

'Town-hallers' to Merkley: No government run health care

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Bessie Wetzell Newspaper Library
University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403

By David Sykes
With nationwide public support for the government take over of health care falling, and general dissatisfaction with government spending on the rise,

an overflow crowd echoed these same concerns to Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley at a town hall meeting last

comments.

A good portion of the discussion was about health care, but many in the audience also asked Merkley about the premise that the government has the right not only to take over health care, but also take over private businesses such as the automobile companies and Wall Street banks and brokerages, which were bailed out by Washington earlier this year.

plan should start with tort reform. "There are heart surgeons paying out 100 grand a year in liability insurance. It's ridiculous. We have to get the attorneys off the backs of our doctors," he said.

Merkley responded that he has seen studies that show that in states which have limits on damage awards, it makes no difference in the cost of health care.

"We also need to stop regulating these insurance companies to the point we can't have competition throughout the United States," Smith said. "The more people we have in



Sen. Jeff Merkley: "Health care costs doubling every six to seven years."

week in Boardman.

A recent Gallup poll shows only 37 percent of Americans support the pending health care legislation. This was pretty much the mood reflected by the capacity crowd of about 220 people jammed into Port of Morrow Meeting hall last Thursday to let their senator know what's on their minds. The crowd was civil, but adamant in its views, often clapping and cheering in agreement with speakers.

Mark O'Neill, the first man to speak, summed up the mood of the crowd,

that gave the federal government these rights.

"You mean you want me to site a specific clause?" Merkley responded. "Yes," the man said. Merkley ended up only saying the government did have the right.

Kerry Rietmann of Lone asked Merkley to answer two questions. "It is not the American way for the government to take over health care. Free enterprise will take care of this. Do you believe in the free enterprise system? And if so how do you justify these takeovers?" she asked.

She also asked if Congress, the Senate and their families were going to live under the same health care plan they pass for the American people.

Merkley responded that the health care plan (actually there is not just one plan, but as he himself admitted, at least four plans) would cause increased competition. He also said that health care costs are doubling every six years and the system is "unsustainable".

"You haven't answered my questions," Rietmann said. "Yes I have," Merkley responded.

Merkley stated several times he is in favor of the public option, which Republicans and moderate Democrats have said will eventually lead to a takeover of the country's health care system, which amounts to about one sixth of the economy, by the federal government.

Clyde Smith, a veteran from Lone, told Merkley that the health

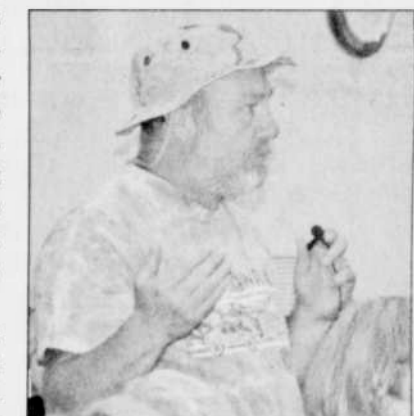


Mark O'Neill: "I am paying for someone else to buy a car."

these pools, the easier it is for them to absorb pre-existing conditions."

Polls are now showing support for Obama and his health care agenda dropping among moderates and independents and many lawmakers from swing districts in the suburbs and rural regions find constituents fearful of increased government involvement in the private economy.

That view extends from the potential government option in health care to the



Clyde Smith: "We have to get the attorneys off the backs of our doctors."

bailout of the financial sector, the takeover of Detroit's carmakers and the \$787 billion stimulus plan. From crowd reaction and those who spoke, this seems to be the view of the majority of people who attended the town hall meeting. Only one woman spoke directly in favor of government run health care.



Kerry Rietmann: "Will congress live under the same health care plan?"

telling Merkley he was not a Nazi, member of a mob, or a racist, as town hall goers across the country have been labeled by Democrat leadership this summer, but just a retired person, a veteran and a person with an opinion.

"Spending, spending, spending," O'Neill said. "Nine trillion dollars, and that worries me." He went on to say that the government should not be bailing out companies that should be allowed to fail, and he was tired of paying for people to buy cars. He was referring to the "cash for clunkers program" where the government was giving people who qualify up to \$4,500 to buy new cars. "I am paying for someone else to buy a car," he said. The crowd responded with loud applause and cheers to his

HEPPNER 50¢

Gazette Times

VOL. 128 NO. 36 8 Pages Wednesday, September 9, 2009 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Heppner 10th graders second in state for math scores

The Oregon Department of Education recently announced the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) test scores for the 2008-2009 school year. Tenth graders at Heppner High School ranked second in the state for their math scores with 89% passing. Riverdale High School in Portland ranked first.

"I am absolutely delighted to hear the news," said Morrow County School District Superintendent Mark Burrows. "The teachers and kids have taken the standards seriously and were prepared. Troy Morgan has done an outstanding job as a math instructor."

Math scores for all Morrow County high schools are listed to the right. County scores for Reading and Lit., Writing, and Science can be found on Page FIVE.

Morrow County High School Math Scores

10th Grade			
School	School %	District %	State %
Heppner H.S.	88.90%	58.20%	53.60%
Riverside H.S.	71.40%	58.20%	53.60%
Lone H.S.	57.10%	57.10%	53.60%
Irrigon H.S.	36.20%	58.20%	53.60%

8th Grade			
School	School %	District %	State %
Heppner H.S.	75.70%	61.10%	70.60%
Irrigon H.S.	60.30%	61.10%	70.60%
Riverside H.S.	54.10%	61.10%	70.60%
Lone H.S.	>95%	>95%	70.60%

7th Grade			
School	School %	District %	State %
Heppner H.S.	92.90%	72.70%	77.80%
Irrigon H.S.	76.30%	72.70%	77.80%
Lone H.S.	88.90%	88.90%	76.50%
Riverside H.S.	68.80%	72.70%	77.80%

Gutierrez takes 6x6 elk



Justin Gutierrez got this 6 x 6 bull elk with his bow on Sunday, August 30. -Contributed Photo

The Heppner Gazette-Times wants to see pictures of your trophy animals from this hunting season. Stop by to have your picture taken, drop off photos, or email them to editor@rapidservice.net.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:
MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

Chip seal work begins on OR Highway 207

Oregon Department of Transportation maintenance crews began chip sealing a 12-mile section of Oregon Highway 207 between the Morrow/Umatilla County line at mile point 19.6 and Interstate 84 at Exit 182 on September 8. Depending on weather conditions, the project is expected to be completed by the morning of September 11.

The work will result in loose rock on the roadway and up to 20-minute delays during day and nighttime hours. Flaggers

and pilot cars will direct traffic through the construction zone. Motorists are reminded to slow down, be mindful of loose gravel on the highway and drive with extra caution.

"On behalf of the highway maintenance crews working on the project, we would really appreciate everyone's patience and support as they drive through this highway work zone," said ODOT Public Information Officer Tom Strandberg. "Please plan extra travel time, watch for crews and slow down in

the area."

The chip seal application will help preserve and extend the useful life of the existing pavement surface.

This project is one of over 45 highway construction work zones throughout eastern Oregon this summer. For updated highway conditions and travel information visit www.TripCheck.com or call 511 or (800) 977-6368. If calling from outside of Oregon dial (503) 588-2941.

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