

Walden: Oregonians will see real tax breaks

Congressman says tax bill will stimulate the economy

By **Richard Hanners**
Blue Mountain Eagle

Oregonians will see real tax breaks and a faster growing economy under a new tax bill approved by Congress Dec. 20, according to Rep. Greg Walden.

Walden, who represents Oregon's Second Congressional District, praised the bill in a conference call to Oregon media on Dec. 19, saying he received input on the initial proposal from nearly 2,000 Oregonians by email and phone calls.

"I appreciate the input. I think it made the bill better," he said.

Walden said he was able to talk to House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas, and House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wisconsin, "about the issues Oregonians cared about" and make improvements to the original House bill.

"There were also issues in the Senate bill they were concerned about, and we pushed back on some of those," Walden said. "In the end, working inside with the leaders who were writing the bill, I think we came to a much better place."

Congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act on Dec. 20.

The final House vote was 224-201, with a dozen Republicans joining the unanimous Democrats in opposition. In the Senate, the vote was 51-48 along strict party lines.

The first overhaul of the tax code in three decades, the tax bill reached bicameral compromise one month after it was introduced in November. In 1986, Congress spent a year on a tax bill that saw bipartisan support before reaching President Ronald Reagan's desk.

Tax breaks

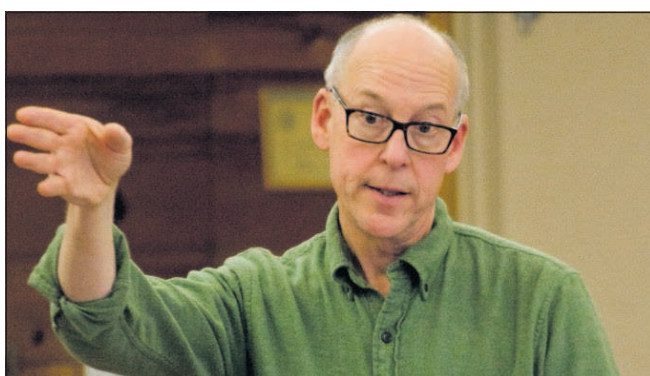
Walden noted that taxpayers in his district should see tax benefits right away.

"The hard-working families in Eastern, Southern and Central Oregon, the people I represent, that earn about \$50,000 a year, the median household income in the district, will receive a tax break of about \$1,300," Walden said. "Not just in 2019 but in the next several years. That adds up to \$10,400 in real federal tax breaks over the next eight years for that family in Eastern Oregon."

Republicans have promoted the bill as tax reform — particularly as a way to simplify tax filing.

"By nearly doubling the standard deduction, even fewer Oregonians will have to hire an accountant to search the 73,954 pages of the tax code to scour out to see if they qualify for any of the loopholes and deductions that are there," Walden said.

Sixty percent of people in the district never file an itemized return, he said. By dou-



Eagle file photo

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R-Oregon, speaks to community members during a town hall meeting in the Mt. Vernon Community Center Feb. 9.

bling the standard deduction, doubling the child tax credit and changing the tax rates in each income bracket, nine out of 10 U.S. tax filers in the future will never have to go through itemizing their taxes anymore, he said.

Many of the House Republicans who voted against the bill came from New York, New Jersey and California — states with high state and local taxes.

"One thing I heard loud and clear from Oregonians was that because of our incredibly high state income tax that they should be able to deduct that as well as property taxes," Walden said.

The new bill allows individuals and families to deduct up to \$10,000 in state and local income, property and sales taxes. The deduction for mortgage interest will continue for existing mortgages, and the deduction will be available for new mortgages on first or second homes up to \$750,000. The charitable deduction was also expanded.

it's like to grow a business," he said.

In addition to lowering the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent, the bill offers significant tax relief to small businesses and doubles the estate tax exemption to \$11.2 million, which should benefit many family-owned ranches, farms and businesses, Walden said.

A Senate provision that will lower excise taxes for craft beer and wineries, popular businesses in Oregon, was approved by the House.

The backbone of the Oregon economy is small businesses, farmers and ranchers — "not giant companies," Walden said. These people will be able to afford a new pickup truck or combine or to "do the things they wouldn't ordinarily have done, and that feeds back into the economy," he said.

"That's not just me saying that," Walden said. "There are a hundred economists from Harvard, Yale and elsewhere that really believe this will stimulate growth."

