

# PETER DEFAZIO

## REPORTS

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House of Representatives

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE · 4TH DISTRICT · OREGON

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## The Cost of Inaction on Infrastructure

America's infrastructure investment needs are massive: According to the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), we need \$2 trillion over 10 years to fix what we have, meet future needs, and restore our global competitiveness. The Department of Transportation estimates the investment gap for our roads, highways, bridges and public transit alone is over \$1 trillion. The gap for water, port, and related infrastructure is nearly \$300 billion over the next 20 years, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. The Airports Council International (ACI) estimates that over the next five years, airports will require total investment of \$100 billion—more than \$20 billion a year.

We also know that the cost of doing nothing will have ruinous effects on the American economy. According to the Business Roundtable, inadequate infrastructure costs U.S. businesses \$27 billion per year in extra transportation costs. And according to the ASCE, between 2016-2025, the economy will lose almost \$4 trillion in economic activity if

we do not upgrade our infrastructure, costing 2.5 million jobs. American families will lose \$3,400 each year in disposable income due to decaying infrastructure.

Investment in rebuilding our roads, bridges, transit systems, airports, and water infrastructure creates good-paying jobs, strengthens the U.S. economy, reduces congestion, improves quality of life, boosts commerce, and decreases carbon emissions.

In the spring, I participated in a productive meeting with President Trump where he offered two trillion dollars for a comprehensive infrastructure plan. In my opinion, his advisers unfortunately intervened and blocked this opportunity. No matter their party affiliation, Americans want their roads fixed and I'm still hopeful that we can get the White House back to the negotiating table and put together a comprehensive infrastructure plan.

We need a 21st-century vision for transportation policy that will blaze a path to a fossil fuel-free future. We can't just maintain what we have; we also need to modernize  
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## A Win for Job Corps



Rep. DeFazio visited the Wolf Creek Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center in Oregon. Rep. DeFazio fought to save the program from closure.

Earlier this spring, the Trump administration announced plans to close or privatize all 25 Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers (CCCs) around the country, including three in Oregon, effectively ending the program.

CCCs provide thousands of at-risk youth from low-income and rural communities with great vocational training and pathways out of poverty, while also providing the Forest Service with essential capacity to help conserve and develop public resources and respond to natural disasters—including wildfires.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, during the height of the 2017 fire season, 1,200 CCC students provided the equivalent of 450,000 hours of wildfire support.

In response to this misguided plan, I spearheaded efforts to halt this reckless decision. I helped lead a bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers in urging the Secretaries of Labor and Agriculture to abandon this plan, and an amendment I offered to protect funding for this critical program passed the House with 313 votes.

Thankfully, my efforts were successful, and the Trump administration reversed its decision.

CCC programs are an important part of the Forest Service's mission, and they teach at-risk youth valuable job skills.

I will continue to push back against any future attacks on this successful program.

### HEALTHCARE

Rep. DeFazio is working to lower healthcare costs for Oregonians.

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### COASTAL COMMUNITIES

Rep. DeFazio is fighting for greater investments in critical infrastructure for coastal communities.

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### WAR POWERS

Rep. DeFazio introduced legislation to assert Congress's war powers and put a stop to military action without an exit plan.

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### SENIORS

Read about Rep. DeFazio's legislation aimed at protecting seniors' benefits.

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# Lowering Oregonians' Healthcare Costs

Despite its many benefits, for some Americans, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is becoming anything but affordable.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 2019 premiums are rising as much as 9 percent in Oregon. Rising costs, combined with efforts from the president to repeal the ACA, are making premiums and deductibles unaffordable.

When the ACA was being drafted, I fought to include a provision in the bill to create a nationwide, not-for-profit government-run insurance option similar to Medicare within the marketplace.

While that provision was included in the House version of the bill, the Senate stripped it out before final passage.

In my opinion, a government-run, not-for-profit health plan—a “public option”—could have paved the way for a single-payer system with more comprehensive coverage at a lower cost.

That's why I have introduced H.R. 1419, the Public Option Deficit Reduction Act, which would create a public option and lower healthcare premiums as a bridge to comprehensive reforms.

I'm a strong supporter of non-traditional models for our nation's healthcare system that will move us toward a single-payer system, with lower costs and comprehensive coverage for all Americans. I support legislation that promotes that idea, including H.R. 1384, the Medicare for All Act.

While we must take steps to lower costs, I believe that repeal of the law without offering any replacement plan, as President Trump has tried to do, would be a disaster. The President has gone so far as to ask a federal court to **eliminate every protection and benefit provided by the ACA.**

This move would likely strip protections from 312,000 Oregonians in my district who live with pre-existing conditions (according to the Center for American

Progress) and end expanded Medicaid coverage for another 129,000 people (according to the Kaiser Family Foundation).

Above all, we cannot go back to the way things were before the passage of the Affordable Care Act when individuals with pre-existing conditions could be denied healthcare coverage and insurance companies could refuse to renew your policy if you got sick.

