

# Town Hall on the Cost of War for Congressman Wu on February 19

The 1st Congressional District Town Hall on the Cost of War for Congressman Wu will be held Monday, February 19, at 6:00 p.m. at Pacific University's Taylor Auditorium in Marsh Hall, 2043 University Way, Forest Grove. The town hall is being hosted by the Rural Organizing Project.

The United States is at a critical deciding point in the future of the war in Iraq. Decision makers in Washington, D.C., are currently debating multiple proposals ranging from troop escalation to a timetable for immediate withdrawal. A supplemental appropriations vote for funding in Iraq is expected in Congress later this month. This vote will test the impact of the recent 2006 elections on decisions relating to the war.

Congress will also decide in this session whether to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, legislation that relies on timber receipts and federal lands compensations to fund approximately

4,400 school districts in 615 counties in 39 states.

Constituents in Oregon's 1st Congressional District represented by David Wu are not waiting for the decisions to come to them. They are hosting their own town hall on February 19th in Forest Grove, Oregon to discuss these issues. The town hall will include delegations from the five counties in the 1st Congressional District.

Columbia County resident Craig Frasier will be testifying to the local cost of war in Columbia County at the 1st Congressional District Town Hall on the Cost of War. "As I look around our community and talk with our elected officials and social services providers," Frasier said, "I am overwhelmed by the needs that are going unmet in our county. Meanwhile, Columbia County's share of the financial cost of war in Iraq is over \$40 million. That amount could have paid for 4-year college scholarships for 1,937 students here at home."

Testimony from constituents to Congressman Wu will highlight the existing human needs of the 1st District that are currently going unmet as a result of federal funding priorities and spending on the war. The 1st District's tab for the war in Iraq is \$602,513,729, the equivalent of 60 new elementary schools or 3,152 affordable housing units or healthcare for 80,057 children since the start of the Iraq war.

Rural America is also home to a disproportionate number of soldiers who have lost their lives in Iraq. *The New York Times* reported in July, 2005, that nearly two-thirds of the soldiers who have died in Iraq came from rural, less densely populated counties. Rural Oregon is paying a high price for this war, both in terms of human costs and lost investment in economies and human services.

In addition to the Rural Organizing Project (ROP) the Town Hall is being hosted by the following local human digni-

ty groups: West County Council for Human Dignity, Yamhill Valley PeaceMakers, Columbia Pacific Alliance for Social Justice, Adelante Mujares and Columbia County Citizens for Human Dignity. ROP and member groups around the state are

## CCRCC holds Lincoln Day Dinner

"Remembering our Roots" is the theme for the annual Lincoln Day Dinner and fundraiser sponsored by the Columbia County Republican Central Committee. Special guest will be recent Republican candidate for Congress, Derrick Kitts. The dinner will be held on Saturday, February 24, at the Moose Lodge Family Center, 56870 Old Portland Road in Warren.

A social hour and silent auction will start at 5:30 p.m., with dinner at 6:30 p.m. The evening will be topped off by speaker Kitts at 7:30 p.m., followed by an oral auction. Twenty percent of the silent auction proceeds will be donated to the Columbia Pregnancy

Center. Donations are still being accepted for the silent auction.

For more information contact Marcy Westerling at 503-543-8417.

Cost for the evening is \$20.00 per person. Tickets are available in advance at Pacific Industrial Service, 1800 Railroad Avenue, St. Helens, or by calling Chair Fred Yauney at 503-543-6271. Reservations are strongly suggested to allow for an accurate meal count.

Columbia County Republicans informal Meet Up gathering will be on Friday, February 23, at Mr. Joe's Coffee Cafe, 555 Columbia River Hwy, St. Helens at 7:00 p.m. All county Republicans are invited to participate in a discussion of current issues of interest to those present.

# Senator Wyden's Health Americans Act would expand insurance

In January, U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) introduced legislation that would give every American the same kind of coverage that Members of Congress receive, for the same amount being spent on health care today.

Under Wyden's bill, called the Healthy Americans Act (HAA), all Americans – including 46 million uninsured – would be covered by health care insurance for no more than is spent today. The legislation includes cost containment and according to the influential

Lewin Group\*, actually saves \$1.45 trillion over the next decade.

Wyden commended states that have put forth their own proposals, but said that only the federal government could clean up the federal tax code, which "has led to a skewed system in which a CEO can write off a designer smile but the local hardware store gets nothing."

"I believe there is no possible way the states can fix health care," Wyden said, "because the states did not create

the major problems in American health care. Who did? The federal government, the big spender of health dollars in America, the architect of the policies now driving American health care toward implosion."

The Healthy Americans Act includes:

- Guarantees of private health care coverage that cannot be taken away;
- benefits for all Americans equal to those of Members of Congress;
- incentives for individuals and insurers to focus on prevention, wellness and disease management;
- financing by more wisely spending the \$2.2 trillion currently spent on health care in America.

Wyden's goal of universal health coverage for all Americans is supported by a diverse coalition of labor and business, including Andy Stern, President of SEIU, a 1.8 million-member labor group; Steve Burd, Chairman, President and CEO of Safeway; Ron Pollack, from Families USA, a leader on health care for the low-income; Mike Roach, a small business owner from Oregon and 30-

year member of the National Federation of Independent Businesses; CEO Bob Beal, owner of a medium-size Oregon business; Malene Davis, President and CEO of Capital Hospice; Don Schumacher, Executive Director of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization; and Pat Maryland, Chairperson of Citizens' Health Care Working Group.

"From the very first day under the Healthy Americans Act, individuals, families and businesses win," Wyden said. "Individuals get more money in their paycheck, and if they can find lower cost insurance, they have some extra money...with health premiums going up 11 percent this year, employers are glad to be exempt from these increases."

According to Sen. Wyden, the Act cuts the link between health insurance and employment. Under HAA, businesses paying for employee health insurance premiums are required to increase their workers' paychecks by the amount they spent last year on their health coverage. Federal tax law will change to hold the worker harmless for the extra compen-

sation and the worker is required to purchase coverage through an exchange in their state. Insurance companies are required to offer simplified, standardized coverage – like a Member of Congress gets – and are prohibited from engaging in price discrimination. The Act includes subsidies for those who could not otherwise purchase private coverage.

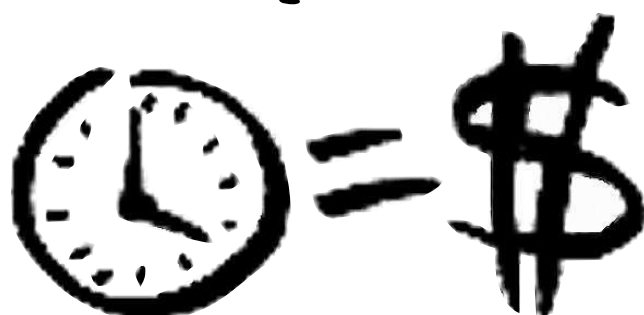
The Healthy Americans Act also focuses on preventive health care.

"Americans really don't have health care at all," Wyden said. "They have sick care. We are going to change that by giving seniors incentives to stay healthy, rewarding parents who enroll their youngsters in wellness programs and pushing private insurers to put a new emphasis on prevention and wellness in the plans they offer."

For more information on the Healthy Americans Act, go to <http://wyden.senate.gov>.

\*The Lewin Group is a health care and human services consulting firm that works with government, industry, foundations, and non-profit organizations.

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