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A new generation of political action



Contributed photo

Tanner Elliott, left, meets Sayd Hussain, a 21-year-old junior at Florida Atlantic University who is running for state representative.

Elliott sits in third row during President Trump's speech at student conference

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Three rows back, 18 feet away — that's how far Tanner Elliott stood from President Donald Trump when he spoke at Turning Point USA's Student Action Summit Conference on Dec. 21 in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Young conservative students from around the nation gathered to listen to Trump talk about his presidency, the economy, immigration, impeachment and more. Most of the 5,000 students attending were seated on a first-come, first-served basis, Elliott said, but he had his seat reserved.

Elliott — who ran for Grant County commissioner in 2018 and has served on county committees — said he enjoyed the energetic atmosphere of his fellow young conservatives.

"The craziest moment was when he first walked out," Elliott said. "It's actually happening. You're seeing the president of the United States who is the most powerful person of the free world. He's not as orange as he looks on TV."

Elliott said Trump doesn't give speeches that are as charismatic as previous presidents such as Ronald Reagan or Barack Obama, but he did notice that engagement with the audience and their feedback is where Trump's charisma shines.



Contributed photo

Tanner Elliott meets Rudy Giuliani, former New York Mayor and current lawyer to President Donald Trump, in Florida.

Trump interacted with the crowd by allowing two students go on stage to speak and also asked the audience if they preferred "Keep America Great" or "Make America Great Again." Both slogans were met with cheers, and Trump decided to keep the two slogans, Elliott said.

"It was a loud atmosphere, that's for sure," he said. "I have never heard USA chants that loud before, and then they started the 'four more years' chants, and that also got loud. It was remarkable to be honest."

As Trump's speech concluded, he left the stage and walked near the audience where people were jumping over chairs and frantically rushing to get a chance to shake hands with the president, Elliott said. He decided to let the crowd near him go for it, but he acknowledged how rare it was for him, as a Grant County resident, to have been so close to the president.

"Not that many people can say they saw the president three days after he was impeached, whether you agree with that or not," Elliott said. "It's historic, and this president will be one of the most remembered presidents in our history."

Elliott said he agreed with Trump's message on the economy and against socialism and on his accomplishments such as getting out of North American Free Trade Agreement and appointing 187 conservative federal judges.

Optimism for the future

Trump gave his speech on Dec. 21, near the end of the Student Action Summit Conference that began Dec. 19 and ended Dec. 22. This gave Elliott an opportunity to listen to speeches from multiple conservative leaders and activists such as Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh, Laura Ingraham and many others.

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Merkley visits Grant County

Senator discusses Iran, impeachment and health care

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Community members from Grant County asked questions about Qasem Soleimani, Iran, health care, impeachment and more during a town hall meeting with U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley in Mt. Vernon on Jan. 5.



U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley

Wayne Hunnicutt of John Day asked Merkley about the developing situation in Iran following the death of Soleimani, the Iranian military leader killed in a U.S. strike, and how viable a threat he was to the U.S. personnel and interests in the region.

Merkley said Soleimani was the second most powerful person in Iran and was highly respected. His position was equivalent to a defense minister and foreign minister combined because he traveled to diplomatic meetings around the world and was very involved with the Shia militias in Iraq, Merkley said.

"In recent years, Iraqi animosity towards the extent of Iranian influences have grown, and there have been many demonstrations against Iran in Iraq and against the Iranian leadership inside Iran," Merkley said. "What this assassination does is flip that into anti-American demonstrations in both countries, and Iraq has just voted to throw the U.S. out of Iraq, which is what Iran wanted."

Merkley said he is concerned about further escalations. Middle East analysts say there is no way Iran cannot respond to their defense minister being killed, he said.

Merkley was critical of a social media message sent by President Donald Trump Jan. 4.

"Let this serve as a WARNING that if Iran strikes any Americans, or American assets, we have targeted 52 Iranian sites (representing the 52 American hostages taken by Iran many years ago), some at a very high level & important to Iran & the Iranian culture, and those targets, and Iran itself, WILL BE HIT VERY FAST AND VERY HARD. The USA wants no more threats!" Trump said on Twitter.

Merkley said a response like this increases Iranian nationalism and could lead to a war.

"There's no sign that he recognizes that the Constitution gives war-making power to Congress, not to the president," Merkley said. "When he is talking about hitting 52 sites, he is talking about going to war, and the Constitution does not give him that power."

County resident Katy Nelson asked about affordability and accessibility of health care. Merkley said others have also been asking, and he presented three ideas to lower the cost of drugs.

The first is for Medicare to negotiate the price. The second is to allow Americans to legally import drugs from Canada, which would allow the U.S. to benefit from Canada's negotiations for the price of medicine. This would be done through carefully audited locations to verify the drugs. The third is to have a

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New Oregon laws to know for 2020

By Jade McDowell
EO Media Group

Several new Oregon laws take effect with the start of the new year, including measures aimed at making voting as easy as possible for Oregon voters. Others address plastic bags, revenge porn and marijuana convictions.

When a new year starts, it can be easy to miss the memo on changes to the law. Ignorance of the law is not a defense for breaking it, however, so here are a few handy guidelines for 2020:

Plastic bags

Starting Jan. 1, stores will no longer be able to give out single-use plastic bags at checkout, although plastic bags used for meat and produce will be exempt. Stores will also be required to charge at least 5 cents per bag for paper, reusable bags or other alternatives.



Eagle file photo

Oregon businesses can no longer give out single-use plastic bags at checkout.

Real ID

As of Oct. 1, 2020, regular Oregon driver's licenses will no longer be valid to board a commercial flight, enter a secure federal facility, such as a military base, or do other activities where a federally approved form of identification is required.

After Oct. 1, Oregonians who want to take a flight will have to use another form of approved identification, such as a passport, or apply for a new type of driver's license called a Real ID.

The state hopes to have the federally approved Real IDs available through the Department of Motor Vehicles starting in July after finishing a "major IT overhaul," according to the department's website.

Real IDs will be optional, and those getting them will be required to pay the DMV's fee for replacement of a driver's license, plus a yet-to-be-determined additional Real ID fee. The newly issued Real ID will have the same expiration date as the person's current driver's license, so people whose licenses expire soon after the Real IDs are available are advised they may want to wait until it is time to renew their license.

Should someone choose not to upgrade to a Real ID, a standard Oregon driver's licenses will still be good for activities, such as driving, purchasing alcohol, registering to vote or applying for benefits.

Voting

In 2020, Oregon will continue its quest to make voting as convenient as possible by not charging for postage to mail in ballots. During the next election, Oregonians will simply be able to drop their ballot in the mail without a stamp.

Bicycling

Starting Jan. 1, bicyclists are allowed to proceed through an intersection with a stop sign or traffic signal without stopping, providing they proceed at a safe speed and yield to vehicles and pedestrians.

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