## Lowering the Cost of Prescription Drugs

One of the most pressing issues my constituents contact me about is the high cost of prescription drugs. In fact, the U.S. spends more on prescription drugs than any other country—more than \$1,000 per capita, according to the Commonwealth Fund, compared with \$427 per capita in Australia and \$497 in the United Kingdom.

I have long supported legislation that would lower prescription drug costs and remove barriers that make it difficult for affordable generic drugs to come to U.S.

markets. In my opinion, the government should negotiate drug prices for all Americans, as we do for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

## Protecting Consumers from Health Insurance Industry Price-Gouging

My bipartisan legislation, H.R. 1418, the Competitive Health Insurance Reform Act, would make healthcare more affordable for everybody by revoking the health insurance industry's antiquated federal antitrust exemption that prevents free-market competition. This exemption allows health insurance companies to collude in order to drive up prices, limit competition, and price-gouge consumers.

It is past time for Congress to rein in skyrocketing healthcare costs and protect consumers from abuse by the health insurance industry. Congress must develop a healthcare policy that provides affordable coverage and care for all Americans.

## Update on Our Coastal Communities

As the Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I work hard to ensure that Congress upholds its commitment to invest in the critical infrastructure that serves our coastal communities. I've achieved major victories this year that will help boost coastal economies, sustain thousands of jobs, and keep Oregonians safe.

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Last fall, I secured an additional \$34.5 million from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to fund critical dredging and safety projects this summer, supporting the coast's vital recreational and commercial fishing and shipping activity as well as improving access for Coast Guard search and rescue crews stationed at these ports.

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Thanks to my efforts, the Port of Coos Bay was able to secure a \$20 million grant to rehabilitate and replace as many as 15 rail bridges along the Coos Bay Rail Line—a vital economic engine for our coastal communities. This rehabilitation project would also repair the the Coos Bay swing span bridge, which connects terminals south of the bay to the rest of the line. Rehabilitation of the line will ensure it continues to be a reliable and efficient option for freight shipping in southwest Oregon, keeping thousands of trucks off the road.

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After years of cutting through bureaucratic red tape, I was able to secure a \$3 million grant for Southwest Oregon Community College (SWOCC) to help build its new Health and Science Technology building. The building, which is being constructed using ecologically-friendly materials like cross-laminated timber, will help the college expand its Nursing and Allied health programs, training a new generation of healthcare professionals to serve southwest Oregon.

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This spring, my office helped secure more than \$10 million in airport improvement grants from the Department of Transportation for the Southwest Oregon Regional Airport in North Bend for construction of a new Airport Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) station that will help keep airport workers and passengers safe. These funds will also go toward airport improvements such as upgraded guidance systems and navigational aids.



*Rep. DeFazio secured funds to help rehabilitate the Coos Bay swing span bridge and rehabilitate or replace 15 bridges along the Coos Bay Rail Line, a critical shipping option that keeps thousands of trucks off Oregon's roads.*

## INFRASTRUCTURE

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how we plan and execute transportation projects. We must act now to mitigate the effects of climate change and build stronger, more resilient infrastructure that will withstand increasingly common extreme weather events. Contributing 28.7 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions (as reported by the Environmental Protection Agency), the transportation sector is now the largest contributor to global warming in the United States. And every year, thanks to out-of-date infrastructure, Americans waste 6 billion gallons of fuel idling in traffic congestion, sending more emissions into the atmosphere, according to the Argonne National Library.

To reduce our climate impact, I will push to electrify our transportation sector and reduce vehicle miles traveled, move freight to rail, and invest more in alternative modes of transportation.

We must also ensure that we are investing in green technologies that will unlock new eco-friendly fuel options. I'm working on a number of infrastructure bills that will reduce carbon emissions, encourage further electrification of our highway system and improve energy efficiency in our federal buildings.

We must be ready to take

advantage of new technologies, such as renewable hydrogen power and creating carbon-neutral building materials, to create a 21st century, world-class, resilient, green transportation system.

### A Penny for Progress Act

I have bipartisan legislation, the Investing in America: A Penny for Progress Act, that provides approximately \$500 billion to rebuild our crumbling network of roads, bridges and transit systems by indexing gas and diesel user fees, which have not increased since 1993.

It would only raise the user fees by approximately 1 cent per gallon per year and includes a hard cap of 1.5 cents per year—less than the change in prices at the pump on a daily basis.

### Rebuilding America's Airport Infrastructure Act

Our airports are aging and struggle from a lack of proper investment. My bipartisan legislation would generate billions of dollars each year to help our airports rebuild and rehabilitate runways, taxiways, and aging terminals and keep pace with ever-increasing demands in the 21st century—without raising taxes—by raising the cap on the passenger facility charge (PFC) charged by airports.

### Full Utilization of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund Act

The U.S. Army Corps of En-

## Protecting Oregon's Treasures

Earlier this year, the House passed a major public lands package, including a number of my bills, that became law. The law protects millions of acres and designates thousands of miles of Wild and Scenic rivers, keeping them safe from pollution, mining, and other hazards and will protect critical fish habitat and recreational opportunities that support thousands of jobs.

