

Senator Ron Wyden (D-Oregon)



Whether he's taking on powerful interests, listening to constituents at one of his famous town hall meetings or standing up for Oregonians on the floor of the U.S. Senate, Ron Wyden is an effective leader on the issues that matter most. As the Wall Street Journal's Kimberly Strassel recently put it: "He's best described as a wonk, a workhorse, a doer."

Commitment to Open Government and Bipartisanship

Oregonians know Ron as a senator who listens. Always citing the need to "throw open the doors of government for Oregonians," he holds an open-to-all town hall meeting in each of Oregon's 36 counties each year. Thus far he has held more than 700 meetings. Wyden's dedication to hearing all sides of an issue and looking for common sense, non-partisan solutions has won him trust on both sides of the aisle and put him at the heart of nearly every debate. In 2011, the Almanac of American Politics described Wyden as having "displayed a genius for coming up with sensible-sounding ideas no one else had thought of and making the counter-intuitive political alliances that prove helpful in passing bills." The Washington Post's Ezra Klein wrote: "The country has problems. And Ron Wyden has comprehensive, bipartisan proposals for fixing them."

Wyden believes the nation's biggest challenges can only be solved by what he calls "principled bipartisanship," solutions that allow all parties to stay true to their respective principles and celebrate agreements. Following that approach has helped him author more than 150 bipartisan bills and assemble unprecedented bipartisan coalitions on issues such as health care, infrastructure and tax reform.

When principles are at stake, however, Wyden has never shied from standing alone, even when it means taking on powerful interest groups or his own party. His lone stand against the PROTECT IP Act (PIPA) and its predecessor, the Combating Online Infringement and Counterfeit Act (COICA), put a spotlight on the problematic legislation being fast tracked through Congress and served as a rallying point for the historic Internet protests that ultimately toppled the bills. He stood alone on the floor of the Senate to block right wing efforts to overturn Oregon's Death with Dignity law; a law that Oregon voters have passed twice. He went head-to-head with the E.P.A. to reduce cancer-causing benzene in gasoline sold in Oregon, and key elements of Wyden's Kinship Care Act were included as part of major reforms improving the nation's foster care system. Wyden's provisions recognized and strengthened support for kinship care, the full-time care and protection of children by relatives.

His relentless defiance of the national security community's abuse of secrecy forced the declassification of the CIA Inspector General's 9/11 report, shut down the controversial Total Information Awareness program and put a spotlight on both the Bush and Obama Administration's reliance on "secret law." To protect hard-working folks in the intelligence community and ensure informed public debate on national security issues, Wyden successfully fought to have controversial anti-leaks provisions removed from the latest intelligence authorization bill.

Wyden has taken the lead on policies that are helping to grow the economy in areas like improved infrastructure through his Build America Bonds program, micro and nano-technology, e-commerce, and through incentives for cleaner sources of energy.

He has won countless awards for his pioneering role in establishing a free and open Internet, is known for his commitment to an open government, having authored the "Stand By Your Ad" law and the resolution ending Senate Secret Holds, and he has been routinely recognized as one of the Senate's foremost health policy thinkers.

Commitment to Oregon Values & Priorities

In Oregon, Wyden has authored laws extending permanent Wilderness protections to more than 400,000 acres including Mt. Hood, the Columbia River Gorge, Oregon's Bull Run Watershed, Badlands, Spring Basin, Copper Salmon and Soda Mountain. Since 2000, the Wyden-authored Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act, commonly known as the "county payments" law, has helped provide a stable source of revenue for historically timber-dependent communities and Wyden's Combat Illegal Logging Act has helped protect Oregon's hardwood industries from the import of illegally harvested timber products.

Wyden serves on the Committees on Finance, Budget, Intelligence, and Energy and Natural Resources. He is ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee and the ranking Democrat on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Wyden began college at the University of California-Santa Barbara where he won a basketball scholarship and played in Division I competition for two seasons before transferring to Stanford University where he completed his Bachelors degree with distinction. He earned his law degree from the University of Oregon School of Law in 1974, after which he taught gerontology and co-founded the Oregon chapter of the Gray Panthers, an advocacy group for the elderly. He also served as the director of Oregon Legal Services for the Elderly from 1977 to 1979 and was a member of the Oregon State Board of Examiners of Nursing Home Administrators during that same period. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1981 until his election to the U.S. Senate.

Senator Wyden's home is in Portland; he is married to Nancy Wyden, whom he wed in September 2005. He has five children: Adam, Lilly, Ava, William and Scarlett.