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HEPPNER 50¢
Gazette Times

VOL. 129 NO. 3 8 Pages Wednesday, January 20, 2010 Morrow County, Heppner, Oregon

Large group turns out for Heppner Cap and Trade program

By David Sykes

About 95 people turned out Sunday in Heppner for a program on "Cap and Trade" legislation. Cap and Trade is legislation designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and therefore reduce global warming.

Walla Walla attorney and Cap and Trade expert Jeff Burkhart explained what Cap and Trade is, who the winners and losers will be, and what the effects will be on households and the economy. The program was sponsored and put on by the Willow Creek Tea Party Patriots, a new group formed in the area that plans to put on other informational programs about issues facing the country.

Approximately 95 people attended the program on Cap and Trade legislation held on Sunday, January 17, in Heppner. The program was given by Walla Walla attorney and Cap and Trade expert Jeff Burkhart. *-Photo by David Sykes*

The program focused on the bill known as "Waxman-Markey" that passed the U.S. House of Representatives on June 26, 2009. The legislation assumes that Global Warming is real and that it is man made. Although he did not personally agree with these assumptions, for the sake of his presentation Burkhart accepted them.

Burkhart first explained what "Cap" is in Cap and Trade. The cap is that government establishes a limit, or cap, on the amount of a pollutant that can be released into the atmosphere. Then companies receive credits that allow them to release a certain amount of CO2 into the atmosphere.

The "Trade" part is that companies that reduce their emissions will have excess credits. The companies can then sell these credits, probably in the commodity or other public markets, to other companies that can't or won't reduce their own emissions. Over time the government gradually reduces the "cap" thereby reducing the total amount of the pollutant released into the atmosphere.

Burkhart said a company could practice what is called mitigation to earn extra carbon credits, doing things such as planting trees or winter crops or changing tillage practices to reduce fertilizers. He said a company or group could even develop a program teaching how bad green house gas emissions are, and thus earn credits it could then sell on the open market.

The Waxman-Markey bill sets caps on greenhouse gas emissions to a 3 percent reduction in 2010 and an 83 percent reduction by 2050. Other provisions of the bill include a requirement that utilities have a portfolio of 20 percent renewable energy sources. Oregon gets a large portion of its electricity from hydropower (dams) but hydro only qualifies as renewable if fish passage and other environmental factors are met. Burkhart said the breakdown of US power production is currently 50 percent coal, 20 percent nuclear, 15 percent natural gas, 6 percent hydro, 6 percent petroleum and 2 percent renewable.

Burkhart said one of the effects on the economy if the legislation becomes law would be increased energy costs, and estimates of the impact on individual households varies from $80 to $3,000 per year cost per household, with the congressional budget office previously estimating that a cap and trade program for carbon would cost each household $1,600 per year. He also pointed out that President Barack Obama said in January, 2008 that "electricity prices would necessarily skyrocket", because that is the point of cap and trade legislation. The impact to manufacturing would cause goods to cost more to produce and job loss.

Part of the program identified winners and losers under Cap and Trade. Some of the winners would be Wall Street, which will trade the carbon credits on the exchange, Al Gore's company and existing carbon trading enterprises from Europe. Other winners will be environmental funds and groups who will get money from companies buying offsets, companies doing alternative energy technologies, like wind and solar "Green jobs". "But, every "green job" created with government money in Spain over the last eight years came at the cost of 2.2 regular jobs, and only one in 10 of the newly created green jobs became a permanent job, Burkhart said. The federal government would also be a winner because of the large expansion of its power especially in the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency).

Surprisingly agriculture will be a big winner even though it is a huge source of CO2 emissions from fertilizers and livestock. Under the bill, agriculture will get a "free pass" and will be allowed unlimited Green House Gas emissions. Also plant mass produced by agriculture will be counted as a valuable mitigator which farmers would be able to sell as carbon offsets. Forest and farm land values will rise under the law, Burkhart speculated. He said car companies would also receive $25 billion more.

Losers under Cap and Trade would be Coal Companies, the Nuclear power industry

(Waxman-Markey specifically defines Nuclear power as *not* renewable, even though it produces no CO2 emissions), the tech industry with 2 percent of U.S. electricity now being used by data centers. Also losing under Cap and Trade would be all consumers of electricity since prices will go up. The only questions are how much, and how fast, Burkhart said.

He said that good alternatives to Cap and Trade would be nuclear power and a carbon and gasoline tax, or to just do nothing.

Following the program a question and answer session was held. Many of the questions centered around people's concern about government in general, its increasing size and influence over people's lives, and irresponsible spending. Several people in attendance expressed frustration with both political parties and what is going on both at the state and national level.

Burkhart, who is affiliated with the Walla Walla Tea Party Patriots said his groups values are: fiscal responsibility, limited government and free markets, which are similar to the state values of the Willow Creek Tea Party Patriots.

People asked what they could do to change the direction of government. Burkhart recommended becoming involved with politics by running for office and supporting those who share their values. He also said people should pay attention to public hearing when issues come up and make their voices heard at these public hearings.

Town and Country Awards winners announced

The Heppner Chamber of Commerce Town and Country Community Awards event, sponsored by CenturyLink, was held in the pavilion at the Morrow County Fairgrounds on Thursday, January 14. This year's theme was "Honor Our past, Celebrate the Future." Each year the following awards are given out: Youth Recognition, Business of the Year, Woman of the Year, Man of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, and Citizen-Educator of the Year.

