

# Baker Middle School honor roll

Baker Middle School has announced students who were named to the honor roll for the first semester.

## Eighth grade

(\*denotes 4.0 GPA)  
Gaige Birmingham\*, Reeve Damschen\*, Emma Davis\*, Weston Downing\*, Grant Gambleton\*, Bryley Garvin\*, Wade Hawkins\*, Eleanor Lamb\*, Christopher Luna\*, Hailey McMurdo\*, Cole Richards\*, Izabella Thomas\*, Evangeline Torres\*, Wyatt Widman\*, Kincaid Rudi, Lillian Gately, Paul Hobson, Tanner Lucas, Hudson Spike, Alexandria Zickgraf, Russell

Walden, Ryann Paulsen, Rachel Shaw, Kayla Crook, Gracie Morris, Montana Williams, Fern Bruck, Kayden Garvin, Jaron Long, Raylin Pfaff, Malaki Myer, Cole Hester, Chaslyn Wheeler, Amberli Reed, Axel Marvin

## Seventh grade

(\*denotes 4.0 GPA)  
Oakley Anderson\*, Taylor Churchfield\*, Ashlyn Dalton\*, Ethan Fletcher\*, Sofia Hanson\*, John Heriza\*, Olivia Jacoby\*, Sage Joseph\*, Jaxon Logsdon\*, Emylia Myer\*, Brooklyn Rayl\*, Alexis Rupel\*, Eowyn Smith\*, Kaydence Thomas\*, Jayden Whitford\*, Lilly-

anna Wilson\*, Alexander Wise\*, Jose Armenta, Elizabeth Standish, Antonio Washington, Callaghan Eckert, Jessica Mercado, Anastacio Rodriguez, Ashtyn Carter, Daniel Brown, Annastasia Johnson, Jillian Poe, Kathryn Gentry, Mary-Anne Jules, Hannah Lay, Zane Morgan, Benjamin Ashton, Sadie Stampflee, Joslyn Collins, Takota Davis, Jacob Staehle, Jose Flores, Tessa Feeley, Savannah McGaughy-Morris, Luke Tracy, Sydnee Wray, Colton Birmingham, Kevin Gutierrez-Dealy, Hannah Vaughan, Colton Clark, Elias Long, Cylus Sperl, Palmer Chandler, Angelyna Baird, Scarlett Rademacher, Paige Wolfe

## MERKLEY

*Continued from Page 1A*

Merkley then solicited questions from the audience, choosing the questioners randomly based on the numbers on the tickets they picked up when they arrived.

### Veterans health care

Arthur Sappington asked Merkley about ways to improve health care options for military veterans, particularly in rural areas.

Merkley said the federal government has two main options — investing in facilities operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and improving local clinics that also treat veterans.

Merkley said many veterans seem to like what he called a “hybrid” approach, which is intended in part to ensure veterans can get needed care without having to travel long distances.

### Climate change

Kelsey Eastman, calling climate change “a huge problem,” asked Merkley whether he believed the federal government could make progress on the issue “under the current administration.”

Merkley said the Senate is “not very amenable to taking on that challenge,” something he dates to the 2014 midterm election, when Republicans regained a majority in the Senate. Merkley cited donations by the Koch brothers that year. The Hill reported that Charles and David Koch’s donor network spent \$129 million in 2014.

Merkley asked audience members to hold their breath for three seconds, a way to call attention to increases in carbon levels in the atmosphere. He said the level has risen by 33% since he was born in 1956.

“We’re trapping so much more heat and it’s affecting rural Americans in many ways,” Merkley said. “This isn’t some city issue. It’s real facts on the ground.”

The senator cited as examples warmer winters that allow tree-killing pine beetles to survive and proliferate, snowpacks in the Cascade Mountains melting earlier in spring, and rises in temperature and acidity in ocean water that are harming the kelp forest that supports the fishing and crabbing industries.

“We need to think about our stewardship,” Merkley said. “We’re borrowing the planet from our children. We need to drive a transition from fossil fuel energy to renewable energy.”

The senator said there are reasons to be optimistic, including solar and wind power becoming cheaper than coal and competitive with natural gas.

“There’s a lot we can do right now,” Merkley said. “We’ve got a big problem, and we need a robust response.”

He said the transition to renewable energy sources can create millions of jobs, including in rural areas, and strengthen the economy. “That’s my hope,” Merkley said.

Mike Higgins of Halfway also asked the senator about climate change.

Higgins said a group of citizens in the Pine Valley

## Merkley on:

### Climate change

*“We’re trapping so much heat and it’s affecting rural Americans in many ways.”*

have formed the Panhandle Climate Change Alliance. He called climate change “the biggest problem that humans have ever faced, and we have to get going on it right now.”

Higgins asked Merkley for advice on how a small local group can gain influence with politicians.

Merkley suggested group members talk with candidates who hope to replace U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, who is retiring at the end of the year.

Merkley also talked about cities that have pledged to use 100% renewable energy.

