

Wyden *from A1*

after the Republican-controlled House passed a bill Nov. 16 to drop legal protections for Gray Wolves across the contiguous United States, reopening a lengthy battle over the species' status.

The senator likened the situation to enforcing traffic law and supported the enforcement of local laws against those who violate it.

**Foreclosure Fraud**

A community member number was called next, eliciting a question from a Eugene resident who asked what has happened to money which came in to the state years ago to address foreclosure fraud, adding that he was forced to sell a property that morning "because of the mess."

Wyden replied that this was the reason he was one of the few who voted against the "bank bailout bill," referring to the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, so as to deny bonuses to executives and instead direct funds to homeowners who were taken advantage of. Wyden sent one of his staffers to the questioner to walk through his situation and find a solution.

**Depression**

Next a student asked about psychological depression rates in Oregon and how the problem could be addressed.

Wyden acknowledged that the state has serious problems in rural areas, particularly with veterans and those with opioid addictions. His own brother was a schizophrenic, he said, who died too young.

The senator bemoaned an effort in Washington D.C. to cut Medicaid, which would decrease funding for people with mental health problems.

He also criticized insurance companies for not treating mental health as seriously as they treat physical health. "So I'm going after them as well," he said.

Giving mental health support to people experiencing homelessness, he said, was another issue needing more attention.

**Climate Change**

A community member thanked Wyden for voting for the Green New Deal and raised concerns about climate change as related to the Department of Defense.

"Our U.S. military is the largest in the whole world in the use of fossil fuels," she said, adding that the military was exempted from greenhouse gas emission limitations as part of the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement.

"The first thing we ought to do in January of 2021 is rejoin the international climate effort to deal with this problem," the senator said to applause. "I think we have to kick the carbon habit in America, and it actually ought to start with people in the Department of Defense."

Wyden also brought up the Green New Deal, calling it aspirational rather than a piece of legislation.

"There are 40 separate tax



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

**A Cottage Grove High School student asks Sen. Wyden about gun control during the Feb. 19 town hall meeting.**

breaks for energy and most of those tax breaks for energy in effect support the energy tax relics of yesteryear," he said, adding that he wanted to "throw them all in the garbage can" and replace them with only three tax breaks for cleaner and more efficient energy.

**Gun Control**

A student next asked if the senator supported more gun restrictions in light of a seeming "epidemic" of mass shootings.

Wyden responded that there appear to be bi-partisan, "practical, common-sense steps" to deal with gun violence that don't involve violating the Second Amendment.

He supported putting up roadblocks to gun ownership for people with mental health challenges, are on the terrorist watchlist and who have been convicted of domestic violence, promising to work on legislation that creates a safer environment for students as well.

**Marijuana Law**

A community member commented that banks will not award home loans "to anyone even tangentially related to the marijuana industry." She said veterans who come out of the military and look for security work have run into obstacles when those security companies are in some way related to the marijuana industry and veterans are thus denied their entitlement to VA home loans.

"These are ridiculous restrictions," said Wyden. "I am a sponsor of legislation that would allow folks in those businesses to use the banking system, which they're prohibited from doing."

The senator criticized a "patchwork" set of rules regarding marijuana throughout the country and said he introduced legislation the week before which would make one uniform set of rules.

**Electoral College**

Next, a student asked the senator if he thought the United States Electoral College was

**YAC: National Legislation**

YAC co-Chair MJ Raade and Vice Chair Courtney Owens, referring to recent passage of a YAC-sponsored state bill restricting the sale of nitrous oxide to individuals under 18, asked what steps they could take if they wanted to make the law national.

Wyden recommended researching how nitrous oxide moves throughout the states and how that might apply to the nation's Commerce Clause, applauding their effort to expand their project.

**Universal Health Care**

A community member asked what the senator's thoughts were on universal health care in the United States.

"First of all, I think health care is a basic human right," Wyden said to applause, "and it ought to be secure for all Americans. Second, we are spending enough money today for good, universal coverage."

Wyden said the country is expected to spend \$3.5 trillion on health care this year, which is enough to send every family of four a check for \$40,000. "We're spending enough," he said. "I think we're in agreement there."

He characterized his role in Congress as a bulwark against Republican efforts to "repeal and replace" the Affordable Care Act, citing the unaddressed problem of about 165 million people as receiving health care through their private employers.

He also castigated an overly bureaucratic billing system bloated with administration costs, which said should be streamlined by centralizing the process.

**Border Security**

A student then asked what the senator's views were on immigration and the proposed border wall between the United States and Mexico.

"First of all, so that nobody is confused, I think this idea of declaring a national emergency to build the wall is one of the most horrible precedents I've heard about," Wyden stated, to which the audience resoundingly cheered.

He said the idea of building a wall "is based on a fable," referring to the promise that Mexico would pay for the wall.

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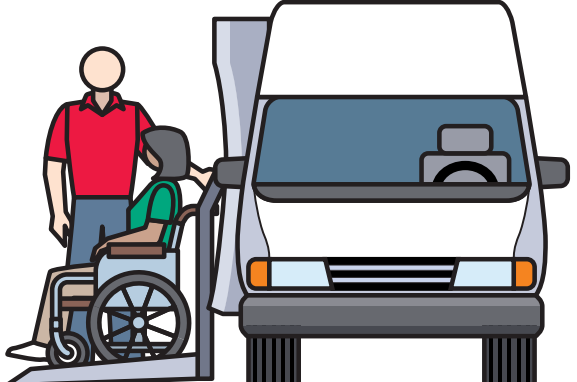


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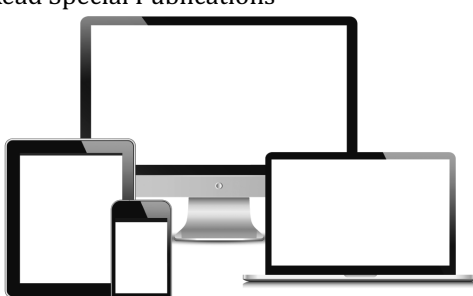
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