He said he talked to CEOs of large companies about the tax bill, including AT&T, which told him because of the tax bill they would invest \$1 billion of their capital. That could be a large build-out in broadband if they chose to do so, he noted.

Affordable housing efforts will be boosted by retaining the low-income housing tax credit and the tax-exempt status of private-activity bonds, Walden said. The initial House version would have ended use

of the bonds, which typically are used to finance public infrastructure projects, but they were retained in the conference agreement.

One concern is that the tax cuts could increase the federal deficit by an estimated \$1.4 trillion over 10 years. Walden said he was confident the tax bill will stimulate the economy by at least 0.4 percent, and that growth will increase tax revenues and address the deficit.

The Joint Committee on Taxation forecast 0.8 percent growth in the economy under the Senate bill, and the Tax Policy Center estimated 0.6 percent growth under the House bill.

But the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget said the more modest claim of 0.4 percent growth per year would cover only two-thirds of the deficit generated by the tax cuts. The group also said 0.4 percent growth was "highly unlikely to materialize as a result of tax reform alone."

With the individual tax rate reductions set to expire in eight years, while the corporate rate cut is permanent, critics have also argued the bill primarily benefits corporations and the wealthy.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Oregon, described the bill as a "bank heist."

"While the rich gloat over their gold, middle-class Americans get coal in their stockings," he said in a statement. "The tax scam so favors the wealthy that 83 percent of the benefits go to the richest 1 percent."

Man shot, alleges he was kidnapped in Morrow County

EO Media Group

Police believe a man was kidnapped and shot Thursday in rural Morrow County.

The 48-year-old man from Eugene was discovered about 7:30 a.m. in a vehicle at Love's Truck Stop, west of Boardman. He was suffering from a single gunshot wound and was transported to Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, for treatment.

According to Oregon State Police, a preliminary investigation revealed the victim was shot at another location and transported to Love's by a citizen who was waved down by the victim on Interstate 84 near milepost 151.

The victim alleges to have been kidnapped and dropped off near that area, by abductors in a maroon van who fled the scene in an unknown direction. According to police, there is no evidence at this time indicating there is a threat to the general public regarding this incident.

Anyone who may have witnessed any suspicious circumstances or observed the victim and suspect vehicle on Interstate 84 near milepost 151 Dec. 22 are asked to call the Oregon State Police Southern Command Dispatch Center at 1-541-664-4600 and reference case number SP17461025.

Arrests and citations in the Blue Mountain Eagle are taken from the logs of law enforcement agencies. Every effort is made to report the court disposition of arrest cases.

Grant County Circuit Court

Dakota C. Stout, 20, John Day, pleaded guilty Aug. 31 to misdemeanor possession of methamphetamine committed on June 2. He was sentenced to 15 days in jail, 24 months probation and 80 hours community service, and fined \$200.

Caleb Vielma, 28, Fruitland, Idaho, pleaded guilty Dec. 21 to first-degree theft and felon in possession of a firearm, both felonies, committed on Nov. 9. He was sentenced to 30 days in jail, 36 months probation and 80 hours community service, and fined \$550.

Grant County Sheriff

The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week of Dec. 14-20:

- Concealed handgun licenses: 6
- Average inmates: 20
- Bookings: 4
- Releases: 6
- Arrests: 1
- Citations: 0
- Fingerprints: 4
- Civil papers: 17
- Warrants processed: 4

- Asst./welfare check: 5
- Search and Rescue: 0

Oregon State Police

Dec. 20: Report of a semi truck that slid off Highway 395 near the Highway 402 junction and blocking the road.

Dec. 23: Responded with John Day ambulance and police to Highway 26 near Golf Course Road in John Day for a single-vehicle crash.

Dec. 23: Advised of a noninjury crash on Highway 395 near Fox.

Dispatch

John Day dispatch worked 133 calls during the week of Dec. 18-25. Along with the various traffic warnings, trespassing, injured animals, noise complaints and juvenile complaints, these calls included:

• John Day Police Department

Dec. 18: Responded to a theft report at a drug store in John Day.

Dec. 18: Dispatched with Oregon State Police to Southwest Front Street in Prairie City for a domestic assault report. Omar Ceja, 20, Prairie City, was arrested.

Dec. 19: Responded to a theft report at an apartment building in John Day.

