

# Legislation will cut overtime for millions of hourly workers

By Anne Phyllen  
Bend

## hourly workers

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Does Congressman Greg Walden meet with ordinary citizens or just contributors? Since I'm not invited to any functions he attends could someone ask him some questions about his voting record the next time they see him?

Congressman Walden recently voted for the mega-monster omnibus bill that, among other things, restricts the rights of hourly workers to be paid overtime. This bill will cause eight million American workers to lose their right to time-and-a-half pay when they work more than 40 hours in a single week. One of the new rules would allow employers to redefine workers who hold "a position of responsibility" as exempt from overtime. Workers earning more than \$65,000 a year could lose overtime pay under the rules.

Apparently no one in Eastern Oregon depends on overtime pay to make house payments or pay medical bills. Some people even use their overtime pay to buy the goods that this administration wants us to buy. Nurses fought long and hard for the right to be paid overtime. Now the Bush administration wants to take this away from nurses, firefighters and police among others. One of the Republican Senators recently stated that firefighters and police personnel should be willing to work overtime for free (while voting to raise congressional salaries) ... and apparently Greg Walden agrees.

This same bill gave Iowa money to build a Rain Forest Museum. A town in Nevada was awarded money to fix its 61-year-old swimming pool. Around the same time Greg voted against the amendment that would have stopped the curious use of allowing sick animals into our food chain. Apparently none of his constituents is a meat-eater.

I'm not too thrilled with the idea of eating Elsie the cow with all the bovine growth hormone and antibiotics pumped into her, but the fact she is ill and still being allowed in the food chain just makes me sick. It should make you sick, too.

Look at the stupidity of that vote from a macroeconomic standpoint. He voted to allow dairy farmers to make some money by dumping downer cows into the marketplace. Now the U.S. cattle industry will suffer because of quarantines placed on U.S. exports by other countries. Guess none of his constituents are cattle ranchers.

Recently, The Oregonian published a map showing the extent of child hunger in Oregon. The districts with the highest percentage of children who are hungry are in Greg Walden's district. About 321,000 children — one in three — live in poverty or near poverty (defined as less than twice the poverty level) according to a report earlier this month on the status of children by the nonpartisan Children First for Oregon. The report singled out threats to family financial stability as its chief concern. It would strike me that if Walden really had the interests of his constituents at heart instead of his constituents at heart voted — at a minimum — to keep what food they might get safe. And at best he'd be working hard to

get those families living wage jobs. We are talking about children and not those infamous welfare queens — that never really existed — but working people. Up to 70 percent of the people who are living in poverty in Oregon are the so-called "working poor." That is, these people usually work full time but don't earn enough to leave the ranks of the poor.

He voted against allowing individuals to order drugs from Canada and against HMOs to negotiate with drug companies for lower prices. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure that the main beneficiaries of the Medicare reform bill are the pharmaceutical and hospital industries. Perhaps Congressman Walden has no senior citizens in his district.

Congressman Walden's votes do not seem to apply to the majority of the citizens of this district. While he votes a strictly conservative line, he seems to forget the large number of children and seniors in this district. These are the people most hurt by his votes.

Congressman Walden's views are apparently a secret. He has refused to complete Project Vote Smart's questionnaire (<http://www.vote-smart.org>) regarding his views. Only his contributors apparently know.

Anne Phyllen is a retired Army nurse and has lived in Bend since 1997.

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P.O. Box 6020  
Bend, OR 97708

FAX: 385-5804

E-MAIL: [bulletin@bendbulletin.com](mailto:bulletin@bendbulletin.com)