On Thursday, March 15, Congressman Blumenauer took a trip to Catlin Gabel High School for a presentation and Q&A session with students on international relations. Much of the conversation centered on finding a balanced approach for our national defense, with a greater emphasis on development and diplomacy, and the conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa.

Blumenauer stressed the need to leave Afghanistan as safely and as quickly as possible, citing the lack of a mission and a beleaguered American military. “Whether we leave in 14 months or 14 years, the result won’t be much different,” he commented.

In response to student questions about Iran and how to address the nuclear question, Blumenauer made clear that the most important element to any Iran policy must include robust diplomacy, and cautioned that military action would not only unify Iranians who would otherwise be supportive of the U.S., but would do only set Iran back one to two years.

Congressman Blumenauer made clear that much of the instability seen in the region, through the Arab Spring, could have been avoided if the U.S. would have moved away from military assistance to despotic regimes, and instead focus on development assistance and civil society. A key piece of the reforms happening in the region for the Congressman is the need for Israel and Egypt to continue regional cooperation and for vigilance as Syria’s regime refuses to step-down in the face of broad democratic aspirations.

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Congressman Blumenauer chats with Catlin Gabel student body president James Furnary