

PETER DEFAZIO REPORTS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

U.S. REPRESENTATIVE · 4TH DISTRICT · OREGON

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Rep. Peter A. DeFazio
405 East 8th Ave #2030
Eugene, OR 97401

M.C.
Presorted Standard

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Recovering from the Coronavirus Pandemic

For the most up-to-date information about the coronavirus pandemic, visit my website:

www.defazio.house.gov

Over the past several months, the COVID-19 pandemic has unleashed an immense public health and economic crisis across our country and the globe. Millions of Americans have contracted coronavirus, and sadly, more than 120,000 Americans have died. Tens of millions have lost their jobs.

I continue to work tirelessly with local, state, and federal partners—and am in regular contact with Oregon health care providers and those at the frontlines of this pandemic—to address all aspects of our continued public health response.

At the federal level, I have worked with my colleagues in Congress to pass four relief bills totaling roughly \$3 trillion to respond to the public health crisis and mitigate the economic damage. Together, these bills included:

- Billions in relief funding for hospitals and health care providers to fight COVID-19;
- Significant investment in research, development, manufacturing, and purchasing for COVID-19 tests and vaccines;
- Direct economic impact payments to more than 150 million American individuals and families;
- A robust expansion of Unemployment Insurance to aid the millions of Americans who have lost their jobs due to this crisis;
- Hundreds-of-billions in forgivable loans through the Paycheck Protection Program to pay workers and keep small businesses from closing their doors forever; and,
- Help for homeowners, renters, student loan borrowers, those in need of nutrition assistance, and more.

As Chair of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I was able to

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Rep. DeFazio helped to secure \$6.5 million in funding for the rehabilitation of Port Orford's failed breakwater.

DeFazio Infrastructure Bill Passes House

Creates Millions of Jobs for Our Nation's Economy

America's infrastructure is in crisis.

For decades we have relied on an outdated 1950s-era transportation system that has failed to keep pace with our economy, our communities, and our changing climate.

The bulk of our nation's infrastructure—our roads, bridges, public transit and rail systems—is not only badly outdated, in many places it's downright dangerous and holding our economy back.

Yet for decades, Congress has repeatedly ignored the

calls for an overhaul and instead simply poured money into short-term patches. The result? We're still running our economy on an inefficient, 1950s-era system that costs Americans increasingly more time and money while making the transportation sector the nation's biggest source of carbon pollution.

Simultaneously, the coronavirus pandemic has crippled our economy and caused millions of Americans to lose their jobs.

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RACIAL JUSTICE

Rep. DeFazio is an original co-sponsor of the *Justice in Policing Act* to address police misconduct.

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SOCIAL SECURITY

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SECURING OUR PORTS

Rep. DeFazio's legislation will unlock the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund.

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PROTECTING THE POSTAL SERVICE

The House approved Rep. DeFazio's legislation to save the US Postal Service.

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Holding Boeing Accountable

When two Boeing 737 MAX airplanes were involved in two separate deadly crashes within five months, killing a total of 346 people, as Chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee I launched an investigation to get answers and demand accountability on behalf of the victims' families, as well as the flying public.

After one year, my committee has been able to bring into focus the multiple factors that allowed an unairworthy airplane to be put into service.

The public deserves peace of mind that safety is always the top priority for everyone who has a role in our aviation system. I will continue my decades-long record of prioritizing safety by advancing legislation in the near future that will reform the process that allowed Boeing to release the MAX without proper FAA scrutiny, which would have saved 346 lives.

Safeguarding Social Security

The Bipartisan Policy Center has estimated that the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic could cause the Social Security Trust Fund to become depleted to the point where it would only be able to pay 73% of its promised benefits as soon as 2029. Hundreds of thousands of Oregonians depend on Social Security, which they earned, to make ends meet.

However, current law allows millionaires to only pay a fraction of what working Americans like teachers and fire fighters pay as a percentage of their salary. Current law caps the amount of income subject to payroll taxes—which funds Social Security—at \$132,900. Once they've earned that amount in a year, they don't have to pay a penny more. That's unacceptable.

If all working Americans paid the same percentage of their income into Social Security, the fund would fully cover benefits for the next 75 years.

My legislation, the Social Security Expansion Act, would

scrap the cap and require millionaires to pay Social Security taxes at the same rate as middle-income earners or minimum-wage workers. If my legislation were enacted, wealthy Americans who earn more than \$250,000 a year would finally have to pay their fair share.

In addition, my bill would increase cost-of-living benefits by \$1,342 a year for seniors making less than \$16,000 annually. Every year, beneficiaries receive a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) based on a flawed formula that shortchanges seniors. The current

Social Security COLA formula is based on the price index of goods younger consumers purchase, such as technology, vehicles, and childcare.

The Social Security Expansion Act would replace this formula with a new Consumer Price Index for the Elderly (CPI-E) to factor in costs seniors traditionally face such as prescription drug costs, utility bills, and property taxes. My legislation would ensure COLA payments reflect the true cost of living for seniors.



Rep. DeFazio meets with members of the Alzheimer's Association in Springfield. DeFazio has introduced legislation that would protect Social Security—even during times of economic crisis.

