

From: Representative Greg Walden Representative.Greg.Walden@mail.house.gov
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News from Representative Walden



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Dear Susan,

Combating Coronavirus

As our nation and state continue to work to combat the coronavirus, I want you to know we are doing all we can to ensure Americans have the resources and support they need. We anticipate another coronavirus relief package will come together in the next few weeks and I will be sure to provide you updates as we learn more.

I have been in constant conversations with federal officials as well as local officials here in Oregon. As Republican Leader of the Energy and Commerce Committee, I launched a second wave project, an extensive study of what we need to do to be prepared for a [second wave](#) of coronavirus, especially as it is likely to coincide with the annual flu season.

The Energy and Commerce Committee recently held a hearing that I attended examining the progress made on the development of a [COVID-19 vaccine](#). It is critical that we develop a safe and effective vaccine that is accessible for all Americans. We are seeing progress made. As Dr. Redfield, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently said, "the mission is to have a vaccine available to the American public by January 2021. I am optimistic we will have one or more vaccines available by the first of the year." But more work remains. The situation is rapidly changing, but I will continue to provide updates and resources.

Fighting for the Klamath Basin

The Klamath Basin has seen glimmers of hope these past few months. In May, I joined [thousands of farmers and ranchers](#) in the Klamath Basin to call for a reset and a fresh look at decades-old water challenges. Following that, I worked closely with Secretary of Interior David Bernhardt, and was glad to see the Bureau of Reclamation [fulfill](#) the allocation of water forecast in April and announce they would deliver 140,000 acre feet of water for farms in the Basin. While this will help most farmers get through this crop year, I'm doubling down on my efforts to get a longer-term fix.



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Rep. Walden speaking at the Klamath Basin Shut Down, Fed Up Rally.

A few weeks after the rally in Klamath, I traveled aboard Air Force One with the Department of Interior Secretary David Bernhardt. While on Air Force One, I invited the Secretary to come to the Klamath Basin to meet with stakeholders and learn about the needs of the farmers, fish, tribes, and surrounding communities. I also delivered a letter to President Trump asking for help on finding a solution for the Basin.



Rep. Walden and Secretary Bernhardt on Air Force One.

Only a few weeks after I extended the invitation, Secretary Bernhardt and Commissioner of Reclamation Brenda Burman visited the Klamath Basin to

meet with key stakeholders. The Secretary's visit was the first time in 18 years a sitting Secretary of Interior was in the Basin. We had productive meetings and I am grateful to the Administration's commitment to finding a solution for the Basin.



Rep. Walden, Rep. LaMalfa, Secretary Bernhardt, and Commissioner Burman discuss the needs of the Klamath Basin

Last week, the Bureau of Reclamation announced they would invest [\\$1.2 million](#) in new science for the Klamath Basin. This new funding will support science-based initiatives that will help get us closer to finding a solution for the Basin that benefits the farmers, fish, and tribes.

I look forward to continuing to work with Secretary Bernhardt and the Trump Administration on finding a solution to the decades old Klamath Basin Water Crisis and I applaud their steadfast commitment to this issue.



Secretary of Interior Bernhardt tours Midland field of crosses

Backdropped by a dusty field filled with white crosses representing lost

Backdropped by a dusty field filled with white crosses representing lost farms, Secretary of Interior David Bernhardt chatted casually with Klamath Basin farmers and ranchers and their families Thursday afternoon, vowing to chart a path towards a solution to water conflicts in the Klamath Basin.

Bernhardt was joined by Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Brenda Burman, Congressmen Greg Walden (R-OR) and Doug LaMalfa (R-California), and other top water officials in the field that hosted the “Shut Down Fed Up” rally held on May 29. The rally that drew more than 4,000 people, following a tractor and vehicle convoy that spanned more than 29 miles between Merrill and Klamath Falls, also drew national attention across the miles from Bernhardt and other top federal officials. Backdropped by a dusty field filled with white crosses representing lost farms, Secretary of Interior David Bernhardt chatted casually with Klamath Basin farmers and ranchers and their families Thursday afternoon, vowing to chart a path towards a solution to water conflicts in the Klamath Basin. Read more [here](#).

Preparing for and Preventing Wildfires

As smoke-filled skies in southern Oregon recently reminded us all, wildfire season is here. This year, our wildland firefighters face unprecedented challenges of high levels of drought as well as COVID-19. Crews of firefighters working in close contact in smokey conditions pose a risk, as do large fire camps. We must take aggressive action to stop these wildfires while they are small to protect the health of our firefighters and our communities.

In July, I met in [Medford](#) with local and regional leadership for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to discuss the fire season and what that looks like in light of COVID-19. Both the BLM and Forest Service have indicated they believe they will have the resources they need for this fire season to accomplish our shared goal of acting quickly when fires strike to keep them small.

We also must continue to improve wildfire prevention work. Recently, USFS announced a [new rule](#) to update the agency’s special-use regulations to improve the reliability of the electrical grid and reduce the threat of wildfires. Unwieldy government regulations are standing in the way of common-sense risk reduction strategies, including hazard tree removal and improvements to the aging power grid. This new rule takes steps to tear down these burdensome regulations and builds on policies I helped pass into law in 2018.



