



Congressman Greg Walden's Oregon Congressional Connection

Dear fellow Oregonian,

Greetings from Washington, D.C. where I this week returned following a very busy summer district work period. I have much to update you on regarding my extensive visits with residents in eastern, central and southern Oregon, along with some legislative accomplishments from earlier this summer. I'll also preview some legislative priorities for the remainder of the year in this edition of the Congressional Connection.

ON THE OREGON TRAIL

All in all, it's been a very busy summer, as my swings in August alone covered nine counties, with over 30 public meetings and events and more than 2,000 miles covered on the road. I have visited nearly all of the 20 counties in the vast Second Congressional District twice or more this year, and my visits will continue for the rest of the year. In fact, I've made 55 official visits this year to counties and held hundreds of meetings across the district. It is certainly a challenge representing such an immense district, but one I welcome with enthusiasm as it is always a joy to interact with the people of central, southern, and eastern Oregon and it's where I get my best "to do" list to take back to our nation's capital each week.

The summer has been packed with many meetings and public events in Oregon during both the weekends in June and July following workweeks in Washington, D.C., and also during the summer district work period in August. I held multiple town hall meetings in southern, central, and northeast Oregon, which covered a diverse range of topics and attracted a broad range of people.

During the first week of the August district work period I made

2nd District Trivia

What is the official Oregon state nut?

[Find Answer](#)

Contact Me

I always look forward to hearing your thoughts and ideas. Please feel free to contact me at any time.

[Email Me](#)

Offices

Bend, OR
131 NW Hawthorne, Ste
201
Bend, OR 97701
541-389-4408
Fax: 541-389-4452

Medford, OR
843 East Main Street, Ste
400
Medford, OR 97504
541-776-4646
Fax: 541-779-0204

Washington, DC
1210 Longworth House

a swing through northeast Oregon. I met with the Oregon Wheat Growers League and the Pendleton Rotary before heading to Enterprise for meetings with local residents over the Forest Service's proposed Travel Management Plan, a town hall in the evening and a tour of and meeting at the Wallowa Lake Dam the following morning to discuss the successful House passage of my bill to authorize essential repairs to the dam. Later that day I was honored to help dedicate the brand-new Elkhorn Valley Wind Project in Union County. I visited the construction site in April, and am happy to see such wonderful progress on a project that will create 100 megawatts, or enough energy to meet the annual needs of over 25,000 Northwest homes. I was able to meet separately with the Baker, Umatilla, and Union County commissioners to brief them on progress in Washington, D.C., and also to hear the latest on the issues affecting each county.

Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-6730
Fax: 202-225-5774

Official Website:
walden.house.gov

Water was very much on the mind in Milton-Freewater in Umatilla County, where I met with members of the Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council and other local officials to discuss the Walla Walla River Restoration Feasibility Study. I also met in Hermiston with stakeholders of the Bureau of Reclamation's Umatilla Basin Phase III Project for which I helped secure a federal investment to continue. Representatives from the Westland Irrigation District, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Umatilla County, and local farmers attended. This long-term project will provide a secure supply of water for irrigation needs and fish habitat. After a long day of meetings, I was able to meet at the Umatilla County Fair with many students involved in 4-H and Future Farmers of America and also met with the Umatilla County Fair Court. Later that evening I attended the Farm-City Pro Rodeo and had a great time visiting with residents and watching the rodeo.

In central Oregon, I spoke to and took questions from members of the Bend Rotary and also attended the groundbreaking for the new terminal at Redmond Municipal Airport. Senators Smith and Wyden, and many other local officials and residents also joined this outstanding event. Before leaving Washington, D.C. for the August district period, I submitted [a tribute in the Congressional Record](#) commemorating the history of Roberts Field. Then I drove 175 miles to Medford to begin a swing through Jackson and Josephine counties, where I had the honor of handing out service medals to a group of southern Oregon military veterans. I attended the dedication of a very exciting new facility in Ashland, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Clark R. Bavin Forensic Lab, which is the only crime lab in the world dedicated entirely to wildlife and is expected to serve both the national and international communities. I also spoke to the Grants Pass Rotary and attended the groundbreaking of the new terminal at the Rogue Valley International-Medford

Airport. Like the Roberts Field event, it was very well attended and highlighted the smart and needed growth of the airport to accommodate the region's growing business and passenger needs.

In-between my travels throughout the district, I also held a number of requested meetings in my office in my hometown of Hood River.

D.C. ACTION

Rural Health Care

Congress has made progress on several of my top legislative priorities since I wrote you last. I joined my fellow co-chair of the Rural Health Care Coalition, Congressman Earl Pomeroy (D-N.D.), to [unveil the Health Care Access and Rural Equity \(H-CARE\) Act of 2007, H.R. 2860](#). This bipartisan legislation, which has 66 cosponsors to date, is a comprehensive bill that proposes several improvements to our nation's health care infrastructure. The improvements would help rural health care providers address the unique challenges associated with delivering quality health care close to home in rural areas like Oregon's Second Congressional District.

As you may know, we introduced similar legislation last year and were successful in passing some of its provisions. One new aspect of the legislation this year is the flexibility it gives to Critical Access Hospitals. During my many meetings with health care providers across the state the past year, I have been told of the burden of the 25-bed daily maximum rule for Critical Access Hospitals, which are so designated because they are the only hospital for many miles around. However, the 25-bed daily cap is firm; if a hospital exceeds it, they could potentially lose their "critical access" designation and the federal investments that come with it. Thus, these hospitals can do little else but *refuse care* to the 26th patient, forcing the patient to make the difficult decision to either travel extensively to the next hospital or forego treatment altogether. H.R. 2860 would give hospitals the flexibility to treat patients as they come in as long as their average daily bed occupancy does not exceed 20. [Click here](#) for more information on the bill and a list of the groups that support the H-CARE Act of 2007.

