

Congressman Earl Blumenauer
September 2, 2003

For as long as most of you can remember, it has been my honor to serve my neighbors and my community in public office. For the last few months, I have been considering how best to continue that service.

Over the course of the spring and summer along with countless personal conversations, I have had more than 50 meetings, some large, others small, some public, others private. Coming at a time of intense pressure on Capitol Hill and serious questions about Portland, it gave me an opportunity to step back to think about the role that I play now and can play in the future.

For me, this is not a political question, but a matter of finding the right thing to do. Where can I have the most impact?

This was an extremely difficult decision. The issues here in Portland are compelling to me: this is my home, and we have many challenges to meet.

But as I look at what is happening to our nation and the world – and how those issues also affect Portland and its people – it has become clear to me that what Portland needs is strong, effective leadership in the United States Congress. And I believe this is the place I can do the most good.

As I met with over 2,000 people, it is clear that Oregonians agree that this nation is at a crossroads, and most are disturbed about the direction we are taking. At home and abroad the choices being made are eroding our standing in the world, weakening our fundamental liberties, degrading the economic well being of all but a few, and playing fast and loose with the environment. These concerns on the national level affect us here at home.

Since President Bush took office in January 2001, Oregon has lost 50,800 jobs. Our 8.1% unemployment rate is the highest in the nation. Thousands of aging, disadvantaged and poor Oregonians are losing access to critical social services made worse by slashing federal funding. More tax cuts are scheduled for those who need it the least while we add a trillion dollars to the deficit in the next two years. And Oregonians have paid the ultimate price for an intervention in Iraq that every day provides new evidence that our deep reservations were well founded.

There is a better way. Instead of tax giveaways, we should invest to repair our crumbling bridges, schools and park systems – putting people to work now and bettering our communities. And there are many specific initiatives that we have worked on, including:

- Helping lead the charge to fix the transportation bill on the floor this week;
- Protecting our air, water and land – and combating global warming;
- Turning the administration's lip service on education (Leave No Child Untested) into a real federal commitment;
- And elevating the urban livability issues that are my passion into a genuine national movement.

The list is long, and important. Eight years of fighting for Portland, Oregon and America in Congress have given me the experience, credibility and, yes, seniority to make a real difference. At the end of the day, making a difference is what it is all about.

I am deeply indebted to thousands of people who have worked with me through my career and particularly those who have helped me these past several months, offering their advice, counsel and personal support. You have reminded me what an honor it is, and how richly rewarding it is to serve.

I will be filing my candidacy for re-election to Oregon's Third Congressional District.