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SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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Barrasso focuses on resources during visit

by Joe Sovo

U.S. Sen. Barrasso spoke about the aborted Keystone pipeline project, the value of Wyoming's natural resources, the price of natural gas and the cost of health care at the Kiwanis Club of Thermopolis meeting during his Jan. 19 visit to Hot Springs County.

The junior senator also distributed "The Western Caucus Jobs Frontier" booklet that he co-authored. The handout is subtitled "Breaking Down Washington's Barriers to America's Red, White and Blue Jobs."

Barrasso said the Keystone pipeline from Canada down through the middle of the United States would have created 20,000 jobs to get it constructed and injected \$7 billion into the U.S. economy. However, President Barack Obama went thumbs down on the project.

"It's energy — oil — from our northern neighbor, Canada, and less dependence on the Middle East," Barrasso said in an interview after the Kiwanis meeting. "You have so much unrest there. The more you can do to develop energy resources closer to home the better it is... This oil is going to get used and I think it's better if we have it here in the United States rather than North American energy going to China and us sending our dollars to the Middle East."

Barrasso indicated there are a number of "environmental extremists" who are important to Obama's re-election campaign. "I have accused the president of putting his own re-election above jobs for American workers," he said.

The senator was asked about the use of CO2 for extraction of oil in Wyoming, specifically Hot Springs County.

"I think we ought to be focused on energy security. To me that's more American energy," Barrasso said. "We're blessed in Wyoming with lots of different sources of energy, renewable energy. We need to be more energy efficient with oil, gas, coal, and uranium for nuclear power. We need it all."

"When I think of energy, I think of energy security along with economic growth and environmental stewardship. I truly believe people of Wyoming through multiple use of lands have really been wonderful stewards of the land over the 121 years we've been a state."

Trimming state budget

Barrasso commented on Gov. Matt Mead's dilemma of cutting his proposed budget due to such

factors as the much lower price of natural gas in Wyoming. That could lower revenue projections by \$100 million over the two-year budget period.

"Wyoming has to live within its means. We do it every year. You can't spend more than you take in," Barrasso said, and the U.S. is borrowing another \$4 million a minute. "That's why Wyoming is still the number-one state in the country in terms of the best-run state in the best fiscal condition."

The senator spoke about the economic status of the U.S. up to the primary and general elections.

"Every day, I focus on jobs, the economy, the debt and the spending that is happening," he said, pointing out the unemployment rate in Wyoming remains lower than national average.

"The number-one concern of small business owners is Washington's red tape that makes it harder for them to create jobs," Barrasso said. "I'm focused on making the pie bigger so that there are more people working, more taxes being paid to deal with the deficit. That's the way to do it, to get the economy going again."

Barrasso said he's one of 20 legislators appointed to the Senate conference committee dealing with the payroll tax cut that's been extended for two months, until the end of February.

"I think we should extend that for the rest of the year and that's what we're going to be working on," he said. The first committee meeting was Tuesday.

Rising cost of health care

Barrasso, who is a licensed doctor, has been in the medical field for many years and he is very concerned about the cost of health care.

"I continue to be involved with the Wyoming health fairs. You go to Thermopolis Health Fairs. There are big turnouts, people going for early detection of problems. Hot Springs County gets it right," he said.

The senator still believes Obamacare, the president's healthcare law, is unconstitutional. He said the U.S. Supreme Court will rule on the law in June after hearings in March.

"The incentives and the consequences in the new healthcare law are actually going to make health care more expensive and not the kind of quality we want," Barrasso said.

He said most Americans believe the cost of health care will go up and the quality will go down with Obamacare.

"People don't want to pay more and get less. It's not something we believe in," Barrasso said.



Kiwanis member Lynda Wyss speaks with U.S. Sen. John Barrasso after he addressed the Thermopolis club's meeting Jan. 19. — Joe Sovo photo

Phones down at LEC Friday

Power at the Joint Law Enforcement Center will be off for 15 minutes, from 8 to 8:15 a.m. Friday.

This will include phone service and emergency 911 calls.

In case of emergency, please call 864-3838. A dispatcher will be handling emergency calls at that number until 8:15 a.m.

Power will be restored and 911 will be available after 8:15 a.m.

House District 28 takes in area towns

by Joe Sovo

House District 28, which includes all of Hot Springs County, will have a new look in light of redistricting by the Wyoming Legislature next month.

The Legislature's Corporations, Elections and Political Subdivisions Committee met Jan. 19 in Cheyenne to finalize a redistricting bill that will be presented during the 2012 legislative budget session, which convenes Feb. 13 in Cheyenne.