Oregon Water Resources Development Act

The House also unanimously passed the Oregon Water Resources Development Act (H.R. 495), which I sponsored and introduced early this Congress in January. The bill includes four separate projects that would provide important tools to help balance land use, conservation, and public safety. Proper management of water is one of the most serious issues in many parts of Oregon, and the projects

included in this bill see to it that water is handled the right way. The legislation is actually a collection of four separate acts, including the Deschutes River Conservancy Reauthorization Act, the North Unit Irrigation District Act, the Wallowa Lake Dam Rehabilitation Act, and the Little Butte/Bear Creek Subbasins Water Feasibility Act. [Click here for more information on each of these acts](#). Now that the Oregon Water Resources Management Act has received solid bipartisan support for two straight sessions, I will continue to work closely with the Senate to ensure that this legislation gets to the President's desk as quickly as possible so we can deliver sound results for water users, conservation groups and the public across Oregon.

The Fairness Doctrine

When the Senate's proposed immigration legislation was defeated earlier this summer, many proponents of the bill blamed talk radio for torpedoing the highly controversial bill. Some senators were not pleased about the fact that some talk radio shows helped to mobilize an effective grassroots effort. Now, some legislators are proposing to bring back the so-called Fairness Doctrine, which found its origins in a 1949 Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulation that required broadcasters to "afford reasonable opportunity for the discussion of conflicting views of public importance." This was interpreted for many years to essentially mean that any station that broadcast one political viewpoint must also provide the opposite political viewpoint too, essentially suppressing political speech on the airwaves. Facing mounting pressure from the courts, in 1987 the FCC dropped the Fairness Doctrine, ushering in the current era of diverse and vibrant talk radio that has been so valuable to the public exchange of ideas.

In 1949, there were only about 3,000 broadcast radio stations across America. Today, however, with over 10,000, the media landscape in this country is much different. The marketplace of ideas has never been more diverse and competitive. Whether you are looking at a print publication, listening to the radio, or perusing the Internet, it is never a challenge to find someone expressing his or her opinion on a matter of national significance.

Unfortunately, those in Washington, D.C. who are interested in bringing the Fairness Doctrine back would muzzle the voice of talk radio. [This is a blatant assault on the First Amendment](#), and as a broadcaster for over 20 years I am extremely concerned about it. The First Amendment is the underpinning of our political discourse and the underpinning of our democracy. It is what allows the free flow of vibrant and diverse discussion of every viewpoint in our country.

Congressman Mike Pence, myself, and 202 other members of Congress are supporting the [Broadcaster Freedom Act](#) (HR 2905) to protect the First Amendment and broadcasters' rights. We must pass this legislation to protect the fundamental right to free speech.

County payments

I continue to work with the rest of the Oregon delegation to identify a way to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (county payments). While we were able to secure a one-year emergency extension of the program to fund the program through the current fiscal year, I am nonetheless very frustrated that more action has not been taken in this Congress to come up with a long-term solution that ensures the federal government keeps its commitment to rural communities. Of course, if the legal gridlock could be undone to actually generate more revenue from the public lands — as has always been intended in federal statutes — there would not be such a drastic need for the federal government to deliver funds to counties where it owns, in some cases, over 75 percent of the land in the county. While a revenue source that has solid bipartisan support has not been identified, we in the delegation continue to pursue every means at our disposal to ensure that the federal government is a good neighbor to rural America.

H.R. 811 – The Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2007

When I was originally approached to support H.R. 811, the Voter Confidence and Increased Accessibility Act of 2007, I signed on as a cosponsor because I support its goal of ensuring a paper trail in elections. Indeed, Oregon already ensures a paper trail in its elections because of our unique mail-in ballot system. However, local election officials soon alerted me that this legislation could seriously complicate voting procedures in the state and ultimately threaten Oregon's electoral integrity. I passed along the concerns of Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury and multiple county clerks in our district to the sponsor of the bill, but was not assured that Oregon's concerns would be addressed. Therefore, I tried to remove my name from the bill as a cosponsor, but could not do so due to a technicality in the House rules. I expect this bill to come to the House floor very soon, and will continue to do all I can to modify the bill to ensure that Oregon is not adversely affected.

INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

My Washington, D.C. office is currently accepting applications for interns. Interns are an integral part of my office as they help with office management, constituent services and various

other hands-on projects. Serving as a congressional intern is an exciting educational opportunity for those interested in learning more about Congress and the inner-workings of the House of Representatives. Those interested should fax or e-mail their resume with a cover letter, as well as any questions they might have, to Melinda McIntyre in my Washington, D.C. office (Melinda.mcintyre@mail.house.gov or fax: (202) 225-5774). Applicants should be in college or graduate school, or recent graduates of either, and willing to spend approximately three months working in the office.

I look forward to a busy September in Washington, D.C., with important meetings on both the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming. I will also be attending many more meetings in the district during the upcoming weekends and will keep you posted on them. Until the next Congressional Connection, remember that for more on the current happenings in Congress, you can always refer to the Library of Congress website [here](#). And you can always reach me through my [website](#) or by contacting [any of my offices](#) in Oregon or Washington, D.C. Thanks for taking the time to read my newsletter, and I look forward to updating you again soon on my work for the people of Oregon's Second District.

Best regards,
Congressman Greg Walden

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