

Clinton focuses on Oregon issues

Tuesday, April 08, 2008

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The Hillsboro Argus

The Argus

Sen. Hillary Clinton stepped onto the raised platform centered in Liberty High School's gym just after 10 a.m. Saturday.

Rep. Darlene Hooley, D-Ore., and Gov. Ted Kulongoski spoke first, building the crowd's enthusiasm. Both have endorsed Clinton as their choice for the May 20 Democratic primary.

When Clinton took over the lectern, she acknowledged their support.

Hooley, who has announced her retirement from Congress, would "have to keep working in behalf of Oregon and America," under a Clinton presidency, she said, implying a possible appointment.

For the governor, who she recognized as "enthusiastic and a good bowler," she promised, "There's a bowling alley in the White House, and you'll be able to be the first bowler on it."

If Clinton has a standard stump speech, she applied local touches liberally to turn it personal and locally relevant. "I'm glad to be able to blaze a home in the land of the Trail Blazers," she said at one point.

Paying homage to Oregon's "green" reputation, Clinton dedicated much of her speech to environmental concerns, especially her proposals for U.S. energy independence. She promised to cut oil imports by two-thirds and greenhouse emissions by 80 percent.

To emphasize the point, her campaign workers passed to the media, copies of a press release, "Hillary Clinton's Plan to Create a Thriving Green Energy Sector in Oregon and Across America." Highlights included:

a permanent renewable tax credit and incentives for wind power;

a fund to promote certified green buildings;

a fund for clean energy technology manufacturing; and

investments in light rail.

Clinton also focused on a hot-button local issue: the proposed siting of LNG terminals and related pipeline construction. Gales Creek resident and pipeline opponent Anne Berblinger joined Clinton on stage and described the impact the project would have on her organic farm and the greater Oregon environment.

She said she has been fighting against a similar proposal in her own state, the Broadwater project, a floating liquefied natural gas transfer platform in Long Island Sound between New York and Connecticut.

Clinton promised to undo "the damage that's been done" by the 2005 federal energy bill created by a task force led by Vice President Dick Cheney, which took away the states' power to site LNG terminals and gave it to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

She also said she would end the oil company subsidies it provided and impose a windfall profits tax on oil.

The crowd greeted each topic with cheers and applause, often standing, then politely silencing and sitting down to await the candidate's next point.

Emotions especially peaked when Clinton promised that getting the troops out of Iraq is her "highest priority, but must be done in the right way," and when she said she would replace the No Child Left Behind Act with a "growth model" that measured each child's progress.