

Lummis gives insight into new job

By Katie Roenigk

Staff Writer

Wyoming's congressional representative Cynthia Lummis chose Riverton for the location of her first-ever town hall meeting as a national politician.

She spoke in front of about 50 area residents Friday afternoon, giving some insight into her first months in office before answering questions from the audience.

"It's been a delight. It's been hard work. It's been fascinating," Lummis said of her experience at the U.S. Capitol. "I'm deeply honored to be representing you in Congress."

Since she was sworn in on Jan. 6, Lummis said she has been able to work on several major pieces of legislation through the committees to which she has been assigned.

Committees

Lummis now sits on the Committee on Natural Resources and the Subcommittee on Energy.

"I think that's particularly important ... since we are the No. 1 energy-producing state in the nation," she said. She also sits on the Subcommittee on National Parks where she works on Bureau of Land Management issues. On the Budget Committee, Lummis said she is able to have input on the overall budget for the country. "Then just this week I had the opportunity to earn a seat on the Agriculture Committee," Lummis said. "I just could not be more pleased. I'm the first representative from Wyoming to get a seat on that committee since 1941."

For that group, Lummis is involved with the Subcommittee on Forests.

"On those committees (I) will be beneficial to you in representing our interests in Wyoming," Lummis said. She said she also has been working closely with Sens. John Barrasso and Mike Enzi, and as she is the only Wyoming representative in the House, she said she has been building relationships with members of Congress from adjacent states.

Criticism

Lummis criticized current House leadership, saying bills have been brought to the floor for a vote without first passing through committees for debate. She said this behavior was not something the past Republican majority has exercised.

"Even members of the Democratic caucus are circulating letters on the floor to say (they) are not having input either," Lummis said.

She said she was pleased to see House Republicans stick together in opposing the recent stimulus bill that, regardless of their lack of support, passed the House and is currently being debated in the Senate.

"There is so much pork in that bill," she said. "The Senate I believe will come up with a more responsible package ... and I'll have an opportunity to vote for a stimulus package I can support."

She said she opposed the bill because of the debt that she said will be passed onto future generations as a result of federal government spending.

“I’ve been asking a lot of questions in budget hearings about the global capacity to absorb this debt,” she said. “What is the saturation point? There is no information so far about (that).”

The president

Lummis said President Barack Obama has met with House Republicans, and she called him an articulate, charming individual.

“His views could not be further from my own. However, he is reaching out to share his views with both parties,” she said. “That does not mean that our views will be taken into account, but I appreciate his willingness to come visit. ... He is a very delightful person.”

She said she is critical of his first month in office, when many members, or potential members, of his administration were found in violation of tax laws.

Questions

Lummis had time to field about 10 questions from her audience, though she was unable to answer several of them immediately, instead promising to follow up in the future.

Many of her audience members were concerned about Social Security, asking why, in their opinion, “government people” receive special treatment. Another question was about the cap on income for some citizens receiving Social Security.

“I’ll look into that,” Lummis said. “There are solutions to the Social Security issue.”

In answering another question, Lummis assured her audience that Wyoming’s annual budget would not be reduced as a result of a stimulus bill.

She said she opposes the Omnibus Lands Bill, which recently passed the Senate and soon will be debated in the House. The bill will set aside certain areas as wilderness, including parts of the Wyoming Range. She said she would like to place a time limit on the moratorium on oil and gas field drilling in the Wyoming Range and would like to redraw the proposed wilderness boundary lines.

“The Lincoln County Commissioners are opposed to it,” she said. “Land ... being closed off in perpetuity to oil drilling, before knowing what resources are there, is in their view the wrong approach at a time when the U.S. needs to wean itself from dependence on foreign oil.”

She said she has met with those commissioners and with proponents of the bill to gather information on which to base her opinion.

To contact Lummis, call her Washington office at (202) 225-2311 or visit www.lummis.house.gov.