

The Inter-Mountain

Boso visits Rotary, ERCC

ELKINS – The state’s 11th Senatorial District representative visited Elkins Monday to discuss the upcoming legislative session and to seek input from local residents.

Sen. Gregory Boso, R-Nicholas, served as keynote speaker at the Elkins Rotary Club’s weekly luncheon at the Elkins-Randolph County YMCA, and took a tour of the Elkins Rehabilitation & Care Center.

The 11th Senatorial District covers Randolph, Pocahontas, Upshur, Pendleton, Webster and Nicholas counties and part of Grant County, which is roughly 20 percent of the state in land area.

Boso told the Rotarians in attendance Monday there are four primary things that define him: His faith, his family, his service as a firefighter and his work as a civil engineer. Before he was appointed to the position nearly a year ago, Boso had not served as a politician.

“I didn’t know what kind of roller coaster ride I was in for,” he told Rotarians.

Boso was appointed by Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin after Clark Barnes vacated the position to serve as West Virginia Senate Clerk. The 11th Senatorial District seat is up for election this year, with the primary election set for May 10 and the general election slated for Nov. 8.

“I know, as one who has never been involved in politics before to have this privilege and honor of serving I get to continue in a different arena

the things that I love to do,” he said. “And that’s taking care of people.”

Boso noted that during the last legislative session in 2015, several bills passed that help take care of people, but there are many more that need to be brought up again.

He specifically identified prevailing wage and right-to-work legislation.

Concerning the much-deliberated-on Senate Bill 361 – the prevailing wage bill – Boso said his experience as an engineer has allowed him “to be a mouthpiece” for fellow legislators to “educate them” on various issues that effect construction, workers compensation, liability and other concerns.

Following his presentation, Boso opened up the floor to Rotarians to voice their concerns.

Rotarian Richard Holland noted “it’s refreshing to have somebody in Charleston that isn’t a career politician.” He asked Boso for his thoughts on prevailing wage.

“It needs to be repealed,” he said. “The process that we have in Charleston is corrupt. The backdoor politics through the course of this last year were quite evident.”

Boso noted what he believes are two apparent mistakes with the bill. First, neither the economic departments at West Virginia University or Marshall were consulted to develop the rates. Secondly, too many provisional benefits are included, such as apprenticeship training and dues calculations, he said.

“It’s time to pull the plug on prevailing wage,” he said. “Why are our teachers being asked to live in poverty in many cases and these guys are standing on the side of the road flipping a sign – most of whom didn’t graduate high school.”

Rotarian Jim Schoonover expressed concern that the elderly, particularly

widows, do not receive state income tax exemptions.

“It just doesn’t seem fair for people that have been good, diligent tax payers all their lives,” he said. “Now they’re spending up all they’re monies and getting no relief from the state.”

Boso said this is one of the pieces that need to be taken into consideration through the tax reform process that began in June.

“I hear you,” he said. “As we get a little more seasoned in our years, we’re looking at those kind of situations. The federal government gives us relief and the state does not and we’re trying to take care of ourselves.”

After the meeting, Boso said he wants to be available to his constituents.

“This is not about me, it’s about the people that we serve in order to make sure we’re doing the right things,” he said. “Everybody has a voice. I have to try and discern what’s best for the region and state from the voices I hear.”

Prior to the luncheon, Boso toured the facilities of Elkins Rehabilitation & Care Center, specifically the new unit – “Unit 2” – which, upon regulatory approval, will be the Dementia Unit, and the new Rehabilitation Unit parts of the facility.

“Unless I’m there and I get to meet the people and get to know what issues are affecting them, I don’t know how to deal with issues that come before us that may affect them,” he said.

ERCC representatives pointed out to Boso during the tour that there are significant inconsistencies by surveyors responsible for issuing citations. The senator said “clear cut objectives” must be laid out for inspectors that aren’t “bureaucratic twistings of what they think ought to be there.” Boso added the state’s education system suffers similar roadblocks.

“One person looks at it one way and another person looks at it another way it becomes a moving target,” he said. “We have to get the moving

target out of play when people are talking about peoples' lives.”

Boso said the biggest thing he took away from touring the facility is how passionate staff members are at ERCC.

“They do a wonderful job,” he said. “The facility is well-maintained, well-funded and well-staffed and I was impressed that it didn’t have the feel of a traditional convalescence home.”

Elkins Rehabilitation and Care Center is a 111-bed non-profit, long-term care and rehabilitation facility in Elkins. ERCC offers a wide range of rehabilitative and daily care services and employs more than 150 full-time and part-time staff members.

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