Redistricting is the process of redrawing the geographic boundaries of an area from which people are elected as representatives to the state legislature or U.S. Congress. Under the state constitution, the legislature is required to redraw state legislative districts at the first budget session following the federal census. The Legislature's Joint Interim Committee is charged with coming up with

a redistricting plan and submitting it to the Legislature at the February 2012 budget session. New district boundaries will be used in the November 2012 elections.

Since Hot Springs County is one of only two counties to lose population since the 2000 census, it must add enough population in HD28 to get within the 5 percent lower deviation of the 9,394 people required for each voting district.

"In Hot Springs County and the Big Horn Basin, it went pretty well," said Rep. Lorraine Quarberg (R-Thermopolis, HD28). "It's (the redistricting) kind of complicated."

With the new plan, the HD28 deviation is a minus-4.05 percent, which is within the figures mandated in redistricting.

Meeteetse in HD28

The last piece of the redistricting puzzle for HD28 fell into place with the addition of the three Meeteetse voting districts, following a plan submitted by Quarberg and Sen. Hank Coe of Park County. The finalized plan has all three — the Town of Meeteetse, Above Meeteetse and Below Meeteetse — in the same house district.

"It keeps them together in the house district. Their first preference was to stay in Park County," said Rep. Lorraine Quarberg of Thermopolis, who represents HD28, on Monday. "This was their second best option... It's a significant change to where we were."

The Manderson voting district had been divided between HD27 and HD28. By adding Meeteetse to HD28, it allows the Manderson district to be "whole" — all in HD27.

See Redistricting on page 9

Draft plan would affect Shoshone Forest

by Cindy Glasson

More than 54,000 acres of land in Hot Springs County may be affected by a proposed draft plan that encompasses the Shoshone National Forest.

At a recent meeting at Days Inn in Thermopolis, the proposed changes to the 1986 Forest Plan were presented by national forest representatives.

Forest products

Changes were made to the 1986 plan in 1994, changing the average annual volume of sawtimber and other forest products to 4.5 million board feet.

Forest service officials said they have not yet run models to predict the volume that will be allowed with this revision, but are in the process of updating things to reflect changes in timber created by recent insect infestations.

While there are no definitive numbers at this time, the forest service does suggest that salvage sales due to wildfires and insect epidemics may create temporary fluctuations in the amount of timber that may be harvested.

Livestock grazing

Those doing livestock grazing on Shoshone National Forest land will probably not be impacted by the new plan.

According to the plan, the condition of the majority of rangeland within the current grazing allotments is good to very good and calls for grazing

to continue at current levels with slight variations to accommodate changes in forage production and resource conditions.

Wildlife habitat

The list of 13 management species will be pared down to just four — aquatic riparian, aspen, lodgepole and sagebrush. These species best represent habitats of concern to the forest service.

Other changes to the list of threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate wildlife species are also incorporated in the draft plan.

Species on the regional forester's sensitive species list are also included.

Minerals

The proposed changes to the forest plan do not address oil and gas availability in the forest, so the forest service plans to continue under the guidance of the 1995 Oil and Gas Availability Record of Decision.

Depending on the final plan, there could be changes in management of acres of allowable surface occupancy.

Recreation

The proposed plan takes a good look at the impact of dispersed camping in and near riparian areas while continuing to provide a diverse array of recreational opportunities.

See Shoshone on page 9



Wyoming's First Lady Carol Mead sits with Orion Jenks during the classroom portion of the Early Childhood presentation this week. — Cindy Glasson photo

Early Childhood Program vital

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County School District's Early Childhood liaison Amy Ready presented the district's groundbreaking Early Childhood Program to a distinguished list of guests at the school auditorium early this week.

The more than 100 attendees at the two-day meeting included Wyoming First Lady Carol Mead, members of the University of Wyoming College of Education, legislators and representatives from school districts across the state.

The program emphasized the need for Early Childhood education within school dis-

tricts, something Hot Springs County has been doing for several years.

"We would like to get an Early Childhood liaison in every community in the state," Ready said. "Things have really changed. The superintendents aren't looking at it like a daycare program anymore."

Ready said the program is more vital than ever now, creating a smooth transition from pre-school into kindergarten.

"Our program ensures the students are ready socially, emotionally and academically before they get to kindergarten," she said. "The way the curriculum works, the chil-

dren go into kindergarten already aware of how things are going to be."

Getting parents involved in their child's education is the key to success according to Ready.

"Sometimes a parent had a bad experience with school when they were young," she said. "Parents are getting more involved early on to make sure their kids have a better experience than they did."

Being able to present Hot Springs County's program is something of a "feather in our cap," Ready said. "We are really a model school for Early Childhood education in the state."