Dec. 20: Report of mail tampering on North Canyon Boulevard in John Day.

Dec. 21: Officer contacted

COPS AND COURTS

to assist in a forced eviction on Patterson Drive in Canyon City.

Dec. 21: Responded to a noninjury motor vehicle crash near the senior center in John Day.

Dec. 22: Responded to a noninjury motor vehicle crash on Main Street in John Day.

Dec. 22: Report of telephonic harassment on North Canyon Boulevard in John Day.

Dec. 22: Travis B. Farr, 25, Mt. Vernon, was cited on Highway 26 near Indian Creek Road for speeding and driving with a suspended license.

Dec. 22: Tylor J. Gifford, 23, John Day, was arrested on Cozart Street in Prairie City and charged with multiple warrants.

Dec. 23: Responded to a single-vehicle crash on West Main Street in John Day.

Dec. 24: Omar C. Medina, 20, John Day, was arrested on Highway 26 near Dixie Summit and charged on a no-contact order from Grant County.

Dec. 24: Sylvia Sweeney, 58, American Falls, Idaho, was cited on Highway 395 in John Day for driving without a license.

Dec. 24: Responded to a report of suspicious circumstances on Northwest Second Avenue in John Day.

• Grant County Sheriff's Office

Dec. 18: Advised of sus-

picious circumstances at the Aldrich Mountain Lookout southeast of Dayville.

Dec. 18: Responded to Marysville Lane in Canyon City for a loud noise.

Dec. 19: Dispatched to Corral Gulch Road in Canyon City for a suicidal subject.

Dec. 22: Advised of a theft in the Murderers Creek Unit of Malheur National Forest.

Dec. 22: Melinda Jo Moss, 38, John Day, was cited to appear in Grant County Justice Court.

Dec. 23: Report of a single-vehicle, noninjury crash on Canyon Creek Lane south of Canyon City that occurred the previous night.

Dec. 23: Responded to East Avenue in Seneca for children left alone at home.

Dec. 24: Dispatched with John Day police to South Fork Road in Dayville for a domestic dispute. James Brunzman, Dayville, was arrested.

• John Day ambulance

Dec. 18: Dispatched to Corral Gulch Road in Canyon City.

Dec. 18: Responded to a senior home in John Day for an 83-year-old woman.

Dec. 18: Dispatched to a senior home in Prairie City.

Dec. 19: Responded to Highway 26 near Dayville for an 86-year-old man.

Dec. 19: Dispatched to Northeast Elm Street in John Day for a 58-year-old man with difficulty breathing.

Dec. 20: Responded with Dayville fire to East Franklin Avenue in Dayville for a 62-year-old person with cardiac problems.

Dec. 20: Dispatched with Monument fire and ambulance to Highway 402 for a man with a diabetic issue.

Dec. 20: Responded to Rebel Hill Road in Canyon City for a woman with extreme abdominal pain.

Dec. 20: Responded with Monument fire and ambulance to Highway 402 for a 70-year-old man.

Dec. 21: Dispatched with Long Creek fire and ambulance to Eagle Street in Long Creek for a 78-year-old woman.

Dec. 21: Responded to an apartment building in Prairie City for a man with stroke-like conditions.

Dec. 23: Dispatched with Monument fire and ambulance to Highway 19 for a 61-year-old woman.

Dec. 23: Paged to Chimney Gulch Road in John Day for a person having a possible heart attack.

Dec. 23: Responded to La Costa Road in John Day for an 84-year-old woman.

Dec. 24: Dispatched with Long Creek ambulance to the Tin Hat Mountain area for a snowmobile accident.

Dec. 25: Responded to a senior home in John Day.

• John Day fire

Dec. 18: Advised of a fire on Marysville Road.

JUNIPER ARTS COUNCIL/GRANT COUNTY CULTURAL COALITION IS SEEKING GRANT PROPOSALS FOR OREGON CULTURAL TRUST GRANT AWARDS

The coalition has \$7,000 from the Oregon Cultural Trust to distribute in Grant County to organizations for projects relating to culture. Projects may be related to the visual or performing arts, heritage, and/or humanities.

Applications are available from Karin Barntish, 131 W. Main Street, John Day or call Kris Beal at 541-932-4892 for more information or an application.

Grant applications will be accepted until February 2, 2018 at 5:00 pm.

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