Rep. Walden Holds Local Meeting On Fire Preparedness and COVID-19

MEDFORD, Ore. -- On Wednesday, Representative Greg Walden sat down with multiple fire agencies to talk about the 2020 fire season and COVID-19. "Obviously fighting fires is tough enough; throw COVID-19 on top of it and you've got an additional unprecedented challenge," said Rep. Walden. "I think it's really positive news their initial plan is to do a very aggressive initial attack and get these fires out quickly. I think that will benefit us all." Officials from the Oregon Department of Forestry, U.S Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management made it clear that this season, fires need to be put out as soon as possible — while also making sure it's done safely. Read the full story [here](#).

Providing for our Veterans

Our veterans deserve to receive the benefits and services they earned. That is why I recently introduced a bill that would re-authorize a successful Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) [work-study program](#) in congressional offices, allowing veterans to assist other veterans. This legislation helps provide veterans access to job training and work study programs— both of which play critical roles in veterans' transition to civilian life. I am glad to sponsor this bill that will deliver for so many veterans in Oregon and across the nation and I look forward to working with my colleagues to get this bill passed and to the President's desk.

I also recently [introduced](#) a bill along with the rest of the Oregon Congressional Delegation to rename the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) clinic in Bend after Bob Maxwell, a World War II veteran and Medal of Honor Recipient from Bend. Bob Maxwell, who passed in May of 2019, was an American hero and a friend. At the time of his passing, he was the oldest Medal of Honor recipient in the nation.



Rep. Walden presenting Bob Maxwell with American flag flown over U.S.

Capitol to honor Maxwell's 97th birthday in 2017 in Bend.

[Bob Maxwell](#) represented the best of what Oregon and America have to offer. The gallantry of America's oldest Medal of Honor recipient was well known -- throwing his unprotected body on a German hand grenade to protect his comrades in WWII earned Bob Maxwell the highest military honor, his second Silver Star, a second Purple Heart, and a Bronze Star. For those who had the pleasure of knowing Bob, they know that his bravery and heroism were only matched by his kindness, warmth, and sense of humor. Bob's legacy will live on in the hearts and minds of everyone he interacted with and will forever be cherished in the country that he sacrificed so much to protect. It is my hope that this bipartisan legislation will swiftly move to President Trump's desk and become law -- forever ensuring Bob's legacy is honored and his heroism is remembered.

Improving Infrastructure

The [Bridge of the Gods](#) in the Columbia River Gorge is an important regional transportation link and a vital, but dangerous, connection on the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). Residents and tourists alike depend on efficient and safe transportation across the river, but for day and thru-hikers working their way along the PCT, the current bridge is a dangerous experience. Last year, over 7,000 hikers crossed the narrow 1920's era bridge, sharing lanes with cars and trucks.

I worked with Oregon Congressman Peter DeFazio to secure a provision in the recently passed House Infrastructure Bill that will ensure access to federal funding to improve safety for vehicles, pedestrian, and bikers across the Bridge of the Gods. If signed into law, this will move the hikers, horseback riders and bikers off to a path alongside the bridge, improving safety along the PCT for all involved.

Supporting Small Businesses

In July, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced a series of CARES Act [grants](#) for Oregon's Second District including in Bend, Pendleton, Enterprise, The Dalles, Medford, and Klamath Falls. This funding is a result of the CARES Act, which I helped usher into law in March. This money will provide economic support to small businesses across Oregon as they rebuild and recover from the economic hardship they face as a result of COVID-19.

These funds are in addition to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) forgivable loans to eligible small business across the state. According to recent data, 64,130 Oregon small businesses were able to take advantage of the program and keep their doors open. I look forward to continuing to work with the Trump Administration to ensure that Oregon receives the support necessary to protect Oregonians, combat this deadly virus, and get our communities up and operating.

Remembering Congressman John Lewis

Our nation recently lost an incredible man and civil rights leader -- Congressman John Lewis. He was an American hero and a champion of civil rights. America is surely a better place because of his tireless efforts in the

rights. America is surely a better place because of his tireless efforts in the fight for equality and he will be greatly missed. Mylene and I are keeping him and his family in our prayers.



View of the memorial for Congressman Lewis.

Ways My Office Can Help

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused economic hardship for many Oregonians. The State of Oregon Employment Department's (OED) delay in assisting the more than 533,000 Oregonians who were forced to file unemployment claims since March 15, 2020 has left many Oregonians in dire straits.

So far this year, out of over 1,570 constituent cases worked, which is the most cases ever handled in a year during my time in office, 450 of those are related to not having received state unemployment benefits. When we receive these calls related to unemployment, we then provide constituents with contact information for their state legislator, who may be able to assist with the review of their case. These constituents include unemployed veterans who have waited more than ten weeks for the state to provide their unemployment benefits, single mothers whose checking accounts are overdrawn from trying to feed their children, and young people who just bought their first house and are facing foreclosure, just to name a few examples.

If you need help with any federal agency, please reach out to my office at 800-533-3303. My staff is available and ready to assist you with problems you are having with federal agencies, and my office will do everything in our power to get results for you.

That's all for this update. Remember, you can always keep in touch with me via [email](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

It is an honor to represent you in the U.S. Congress.

Best regards,

Greg Walden
U.S. Representative
Oregon's Second District

Washington, DC Office
2185 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: (202) 225-6730

Bend Office
1051 NW Bond St. #400
Bend, OR 97701
Phone: (541) 389-4408

La Grande Office
1211 Washington Avenue
La Grande, OR 97850
Phone: (541) 624-2400

Medford Office
14 N. Central Ave. #112
Medford, OR 97501
Phone: (541) 776-4646

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