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February 1, 2007

Thank you, Congressmen DeFazio and Walden!

Salem – “They did a terrific job under terrible conditions,” is how Association of Oregon Counties President Bobby Green describes the legislative efforts of U.S. Representatives Peter DeFazio, D-OR, and Greg Walden, R-OR, in trying to amend a recent Continuing Resolution to keep the federal government funded with a one-year extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (PL 106-393).

“Congressmen DeFazio and Walden may not have gotten the amendment attached to the Continuing Resolution, but they managed to pick up three more co-sponsors for their reauthorization legislation,” President Green said. “They also brought the issue to the full attention of the House of Representatives and put the House on notice that this is an issue that won’t go away.”

Representatives Walden and DeFazio were joined by U.S. Representative Darlene Hooley, D-OR, in voting for a procedural rule that would have allowed the extension amendment to go forward as the House debated the Continuing Resolution. They were unsuccessful in that effort and the extension amendment was not included in the final Continuing Resolution to keep the federal government funded through fiscal year 2007. Representative Walden was the only Oregon member of the House to vote no on the final Continuing Resolution.

“They’ve been tireless in their efforts,” President Green said of Representatives DeFazio and Walden. “Oregon’s counties are fortunate to have such champions in the House. We greatly appreciate all they done and continue to do.”

Representatives DeFazio and Walden have rounded up nearly one hundred other members of the House in signing a letter to House leadership to include the one-year extension of PL 106-393 in the Emergency Supplemental legislation Congress will consider over the next several weeks. The letter to leadership is quite clear that this is the last opportunity for Congress to address this critical issue before counties in Oregon and 38 other states start implementing drastic cuts to services.

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At last count, 106 members of the House have signed on to co-sponsor HR 17, a bill Representatives DeFazio and Walden introduced at the beginning of the current Congress. HR 17 calls for full reauthorization and full funding of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act until 2013.

"Hopefully, Congress will honor a century old agreement with America's counties and reauthorize PL 106-393. Until they do, the one-year extension will give counties some breathing room to more fully plan for a drastic impact that should have never happened," President Green said. "We are grateful we have a Congressional delegation from Oregon dedicated to making sure it won't happen again."

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