

Wyden pushes for coastal, social issues

Town hall was senator's 869th in Oregon

By Edward Stratton
EO Media Group

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden told the crowd at an Astoria town hall Saturday that he would continue pushing the federal government to take seriously Oregon coastal issues such as the coming Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, tsunamis and offshore drilling.

Wyden, a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, last week urged U.S. Geological Survey Deputy Director David Applegate to support funding for ShakeAlert, a federal early warning system being developed for the West Coast. President Donald Trump last year proposed eliminating funding for the system.

"I think that we need to get all the Democrats, all of the Republicans, all over the West, all up and down the coast, to say to Mr. (Mick) Mulvaney, the head of the Office of Management and Budget, 'Earthquakes and tsunamis are serious, deadly business for our part of the world,'" the Oregon Democrat said.

Wyden took a moment near the beginning of the town hall to honor state Rep. Deborah Boone, D-Cannon Beach, who recently announced she would retire from the state House when her term expires in January. Boone's late husband, Bill, had been battling brain cancer the last two years until his death in November.

"One of his last requests of me was to retire and take some time for me ... to do some things that we didn't get to do together," she said, adding she plans to visit relatives in Sweden.

Boone's tenure has largely been defined by her focus on coastal issues such as natural disaster resiliency.



U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Oregon, stopped for photos with attendees at the end of his town hall at Astoria High School.

Melissa Ousley, one of several Democratic candidates who have filed for the primary to replace Boone, asked for Wyden's take on the proposal by Trump to expand offshore drilling on the West Coast. The senator promised to help block attempts at offshore drilling and the return to the natural resource-based economics of yesteryear, and to shift the conversation on economic prosperity to include emerging industries like recreation and tourism.

Wyden accused the president of committing legislative malpractice by publicly pushing for a large infrastructure package, then passing a tax bill that saps federal money.

"He didn't want to have money for roads and bridges," Wyden said. "He wanted to have money for tax cuts, for his friends, for the multinational companies."

He also decried the tax bill for weakening the low-income housing tax credit, linking homelessness with the need for affordable housing, expanded Medicaid and more coverage of mental health services by insurance companies. He recounted his late

'Earthquakes and tsunamis are serious, deadly business for our part of the world.'

Rep. Ron Wyden

brother Jeff's struggle with schizophrenia and bouts of homelessness before his death in 2002.

"Don't for a second let anybody off the hook on this homeless issue right now," he said.

Republicans recently made public a memo by U.S. Rep. Devin Nunes, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, accusing the FBI and U.S. Department of Justice of abusing surveillance tools. Wyden called the memo a smokescreen to distract from recent arrests and guilty pleas in the investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller into Russia's meddling in the 2016 presidential election. He called Nunes hypocritical for criticizing federal officials' use of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act he recently

voted to reauthorize.

Asked about the threats to Mueller's investigation, Wyden said firing the special counsel would start a constitutional crisis and lead some members of the U.S. House to push for Trump's impeachment.

Wyden renewed his push to have Trump's tax returns released and restrict the president's ability to unilaterally launch a nuclear missile.

When Democrats feel discouraged, they should look to more promising developments, such as Doug Jones becoming the first Democrat elected to the Senate in Alabama in more than 20 years, Wyden said.

"There's a lot going on in America, and you ought to keep it in perspective, along with the record number of young people (running) for office," he said.

Wyden also held town halls in Columbia, Multnomah, Tillamook and Washington counties over the weekend, bringing him to 871 since he was elected to the Senate in 1996 and promised to visit each of Oregon's 36 counties at least once a year.

Lawyer, musician runs for state House

Orr ran practice for 25 years

By Edward Stratton
EO Media Group

Local attorney John Orr has filed for the Democratic primary to replace state Rep. Deborah Boone.

Boone, D-Cannon Beach, announced last month she would not run for an eighth two-year term in state House District 32. Tillamook County Commissioner Tim Josi and local educator and author Melissa Ousley have also filed for the primary. Brian Halvorsen, an Independent from Rockaway Beach, has also filed.

Orr ran a family law and criminal defense practice in Astoria for about 25 years, also serving at times as a Municipal Court judge, before leaving to pursue art and recycling.

He is project development manager for Trails End Recovery in Warrenton, provides the company legal counsel and plays in several local bands.

This is Orr's first attempt at elected office. He has served in appointed positions on a public safe-

ty coordinating council, a committee to site the North Coast Youth Correctional Facility in Warrenton, an affordable housing board in Cannon Beach and with the Surf Pines Homeowners Association. He was president of the North Coast Land Conservancy from 1996 to 2002.

"I think my skill set is uniquely suited to the demands of working in the state Legislature," Orr said, describing himself as a fiscal conservative and social progressive. "It looks like the Legislature needs help to address its funding issues and the problems the state is facing, both in terms of education, housing, sustainable wages and family wage jobs."

Orr would also like to see Oregon better utilize its natural resources, particularly biomass energy.

He has lived in Clatsop County about 28 years and Oregon for 32 years. He is from Kalamazoo, Michigan, and originally moved to Portland to attend law school at Lewis & Clark College.

Candidates have until March 6 to file for the May primary.



John Orr

Local author, educator files for state House seat

Ousley part of a progressive group

By Edward Stratton
EO Media Group

Local college adviser and author Melissa Ousley has filed in the Democratic primary to replace state Rep. Deborah Boone.

Boone, D-Cannon Beach, announced this month she would not run for an eighth two-year term in state House District 32. Tillamook County Commissioner Tim Josi, a Democrat, and Brian Halvorsen, an Independent from Rockaway Beach, have also filed.

Ousley, 42, is an adviser at Clatsop Community College who lives in Warrenton with



MELISSA OUSLEY

Local author and educator Melissa Ousley is running in the Democratic primary for state House.

her husband, Chris, the dean of students at the college, and their twin 14-year-old boys. She has a doctorate in higher education and has worked in the field for 15 years, previously as a student services adviser at Pima Community College in Arizona and as a researcher at the University of Arizona.

A suspense and young adult fiction author, she serves on the Seaside Public Library Foundation Board.

Ousley volunteers with progressive activist group Indivisible North Coast, canvassing for the recently passed health care ballot measure and trying to increase voter registration. Another focus of the group has been getting more people to run for office.

"I see running for office as a way to expand my service to my community," Ousley wrote on her campaign website.

Among her values are making health care and education more accessible and affordable.

"I'm concerned about the environment, protecting our gorgeous coast and forests and advocating for clean, renewable energy," she wrote, expressing concern about potential offshore drilling.

The state should establish caps on greenhouse gas emissions, require emitters to purchase allowances and use the revenue to invest in renewable energy and communities affected by global warming, she wrote. "District 32 could benefit from these measures, and we have the potential to lead these efforts."

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