

# Merkley sees federal role in solving local issues

BY ERICK PETERSON  
Hermiston Herald

Sen. Jeff Merkley on Friday, June 17, advocated for using the federal government to find solutions to local problems in the wake of the pandemic.

"It's been a tough two years," he told the crowd after he stepped onstage during the second day of the 2022 Eastern Oregon Economic Summit in Hermiston.

Sen. Ron Wyden and U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz also participated, but they streamed in via video.

Merkley spoke of the difficulty of the pandemic years, the pains of lockdowns and the struggles of school children who suffered isolation. He also mentioned the recent flooding in Echo, which he was planning to visit later in the day, as well as supply chain problems, inflation and global warming.

Still, he maintained, there were solutions to our problems. Rising gas prices, for example could be addressed by reducing "our addiction to oil." By opening more ports, we can fix supply chain woes. And earmarking government funds for various government projects also can help.

Merkley said we are planning for a brighter future.

The Eastern Oregon Women's Coalition organized the event June 16 and 17 in Hermiston. The general session was June 17 at Hermiston High School and open to the public.

Following his speech, Merkley retired to a classroom at the school,



Yasser Marte/Hermiston Herald

Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley talks to city officials at the East Oregon Economic Summit on Friday morning June 17, 2022.

where he met with individuals and talked more.

"Economic development is on everybody's minds, as well as the immediate economic issues of gas prices, food prices and drug prices," he said.

He called it "shocking" that housing and gas prices have risen quickly. Drugs, too, are expensive, he said, which worries people. He said he is

fighting in Congress for solutions, including for a windfall profits tax.

"I hope we'll be in a better place in a year," he said.

Merkley also said he was aware of issues in Umatilla and Morrow counties. He said he helped secure a \$500,000 community-initiated project grant for Echo for water infrastructure and was visiting the town later June 17

to see flooding damage.

"What I'm anticipating is that they're going to need a lot of repair work that will involve the Corps of Engineers," he said. "I'll be looking to their guidance, but if they are seeking to apply, Sen. Wyden and I, and I'm sure Cliff Bentz, will advocate to get help from the Corps of Engineers and hopefully funding to improve their protection

*"Economic development is on everybody's minds, as well as the immediate economic issues of gas prices, food prices and drug prices."*

— U.S. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore.

from the next big rain impact." Merkley also discussed groundwater pollution in Morrow County.

"It's a very big deal," he said. "Nitrate pollution has a lot of health implications."

Merkley said he was planning to meet with Morrow County Commissioner Jim Doherty, who has been getting surveys of wells in his county and has been discovering dangerous levels of nitrates in well water.

Merkley called this a problem that has been known for decades. It is only now, he said, that local officials are taking it seriously.

"I'm looking forward to seeing how I can help them out," he said.

And he left a message for the people of Eastern Oregon.

"Our future depends on our investment in infrastructure and our investment in education," he said. "In the meantime, though, we have a lot of problems from the droughts, from the fires, from the conditions in our forests, and I'm going to be working with local communities on tackling those problems from every direction I can."

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For the three hundred and eighty-first month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and eighty-second month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and eighty-third month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and eighty-fourth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and eighty-fifth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and eighty-sixth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and eighty-seventh month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and eighty-eighth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and eighty-ninth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and ninetieth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and ninety-first month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and ninety-second month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and ninety-third month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and ninety-fourth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and ninety-fifth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and ninety-sixth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and ninety-seventh month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and ninety-eighth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the three hundred and ninety-ninth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundredth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and first month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and second month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and third month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and fourth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and fifth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and sixth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and seventh month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and eighth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and ninth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and tenth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and eleventh month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and twelfth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and thirteenth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and fourteenth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and fifteenth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and sixteenth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and seventeenth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and eighteenth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and nineteenth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and twentieth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and twenty-first month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and twenty-second month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and twenty-third month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and twenty-fourth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and twenty-fifth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and twenty-sixth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and twenty-seventh month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and twenty-eighth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and twenty-ninth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and thirtieth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and thirty-first month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and thirty-second month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and thirty-third month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and thirty-fourth month, the fee is \$35.00. For the four hundred and thirty-f