

## Wood talks broadband during visit

**Assemblyman says he's 'a huge advocate for smaller communities'**

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California Assemblyman Jim Wood was in Ukiah Friday afternoon to talk about issues with Mendocino County citizens at Schat's Bakery and Cafe.

"It's just an opportunity to have a conversation about what we're doing in Sacramento and to hear from you," Wood said.

Last year, Wood said, he had nine bills signed into law by Gov. Jerry Brown, which included his participation in the Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act.

Wood is working on at least a dozen more bills that have not yet been approved. The last day for the Legislature to pass bills is Aug. 31, at which time they would go to the governor for veto or approval.

Some of the issues Wood has been working on during this legislative session include:

### **AB 1549: Caltrans broadband conduits**

The bill is scheduled to go back before the Senate Appropriations Committee next week.

It would require Caltrans to collect data of all broadband conduits throughout the state and maintain that information in a central database. The database would provide a location for public and private agencies to check locations for existing fiber-optic cables before digging. Wood hopes this would help prevent cables from being severed during excavation work.

### **AB 1977: Opioids**

A third reading of AB 1977 is scheduled to take place in the Senate Monday.

With concern about increased prescribing and use of opioid painkillers, Wood is attempting to create an "Opioid Abuse Task Force" that would include representatives of health care service plans and insurers to address the abuse and misuse of opioids in the state.

### **AB 2243: Cannabis excise tax**

This bill is scheduled to be heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee Monday.

AB 2243 would levy a tax on medical cannabis to fund “environmental mitigation, provide resources for local law enforcement and maintain open space.”

The assemblyman also said he is always looking for ways to stimulate economic redevelopment and provide adequate funding for rural communities.

Wood addressed many questions from the public, on topics including climate change, Community Development Block Grant funding and water. He also fielded a question on new vaccination laws that will be in effect for students and day care school staff members and volunteers for the upcoming school year. The concern voiced to Wood was there is an apparent serum shortage for people trying to get vaccinated in time.

Wood said the shortage was most likely due to prescription drug companies not being prepared for the increase in vaccination rates.

On the public safety front, Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allman encouraged Wood to stay neutral on Proposition 57, Gov. Jerry Brown’s measure on the November ballot that would reclassify crimes for violent offenders making them eligible for parole earlier.

“It’s a very scary proposition for rural counties,” Allman said.

Wood said he hasn’t taken a stance on any propositions or other ballot measures yet.

The assemblyman ended the talk by saying he hoped to host more public forums regularly in the future.

“I’m a huge advocate for smaller communities,” Wood said. “I know what they go through.”

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