

During such a divisive political climate and a calling to get more young people involved... Hamilton High School is making sure students have every opportunity. In Kiah Nisly's AP U.S. Government Class students are getting the chance to speak with lawmakers LIVE and ask the questions that are important to them.

Hamilton High School teacher Kiah Nisly says "Living in a small place in Montana we can get overlooked when it comes to politics and diversity and our different ideas. So, it was nice to actually give the kids some access to an elected official and hear what they have to say because so often they feel so removed. They get one vote for a member of the senate this last election. So, just giving them the opportunity to get feedback from these individuals and actually practice some of the ideas that we've talked about all year like the powers of congress and the powers of the senate and the transition into having a new president. So, it's nice that they are paying attention and they are listening and that they are going to apply it when they get to talk to a politician."

This time it was Senator Steve Daines making an appearance. Setting aside time for a ZOOM meeting with our Broncs... who didn't hold back with sharp, thoughtful and well-prepared questions.

Hamilton High School Senior Hayley Bender says "So, recently Ted Cruz proposed for congress to push a constitutional amendment to enact term limits for members of congress. My first question is, how do you feel term limits will affect our democracy and secondly do you think his proposal has enough weight to be pushed through?"

Sen. Steve Daines says "So, I support term limits. I think what Ted has there is two senate terms and 3 hours terms I believe is what he had. So, it'll be 12 years in the Senate and 6 years in the house. If I could wave a magic wand, I'd probably tweak it and say 10 years in the house, so you have 12 years in the Senate and 10 years in the house because you want to give enough time for somebody to come into the job and be able to chair a committee, make a difference, make an impact and then go back home. I think 6 years is not enough time in the house and that is my own opinion. I served one term in the house. So, that would be 10 years in the house and 12 years in the senate and I think that's enough. I really do."

Hamilton High School Senior Helen Vanosdell "Do you think that moving towards renewable energy is a better strategy than supporting fossil fuels and the Keystone XL pipeline?"

Daines says "Great question and very relevant because six hours after Joe Biden became President of the United States, he killed the Keystone XL pipeline. What I'm concerned about is the Green New Deal and a radical shift away from conventional energy sources is going to hurt America.

When you think about oil, and natural gas... none of you were born back in the 1970s when we were at the mercy of the Middle East with oil and what impact that has on our economy. You realize that interest rates as a result of oil prices skyrocketing... a 30-year fixed mortgage got up to 18% for an interest rate. Right now, you can go get a 30-year fixed mortgage for a house for

under 3%. It was 18%. What that means is instead of having a \$1500 mortgage you have a \$5,000 mortgage. This all ties together in keeping energy prices low and reliable. So, I'm very concerned that we're moving away from a balanced portfolio and moving to a pure renewable form. I'm not opposed to renewables and I think it's exciting to see what's happening in the areas of wind and solar and biomass and geothermal. But you can't move away from what we've got right now which is your hydro, your oil, your gas and your coal which provides the majority of Montana's electricity as well as what does so much for our transportation and our economy. So, we need balance here and what President Biden is doing here is radical by stopping the Keystone XL pipeline. And by the way the Keystone Pipeline is carbon neutral which is the most environmentally friendly way to transport a liquid.

Hamilton High School Senior Grayden Beyer says "I want to know how factual the claims are that you are China's cheerleader."

Daines says "China's cheerleader! Well, there's about 100 million dollars attacking me on that from Chuck Schumer at the democrats and Montana saw through that and I'm very thankful we were able to win our reelection by 10 points against Governor Bullock. But that's false. I've been very outspoken and direct in confronting China and the challenges they face. There are a lot of lies told during the campaign and I appreciate the chance to respond to it. But it's false and if you talk to our Montana ranchers, they are very thankful that I took on China. They had banned U.S. beef imports into China for 13 years and I confronted the Chinese government on that and said this is not fair and it's not right. I want to be able to export Montana beef and U.S. beef into China and they removed that ban. So, I hardly call that a cheerleader. I call that somebody looking out and fighting for the interests of Montanans and America and we got the Chinese to change and now we are shipping U.S. beef into China."

And the students say they in turn appreciate the time Senator Daines took to speak with them. Even if they didn't always share the same views.

Hamilton High School Senior Addison Gordon says "I thought he was super respectful towards everyone in our class and addressed their names when he asked questions and our class of course asked great questions which he answered well too."

Hamilton High School Senior Brynnli Polusen says "I think it makes it more personal and lets the students know that it is their real opinion, and they are not just doing it to get votes and get back in. He really stood by his beliefs and didn't waiver at all."

Nisley says she is always impressed with the HHS students that walk through her classroom doors and hopes more Broncs will sign up for the class.

Nisly says "I just would encourage any kid to take an advanced government class. I think it is a very important class to take in High School. The regular government class is fantastic. But I think kids sell themselves short thinking that they can't take AP classes because it might be difficult, or it might be boring. But I really feel you can get so much out of this class and think in depth about how you can participate in our political system."

Poulsen says “This whole class has definitely made me want to get more involved in politics and I’ve learned a lot more about politics in general and become more solid in my own political beliefs because of the class. So, that’s definitely been helpful.”

Sen. Daines was the second U.S. Congressman to visit the class. Representative Kelley Armstrong from North Dakota spoke earlier this year. Next on the list is Senator Jon Tester. Who, no doubt will be impressed by these outstanding Broncs.

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