One of my bills included in the law, H.R. 994, the Chetco River Protection Act, prohibits new mining on the Chetco River. Furthermore, at the end of the Obama Administration I was able to secure a 20-year ban on new mining claims impacting part of Rough and Ready Creek and part of Baldface Creek, and I have been working to make this ban permanent through HR 992, the Southwestern Oregon Watershed and Salmon Protection Act. A few years ago, a foreign-owned corporation proposed strip-mining low-grade nickel ore in these areas, putting the drinking water supply for thousands of residents of Southwest Oregon as well as critical fish habitat at-risk. Thanks to my legislation, these waters are now protected from new mining claims.

Also included in the law, the Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area Designation Act, H.R. 1056, designates almost 100,000 acres of public land in the Steamboat Creek Watershed in the Umpqua National Forest to ensure fish runs are protected. The legislation honors Frank and Jeanne Moore's lifelong efforts to protect the North Umpqua River and its tributaries.

Another bill included, H.R. 999, permanently protects Devil's Staircase, a remote, unspoiled area in the Coast Range. The law, which I have been trying to pass for more than a decade, designates approximately 30,500 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands as Wilderness.

gineers (Corps) estimates that navigation channels at our busiest ports are available less than 35 percent of the time, and conditions at midsize and small harbors are even worse.

That's why I introduced H.R. 2440, the Full Utilization of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund Act, bipartisan legislation that would provide approximately \$34 billion in investment for our nation's coastal and inland harbors over the next decade **without raising a dime in new taxes.**

Thanks to my efforts, a minimum of 10 percent of these funds would go toward maintenance for small ports, including fixing failing jetties, addressing dangerous bar conditions, and dredging.

### Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act of 2019

The Clean Water Act has been critically important to ensuring Americans have access to safe water, but in recent years federal assistance to communities has been severely cut. My bipartisan bill, the Water Quality Protection and Job Creation Act of 2019, would authorize \$23.5 billion over the next five years to help communities nationwide address their failing wastewater infrastructure, make it more resilient to disasters, more green with methane recapture technologies, and more affordable for all communities, with a special set-aside for small cities and rural areas that cannot afford federal mandates but are struggling to meet their wastewater needs.

# Congress Must Assert War Powers

President Trump's National Security Advisor, John Bolton—one of the chief architects of the Iraq War—has publicly advocated for war with Iran for more than a decade.

I am deeply concerned that his pro-war stance and influence on President Trump is pushing our country towards yet another conflict in the Middle East. We have an obligation to ensure that we are not committing our troops to an unnecessary conflict that does not have a clear exit strategy.

Ultimately, Congress—not the president—has the authority to declare war, as granted by Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution. Unfortunately, Congress's war powers have steadily eroded over the last five decades.

Despite passage of the War Powers Resolution of 1973—an attempt by Congress to curb the presidential overreach that occurred during the Vietnam War—I believe the legislation was flawed and did not effectively constrain the Executive Branch from sending unauthorized forces into hostilities.

Throughout my time in Congress, I've spoken out against presidents of both parties who have unlawfully exerted sole authority to commit U.S. forces to armed conflict overseas.

I've introduced legislation that would strengthen the

War Powers Resolution by making clear that any president must consult with Congress before sending American forces into conflict. My legislation includes a sunset clause for any future congressional authorization for the use of military force so our troops are not com-

mitted to endless hostilities. The American people deserve to know the full scope of any potential conflict—including an exit strategy—before the U.S. considers another military campaign in the Middle East or anywhere else in the world.

## Standing Up for Seniors

It's unacceptable that in 2035, seniors who have paid into Social Security their whole lives may not receive the full benefits they are entitled to because of government mismanagement. More than 200,000 seniors in Oregon's 4th Congressional district alone depend on these benefits, according to the Social Security Administration.

If all working Americans paid the same percentage of their income into Social Security, the fund would fully cover benefits for the next five decades and put the program in a more financially-sound position for the future. Today, income over \$132,900 is currently exempt from Social Security taxes, meaning a corporate executive making \$1.3 million pays Social Security tax at one tenth the rate of a police officer or supermarket checkout clerk. My legislation, the Social Security Expansion Act, would close this loophole and require millionaires to pay Social Security taxes at the same rate as middle-income earners or minimum-wage workers.

Moreover, the Social Security Expansion Act would modify how the Social Security Administration calculates cost-of-living-adjustments (COLA) for seniors. Instead of using the current COLA formula, my legislation would use a new CPI-E index to factor in goods that seniors actually buy such as prescription drugs, utility bills, and housing costs. If we had used CPI-E in 2017, seniors would have received a cost of living adjustment that was five times higher than what they actually received.

We must also ensure that volunteer programs and social services that look after our seniors are properly funded. Every year, more than 200,000 older adults across the U.S. participate in Senior Corps programs like the Foster Grandparent program, Senior Companion program, and others. I helped bring the first Senior Corps program to Lane County early in my career and have always been a staunch supporter of the work they do. Earlier this year, I led my colleagues in sending a letter to the House Appropriations Committee urging them to increase funding in the program. At my urging, the committee included \$222 million for the Senior Corps program in FY2020—an increase of \$13 million over FY19 levels. This is the first time Senior Corps funding has increased over level funding since 2014.

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