

Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR)



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Ron Wyden, Oregon's senior senator, was elected to the U.S. House in 1980 and then to the U.S. Senate in 1996. Wyden grew up in California, graduated from Stanford, and came to Oregon to attend the University of Oregon Law School. After graduating in 1974, he founded the Gray Panthers, an advocacy group for the elderly. His first foray into electoral politics was sponsoring a successful referendum reducing the price of dentures.

Wyden serves on the following committees: Budget, Aging, Intelligence, and is Chairman of the Finance Committee. He is also the ranking Democrat on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over the nation's energy and natural resources policy. This is his 18th consecutive year of holding town hall meetings in all 36 Oregon counties.

Wyden has a knack for forging counterintuitive political alliances. In his years in Washington, Wyden has also shown a wide range of policy interests ranging from health care reform to taxes.

In December 2012, Wyden introduced the "Data Cap Integrity Act" (S. 3703) to empower consumers to better manage their data usage and to promote innovation online. The act would institute industry-wide data management standards by ensuring that data caps are only used to manage network congestion. The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Wyden is a proponent of political transparency. In 2013, he authored the "Follow the Money Act of 2013" (S. 791) to allow for the identification of funding towards political activity. The act is the first bipartisan campaign finance reform legislation in the Senate in over a decade. Wyden's plan creates a simple and universal system for voters to identify the source of campaign funding, meanwhile closing loopholes in existing election campaign law. The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

Another piece of legislation relevant to Wyden's interest in transparency is the "Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act (FASTR)" (S. 350), which he cosponsored with Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas) in February 2013. FASTR would

require all federally funded research papers to be available on a public database no longer than six months after being published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Wyden is interested in increasing transparency associated with obtaining a college degree. In the 112th Congress he authored the "Student Right To Know Before You Go Act" to help students and families make more informed decisions about higher education. The bill would guarantee easy access to detailed information, including expected earnings and debt load after graduation based on the type of degree earned and university attended. In May 2013, Wyden and a bipartisan, bicameral coalition including Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Florida), Sen. Mark Warner (R-Virginia), Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-California), and Rep. Robert Andrews (D-New Jersey) re-introduced the bill as S. 915 and H.R. 1937.

Wyden is attentive to uniquely Oregon interests. He co-authored the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, which created the county payments program for timber-dependent communities – legislation that has kept many rural Oregon communities afloat during tough budget times. Wyden and fellow Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley (D) re-introduced three bills in February 2013 that would designate over 100,000 acres of land as wilderness or preserved areas in Oregon.

At the end of 2013, Wyden unveiled the ambitious O&C Land Act of 2013 to establish new jobs for Oregonians. Wyden seeks to produce sustainable harvests by utilizing proven science in forestry management. This act would create jobs by almost doubling the current timber harvest, meanwhile protecting nearly one million acres of land.

Recent visits to OSU

In May 2013, Sen. Wyden hosted a forum at the LaSells Stewart Center to discuss federal energy policy with OSU students.