Right now, the senator said, there is a “deep freeze” in Congress on climate change legislation.

“Local action is where the action is,” Merkley said. “I’m hoping we can unfreeze the federal government.”

### Snake River dam removal

Anthony Bailey asked Merkley how he can reconcile Oregon Gov. Kate Brown’s recent endorsement of a proposal to remove four federal dams on the lower Snake River in Southeastern Washington.

Bailey is the chief financial officer for Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative in Baker City. OTEC issued a press release Wednesday criticizing Brown’s call for dam removal, saying that doing so would result in increased carbon emissions and potentially boost power costs.

Merkley said he has not heard many comments about the dam removal.

“It’s not an issue I’ve looked at closely,” he said.

Merkley, who talked about childhood field trips to Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River, said that although dams on the Columbia and Snake create electricity, they are also among the many factors contributing to declines in salmon and steelhead runs.

“Some of our runs are very close to disappearing,” Merkley said.

The senator talked about a 2018 bill he led, the Endangered Salmon Predation Prevention Act, which among other things allows officials to kill sea lions that feast on salmon at Bonneville Dam and Willamette Falls at Oregon City, among other places.

President Trump signed that bill into law in December 2018.

“We need to look at every piece of the puzzle,” Merkley said, citing other factors that can imperil salmon, such as ocean temperatures and fish-eating cormorants.

### Plastics recycling, health food

Cynthia Roberts asked Merkley about environmental pollution, in particular plastics, and whether something can be done to ensure people have access to healthy food rather than heavily processed

food.

Merkley talked about serving as an intern for Sen. Mark Hatfield of Oregon in 1976, when Hatfield’s bill creating a national recycling bill, based on Oregon’s landmark bottle bill, failed to gain traction.

That was due in part to lobbying from the plastics industry, Merkley said.

But the problem is no longer limited to recycling bottles, he said. Dealing with single-use plastics is a major challenge, he said, and one that’s now summed up with what Merkley calls the “2 B’s” — that those items are either buried or burned.

Merkley also talked about the proliferation of “microplastics” in the environment.

He pulled a credit card from his wallet to demonstrate.

“We consume a credit card worth of plastics in our food each week,” Merkley said.

These microplastics are endocrine disruptors, which have been linked, though not definitely, to prostate and breast cancer.

In terms of food, Merkley said he thinks the federal government should require food to carry labels stating whether they contain GMO ingredients.

“That’s at least a starting point,” he said.

### Abortion

Paul Opperman urged Merkley to support a law to ban late-term abortions, calling the practice a “moral atrocity.”

Opperman cited Senate Bill 3275, the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, which was introduced Feb. 11. The bill would prohibit most abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy, with exceptions for cases in which the woman’s life is at risk or in cases of rape or incest.

“That’s what’s going to change our nation for the good — I’m talking about morally, not financially,” Opperman said. “I’m thankful I wasn’t aborted.”

Opperman didn’t ask Merkley a specific question, and the senator thanked Opperman for his comments.

Later in the town hall, Dave Schmitt of Halfway asked Merkley whether he would support Senate Bill 3275.

Merkley said “my general sense is that the issue of an abortion is an extraordinarily difficult and complex question for a woman” to make along with her doctor, partner and spiritual adviser.

“I don’t feel that the federal government is helpful butting its nose into that set of relationships,” Merkley said.

He noted that late-term abortions are rare — studies estimate that about 1% of abortions in the U.S. happen after 20 weeks of gestation — and typically are performed due to health threats to the woman.

Merkley also cited a “dramatic reduction in abortions” in the U.S., a trend he attributes to family planning and education.

According to federal records, the number of reported abortions dropped from 836,000 in 2006 to 638,000 in 2015, a 24% decrease.

### Homeless

Bruce Raffety asked Merk-

## Merkley on:

### The economy

*“There is no social program that equates to a good-paying job.”*

ley what can be done to deal with the homeless problem.

Merkley said the homeless population “has absolutely surged,” a trend, he said, that was driven by three main factors — addiction, mental illness and rising housing costs.

“We need to tackle it from all three directions,” Merkley said.

The senator said he is working on a comprehensive housing bill which will be based on a survey of housing programs nationwide and crafted to reflect those that are most cost-effective.

Merkley acknowledged that making housing more affordable will be expensive.

“We need a much more serious level of investment,” he said.

Merkley said a “big factor” in rising housing costs has been the U.S. trade policy with China — in particular giving that country full access to our market for manufactured goods.

“They could make the same things for less money, and the loss of these middle class jobs has had a tremendous effect,” Merkley said.

Job losses have also contributed to addiction epidemics and other social problems, he said.

“There is no social program that equates to a good-paying job,” Merkley said.

### Federal deficits

Schmitt, in addition to asking Merkley to respond to the late-term abortion issue, questioned the senator about federal deficits, which Schmitt deemed “outrageous.”

Merkley said the federal deficit has doubled over the past few years, “mainly due to the 2017 tax bill.”

