

Town Hall from A6

"I've voted for laws that authorized more than \$100 billion for border security," he said. "I have voted for fencing. I have voted for drones. I have voted for radar. I have voted for people. I support common-sense, effective measures for border security and, friends, building a wall does not meet that test."

Government Spending

Concern about the \$22 trillion national debt was raised by a citizen who asked, "What has to happen for our government to learn to spend within its means?"

"The biggest challenge we have in the federal budget, by far," the senator responded, "is that ten thousand people are going to turn 65 every day for decades and decades to come and they're going to be eligible for Medicare."

Wyden addressed the students in the audience. "If we don't figure out a way for seniors to get good care and hold down the costs for all of you students, lots less money for you," he said. "Lots less money for student loans. Lots less money for science. Lots less money for technology. Lots less money for parks."

He pointed out that in the near future, 80 percent of Medicare spending will go toward patients with two or more serious chronic conditions such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease.

"So we've got to get on top of the debt, and if we don't, it gets passed on to you guys," warned the senator. "And to get on top of the debt you've got to deal with health care and you've got deal with Medicare, and that's what I've focused on."

Climate Change Accountability

Next, a student asked about Juliana v. United States, an ongoing case originally filed in 2015 by 21 youth



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

Sen. Ron Wyden spoke to a packed gym during the Feb. 19 community Town Hall.

plaintiffs. The lawsuit asserts that the youths' rights to life, liberty and property have been violated by the government as it failed to prevent the harmful effects of climate change.

"The legal issue here is whether the students have what's called, 'standing' — a legitimate interest in being plaintiffs to the suit," Wyden said. "I can't think of anybody who has more standing on something like this than students. I'm with the students on this and I've been supporting the court case."

Government Accountability

A member of the community voiced her concern that people in Washington are not held accountable to legal trespasses, citing the ambiguity of the Mueller investigation's potency as an example.

Wyden said that he has previously stated that "if anybody in the Congress tries to derail the Mueller report from being made public, I will go the floor of the United States Senate and fight until it is made public." He added, "It

speaks to the question of whether the President of the United States is above the law. Nobody in America is above the law."

As a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Wyden affirmed his commitment to telling the public the story of the investigation.

"As long as I'm Oregon's guy on the Senate Intelligence Committee, this investigation is not going to get swept under the rug," he said. "Nobody is going to be able to bury it."

The senator also put the government of Saudi Arabia in his crosshairs in reference to a recent spate of Saudi Arabian nationals being mysteriously whisked out of the country before facing trial or completing their sentencing for crimes committed in Oregon.

The crimes included rape, a hit-and-run homicide and possession of child pornography. The Saudi government has been fingered by authorities as a likely accomplice in the Saudi nationals' disappearances.

"I'm not going to allow a medieval regime to flout diplomatic norms,"

Wyden said. "And, if this is the case, this core Saudi royal government is not going to be able to use the United States as a playground. They are not going to be above the law."

School Funding

A student asked if schools in Oregon could expect more funding.

The senator pointed to a core difference in how Oregon pays for schools as opposed to other states — timber.

In the past, timber harvested in Oregon, which was on federal land, was sold and the money went into the public coffers for services such as schools, Wyden said.

"Well, when the environmental laws started to change, I wrote a bill called the Secure Rural Schools bill. Lane County gets a lot of money under it — millions of dollars," he said.

Wyden noted that he has proposed creating an endowment that would let rural schools know with certainty how much money they could receive each year.

"The big difference, though, is that the federal government owns most of our land," he lamented. "That's why we don't have money for local services the way they do back East."

Early Childhood Education

A retired educator asked for the senator's views on early childhood education.

"Dollar for dollar, there is no smarter place to put scarce resources than early childhood education and vulnerable kids," said Wyden, emphasizing the importance of supporting healthy neurological development as early in a child's life as possible.

"You either get there early or you play catch-up for years to come," he said. "I'm a very strong supporter of those early childhood programs."

Abortion

Lastly, a freshman student asked if the recent New York law allowing abortion at any time if a mother's health is at risk will find its way in Oregon.

"First of all, I don't think this a matter for politicians to jump in the middle of," Wyden said. "Number two, it is for a woman and her health care provider to make the decision. And number three, what is called 'infanticide' by some is illegal in every part of the country."

Citizens United

The senator closed the forum by addressing his own concerns with the nation's political status quo.

"There's one important issue that hangs over — that clouds every other aspect of our ability to make the changes that we need in this country," he said. "And that is a Supreme Court decision called Citizen's United."

The landmark 2010 case ruled that private organizations may participate in political campaign spending in the same way as citizens as defended by the First Amendment.

"It basically says that the rich guy's checkbook is exactly the same thing as the poor person shouting on the street corner. I think that's absurd," said Wyden. "So I hope that as all of you leave today, you will also reflect on the need to change the way we finance elections in America, because in much of America, they don't have town hall meetings like this anymore."

The senator finished the night on a note promoting grassroots movements. "I'm working to overturn Citizens United and as long as I have the honor to represent you in the United States Senate, this is way we'll do it," he said.



Caring for Children's Teeth

Educating your children about good oral care will promote a healthy mouth as they age. Get your child to learn good habits and teach them how to properly brush and floss. This could help them avoid costly dentist bills in the future.

The American Dental Association recommends a first visit to the dentist as soon as the first tooth comes in and no later than 1 year old. This early exam can give your dentist an opportunity to identify tooth decay and discuss bad habits that may promote decay.

Baby Teeth

Your child's first set of teeth are nearly completely formed at birth. According to the ADA, your child's teeth will typically begin showing around the six-month mark. Taking great care of these baby teeth is very important in the health of permanent teeth. Properly maintained baby teeth can help permanent teeth grow in straight.

Baby teeth should be cleaned every day. They should be wiped down with a wet washcloth as they begin to show. Once the teeth become bigger and stronger, you will be able to use a child's toothbrush.

Bad Habits

You can help your baby avoid learning bad habits by discouraging thumb sucking, sleeping with a bottle or excessive use of a pacifier. All of these habits can lead to serious dental trouble if performed after permanent teeth have set in.

Constant sucking can cause problems with the growth of your child's mouth and the alignment of his teeth. It's best to break



these habits long before his permanent teeth grow in and avoid these unnecessary risks.

Toothpaste and Floss

Once your child is over 3 years old, the ADA recommends the regular use of children's fluoride toothpaste. Fluoride is an active cavity fighter and can strengthen developing tooth enamel.

You should apply no more than a pea-sized drop of toothpaste to your child's toothbrush. Your child should brush their teeth no less than twice a day for two minutes each time.

The ADA also recommends flossing as soon as your child's teeth are touching. When looking for tooth-care products for your child, look for the ADA Seal of Acceptance stamped on the package

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