transportation and other services.

The shortfall comes as previous funds granted to the state for health care costs have run their course and costs for the Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) skyrocket. Current estimates show PERS costs continuing to climb through 2017 with the latest data predicting public employers being mandated to come up with an additional \$930 million per budget cycle by 2021.

Saturday's budget hearing, like the one held in Salem, saw a packed house with residents turning out to speak on the proposed cuts and how a decrease in services would effect them personally. Stories ranged from student loan debt to fears over transportation cuts and larger class sizes.

The last of seven scheduled budget hearings will take place on Friday, March 3 in Tillamook. Previous meetings were held in Eugene, Salem, Ashland, Portland, Hermiston and Madras.

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South Lane County Fire & Rescue: Creswell Fire Station Advisory Committee.

South Lane County Fire & Rescue services a 132 square mile area for Fire/Rescue/EMS services based on voter approved taxing rates, levies, and bonds equaling \$1.80/\$1000, beginning with fiscal year 2016-2017.

The current voter approved permanent and levied rate is \$1.50/\$1000 of assessed property value, including a house and five acres within the District's boundaries. The District further provides advanced life support ambulance service to an area totaling 850 square miles. The area outside the District's 132 square mile area does not provide tax revenue. The District operates from four fire stations and staffs the Cottage Grove and Creswell stations 24/7, with a combination of career/resident and community volunteer personnel. The Saginaw station is staffed 24/7 with off duty residents and the Camas Swale station with community volunteers.

The District is managed by the Fire Chief who reports directly to the five member Board of Directors. All other District personnel report to the Fire Chief utilizing a chain of command.

The district is seeking individuals who have the desire to contribute to ongoing efforts aimed at enhancing and improving fire and EMS services in the South Lane County community by serving as an advisory committee member for replacing the District's Creswell fire station. Interested applicants must be at least 18 years of age, be an elector, or a property owner within the district. While any person meeting the requirements may submit a letter of interest to the Board of Directors, preference for appointment to the advisory committee may be given to those within the Creswell area.

Interested persons should submit a letter of interest to the SLCFR Board of Directors by close of business

Thursday March 9, 2017.

Letters of interest may be hand delivered, mailed, or faxed to:

South Lane County Fire & Rescue

Attn: Advisory Committee

233 E. Harrison Ave, Cottage Grove, OR 97424

Fax: 541-942-3367

Office: 541-942-4493

Deadline for submitting a letter of interest is Thursday March 9, 2017 by 5PM



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