

Occupying the Invisible Congressman

Written by The Source Editorial Board
Wednesday, 21 December 2011 09:49

On Dec. 6, a group of constituents went to Rep. Greg Walden's office in Bend. The congressman wasn't there, which wasn't surprising; he rarely is. Other groups showed up at Walden's offices in Medford and LaGrande. (He wasn't there either.)

Holding signs saying We Are the 99 Percent and a banner that asked Where's Walden? The protesters demanded that Walden hold more town hall meetings in places where more of his constituents can conveniently attend.

The response of Walden's staffers to that perfectly reasonable request was to call the cops. A total of 14 Occupy Walden demonstrators were arrested, cited for criminal trespass, and ordered not to visit Walden's offices again unless invited.

We'd advise them not to hold their breath waiting for that invitation.

To be fair to Walden, he's held quite a few town hall-type events in his district – 14 of them in the past year. The problem is where he holds them.

Walden's office didn't return our phone call, but a check of his website indicated that since 2007 he hasn't scheduled a single town hall in Bend, and only one in Medford. He's held town halls all over the vast Second Congressional District – in Pendleton, The Dalles, LaGrande, Grants Pass, Baker City and Condon, to name a few – but nary a one in what is by far the district's biggest city.

The district's biggest city, of course, also happens to be its most liberal (or at least moderate) city. Is that why Walden has been the Invisible Congressman around here? We only report; you'll have to decide.

It's true that Walden has an obligation to his rural constituents as well as his more urban ones. And it's nice that the good people of Rufus, Dufur and Fossil get to see a real live congressman once in a while. And no doubt Walden enjoys the chance to put on his Wranglers and

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howdy-doo the folks out in sagebrush country.

But like it or not (and for us it's mostly not) Walden is our congressman too, and when he doesn't show up here to press the flesh and listen to our gripes from year's end to year's end – well, we can't help feeling a little bit hurt.

A little bit hurt, and pretty damn angry. Because we and other people in Bend have a lot of questions we'd like to ask Greg Walden. For example, about his stand on Medicare reform, or extending unemployment benefits, or the issue of net neutrality, or in general why he so consistently toes the Tea Party line and stands on the side of the 1-percenters on issue after issue.

So we're giving THE GLASS SLIPPER to the Occupy Walden group, hoping they'll keep showing up at Walden's offices from time to time until he develops enough testicularity to engage in a real give-and-take with voters all over his district, not just in safe, predictably conservative rural areas.

Or, realizing that's an unlikely outcome, we hope the demonstrations will at least remind Walden that a little town called Bend is still on the map.