The 2009 Youth Recognition Award recipient is Erin Price. She is involved in the National Honor Society, basketball, track and field, pep band, drama club, AWANAS, ASB, and is actively involved in music with her church. As a community volunteer Price has been involved with the Mustang Mop-Up, canned food drive, Town and Country, Heppner High School Booster Club, MS Walk, Tupper outdoor school as a counselor, as well as being a STARS counselor. She is described as having character, depth, and conviction is a natural leader.

Erin Price

This year's Business of the Year is CenturyLink. CenturyLink, previously known as CenturyTel, has been in the Heppner are for the last 13 years. When they first came to Heppner, the company purchased a company that had already been here for approximately 100 years. CenturyLink currently has two full time employees in the Heppner area and four to five more employees in the northern portion of the county. CenturyLink promotes employee involvement in the community and they have been a sponsor of the Town and Country Community Awards Event since 2001.

CenturyLink

This year's Woman of the Year is Peggy Fishburn. Fishburn is a person who has been described as being most comfortable working behind the scenes, but not hesitating to take the lead when necessary. Many years ago, Heppner hosted a refugee family from Laos who knew no English and nothing about the American culture. Fishburn stepped in and helped the family learn basic English. She has also taught tole painting in 4-H and Sunday School. She serves on the Housing Authority Board and has served on or chaired almost every committee in the United Methodist Church. Since her retirement, she has been serving on the board of the Farm Foundation, the operating entity of the Morrow County Museum. Fishburn can also often be found working on cleanup crews and painting community spots. She is woman who quietly takes care of needs that she sees.

Peggy Fishburn

The 2009 Man of the Year is Tom Mafera of the Heppner Ranger District. Mafera, who has only been in the community for a short time, has immersed himself in volunteer work. He volunteers for the Mustang Mop-Up, SOLV Cleanup, St. Patrick's Day, Fair and Rodeo, and Heppner Days. He is a member of the Heppner Chamber of Commerce, the Heppner Lions, and the Willow Creek Economic Development Group. He currently volunteers one hour a week to the Heppner Elementary School HEROES program where he works one-on-one helping HES students with their reading. He is responsible for establishing a career program for Morrow County high school students in which the students attend a career camp to obtain educational, work experience, training, and experience in forestry, fire suppression, and other vocations. Each year Mafera also works with the Neighborhood Center to coordinate students and community members as they cut, split, and deliver wood to needy families.

Tom Mafera

This year's Lifetime Achievement Award was given to Ron and Ginger Bowman. The Bowmans moved to Heppner approximately 32 years ago. Ginger works at Heppner High School where she serves as a mentor and friend to the students. She currently heads up the distance education department at the school. She also works at the snack shack during athletic events and organizes the annual Veteran's Day Celebration held at Heppner High School. During their time in Heppner, Ron has been involved in Little League as a coach and umpire, youth basketball, junior golf, the Heppner Booster Club, and Willow Creek Country Club. He has organized the Willow Creek Invitational Golf Tournament for over 20 years as well as working the chain gang for Mustang football for 30 years. Their efforts and volunteerism have helped make these programs the envy of other communities.

Ginger and Ron Bowman

The 2009 Citizen-Educator of the Year is John Flaherty, a social studies teacher at Heppner High School. During the past 10 years of his employment with the Morrow County School District, Flaherty has accomplished many things, including: running the clock at the football and basketball games; helping the Garden Club on their many plantings; serving dinner at the Elks with the Civics Club; Organizing students to deliver firewood to those in need; decorating trees on Main Street with students; organizing, escorting and chaperoning 17 students

John Flaherty

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Ballot drop site locations announced

Ballots were recently mailed out for the vote on Measures 66 &67. Ballots can be returned by mail or at any designated drop site. Listed below are the Morrow County drop site locations and the available days and hours the sites will be open. All ballots must be received by 8 p.m. on January 26, Election Day.

-New Boardman City Hall, 200 City Center Circle, Boardman, OR 97818; Open January 8-25, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and on January 26 (Election Day) 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

-Irrigon Annex-Planning Department Lobby, 205 NE 3rd St., Irrigon, OR 97844; Open January 8-25, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and on January 26 (Election Day) 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

-Bank of Eastern Oregon-Ione Branch, 280 West Main St., Ione, OR 97843; Open January 8-25, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, and on January 26 (Election Day) 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

-Morrow County Road Office, 365 West Highway 74, Lexington, OR 97839; Open January 8-25, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and on January 26 (Election Day) 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

-Morrow County Courthouse, 100 S. Court St., Room 102, Heppner, OR 97836; Open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and on January 26 (Election Day) 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

For more information contact the Morrow County Clerk at 541-676-5604, 541-481-2112, 541-9224103 or visit www.morrowcountyoregon.com.

Customer Appreciation Day!
Friday, January 29th • Factory Reps • Door Prizes
Seeding & Tillage Clinic 10 am - 12 noon
Lunch @ 12:00
Morrow County Grain Growers
Lexington 989-8221 • 1-800-452-7396 For farm equipment, visit our web site at www.mcgg.net