The senator said he would like to overturn the tax provisions from that bill and devote the tax savings that have gone to the wealthiest Americans to housing, deficit reduction and infrastructure.

Merkley said the tax bill has contributed to a growing disparity in wealth, and with so much money concentrated at the top of the scale, it “influences the whole system” including electoral campaigns and media strategies.

Merkley went on to cite the cost of prescription drugs. He asked audience members whether they support changes allowing the importation of drugs from Canada, allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices with companies, and prohibiting drug makers from charging more than the average price in major developed countries.

He said all three of those issues are included in a bill he endorses.

“I think it’s outrageous we’re being gouged,” Merkley said. “It’s because of the money in our campaign system.”

The senator said the drug companies employ five times more lobbyists than there

## LDS church youth program broadcast set

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will transmit a worldwide broadcast Sunday afternoon about the new youth programs. This “Face to Face” event will be hosted by Dallin Oaks, First Counselor in the First Presidency, and will start at 3 p.m. at the church, 2625 Hughes Lane.

Ward conferences will take place in La Grande’s Young Single Adult Branch, and the Enterprise, and John Day Wards with Stake Presidency members speaking. Members of the congregation will be the speakers for Sacrament Meeting in all other locations.

The second hour of services will be Relief Society and Priesthood meetings. The “Come, Follow Me” lesson for the week of Feb. 24-March 1 will cover 2 Nephi 26-30 in the Book of Mormon. Those interested in learning more about Family History work are encouraged to watch the Roots Tech 2020 free sessions on Feb. 26-29. Many of the sessions are broadcast. To learn more, go to [www.rootstech.org](http://www.rootstech.org)

## Merkley on:

### Prescription drug costs

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### Electoral college

Eli Lien, a freshman at Eastern Oregon University, asked Merkley about the senator’s support for eliminating the Electoral College system for electing the president.

Donald Trump lost the popular vote in 2016 to Hillary Clinton but won the Electoral College.

A constitutional amendment abolishing the Electoral College is part of Merkley’s “Blueprint for Democracy,” which also includes proposals to reduce voter suppression, gerrymandering and dark money in elections.

On his website Merkley contends that the Electoral College “does not fit our ‘We the People’ model of government; it is profoundly unfair.”

As the town hall was ending and Merkley said he couldn’t take any more questions, Whitey Bloom of Halfway stood and asked the senator whether he was “ready to move on” with regard to President Donald Trump.

Bloom asked a similar question at the conclusion of Merkley’s April 2019 town hall in Baker City, which happened soon after special counsel Robert Mueller issued his report on his investigation into allegations that the Trump campaign colluded with Russia in 2016.

On Thursday, Bloom referred to Merkley voting to impeach Trump — the senator correcting Bloom to note that he voted to convict the president (the House conducts impeachment hearings, the Senate decides whether to convict or acquit; the Senate acquitted the president).

“It’s a sad state of affairs that you let Adam Schiff sucker yourself into that,” Bloom said, referring to the California congressman who oversaw the House hearings that led to two articles of impeachment against the president.

Although Merkley was leaving the Senior Center and didn’t have time to elaborate, he did respond to Bloom with “we’ll see what happens in November.”

are members of Congress (435 representatives and 100 senators).

### Second Amendment

In response to a question about his position on gun rights, Merkley said the Second Amendment is “our constitutional protection.”

He noted that the Constitution “doesn’t allow us to do everything,” noting, for instance, that neither hand grenades nor bazookas are legal.

Merkley said he supports laws requiring background checks for gun buyers, saying Oregon’s law is “one of the stronger systems” in the U.S.

### Renewable energy

Rod Tarter took up the issue of Snake River dam removal, saying he opposes that, and he also said wind and solar power, besides generally requiring federal subsidies, aren’t capable of supplying the nation’s power needs.

Were we to try to rely on those sources, Tarter said, “somebody’s going to do without electricity. I don’t want to be one of those that runs out of power when it’s 30 below.”

Merkley acknowledged Tarter’s point about the limits of current technology, noting that it’s not yet possible to store energy from periodic sources such as wind and solar.

But the senator said “that may change.”

“There’s no strategy that’s perfect,” he said. “But (solar and wind) can be a pretty significant contributor” to the nation’s energy supply, particularly in rural areas.

### Small farms

La’akea Kaufman, who lives in Baker City and farms in Richland, asked Merkley about legislation he has endorsed, the Farm System Reform Act of 2019 introduced by Sen. Cory Booker, D-New Jersey.

The bill is designed to “ensure a level playing field for all farmers and ranchers,” according to Booker.

Kaufman said the predominance of corporations, such as the 2018 merger of Bayer and Monsanto, can make it difficult for small farmers, for instance by concentrating the control of the seed supply.

Merkley said he didn’t support that corporate merger.

He said he supports Booker’s bill because he hopes it will provoke a discussion about ways to support small farms, and ensure farmers can stay in the business.

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