Addressing Police Misconduct and Systemic Racism

In June, the House of Representatives passed a bold and unprecedented reform bill, the Justice in Policing Act, that will transform the culture, practice, and training of law enforcement to address systemic racism and help save lives.

I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of and to have voted for this critical legislation.

The bill will:

- Ban choke and carotid holds;
- Set accreditation standards for hiring officers;
- Require state and local law enforcement agencies to use existing federal funds to purchase and fully utilize body cameras;
- Incentivize states to conduct independent investigations into problematic police departments;
- Create a national misconduct registry for law enforcement officers to keep track of discipline and termination records; and,
- Empower the professionals—not the political hacks—at the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division to investigate and mandate reform of individual police departments through federal court orders.

This bill will not defund the police. Issues regarding police budgets are decided at the state, county, and local level.

For decades, police misconduct and racial profiling have devastated communities, created mistrust between Americans and the public servants sworn to protect them, and, regrettably, resulted in many deaths.

Our country is facing systemic issues that require a comprehensive solution. The Justice in Policing Act takes key steps toward creating structural change that safeguards every American's right to safety and justice while also building trust between law enforcement and the communities they are charged to serve.

Unlocking the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund

Oregon's ports and harbors are the lifeblood of the communities they serve.

However, for years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has estimated that navigation channels at our nation's busiest ports are available less than 35 percent of the time, and conditions at midsize and small harbors are often worse. Our failure to invest in these projects has resulted in jetties such as the Coos Bay North Jetty crumbling and harbors shoaling in, up and down the Oregon coast.

I have repeatedly introduced bipartisan legislation, the Investing in America: Unlocking the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) Act (H.R. 2440), to provide more than \$18 billion in investment for our nation's coastal and inland harbors over the next decade without raising a dime in new taxes.

This March, my bipartisan proposal to unlock the HMTF was included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. From now on, the Harbor Maintenance Tax collected from shippers will be used for its intended purpose—maintaining our harbors—which will allow the Corps to dredge all federal commercial harbors and smaller ports to their appropriate widths and depths, fix failing jetties, and address dangerous bar conditions.

However, there remains an estimated \$10 billion balance in the Trust Fund that has not yet been spent and is still at risk of being diverted to other projects. This summer, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, which I Chair, will pass legislation to tap into that balance to fix Oregon's jetties and harbors.

INFRASTRUCTURE

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It will take transformative action, on par with President Roosevelt's New Deal, to repair the damage and get Americans working again.

I believe investment in our nation's infrastructure can provide us the opportunity to take that transformative action.

That's why I've authored the Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America (INVEST in America) Act, transformative legislation that will address some of our nation's most urgent infrastructure needs. I'm proud that in July, the INVEST in America Act passed the House of Representatives and is now awaiting action by the Senate.

The INVEST in America Act is a five-year, \$500 billion investment that will get our existing infrastructure working again and fund new projects that will create millions of jobs and support American manufacturing, while reducing carbon pollution, dramatically improving safety, and spurring economic activity.

In short, it will create infrastructure that's **smarter, safer, and made to last.**

Repairing and Modernizing Our Existing System

The INVEST in America Act dedicates \$319 billion to repair and modernize the broken, outdated infrastructure that we already have in place—including 46,000 structurally deficient bridges across the nation, according to a report from the American Road and Transportation Builders Association.

In addition, my bill will provide significant investment to address the growing backlog of transit maintenance needs, making public transit safer and more reliable.

Lowering Carbon Emissions and Building Resilient Infrastructure

My legislation will put the U.S. on a path toward zero emissions from the transportation sector by prioritizing carbon pollution reduction, investing in public transit and the national rail network, building out much-needed fueling infrastructure for low- and zero-emission vehicles, and deploying technology and innovative materials to build resilient infrastructure that will withstand the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events.

To do so, the INVEST in America Act will create a new program to fund projects that reduce carbon pollution and a program to fund green materials research and deploy green construction materials and practices.

It will also provide incentives to states that lower their carbon pollution and increase funding for transit agencies to encourage fewer single-occupant cars clogging our highways.

Investing in Safety

The safety of Americans who use our nation's transportation infrastructure every day to get to their jobs, schools, and homes is one of my highest priorities.

The INVEST in America Act reflects that priority, with significant investment for safety programs across the board.

The bill boosts funding for highway safety programs under the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, providing \$5.3 billion over five years.

In addition, my legislation takes much-needed steps to address rising rates of pedestrian and bicyclist deaths across the country by providing funding for states to design streets that are

safer for all road users, expanding eligibility for safe routes to school and emphasizing safety on high-risk rural roads.

The bill also prioritizes solutions to reduce distracted driving, improve school bus safety, and prevent drunk driving deaths.

The INVEST in America Act also accounts for the economic downturn caused by the global coronavirus pandemic by ensuring that states, cities, tribes, territories, and transit agencies can carry out existing projects, keep workers on the job, and delay major policy changes until the fall of 2021.

I am proud to put forth this transformational bill that will catapult our country into a new era of how we plan, build, and improve U.S. infrastructure.

The INVEST in America Act is our opportunity to replace the outdated systems of the past with smarter, safer, more resilient infrastructure that fits the economy of the future, creates millions of jobs, supports American manufacturing, and restores U.S. competitiveness.

CORONAVIRUS

Continued from page 1

secure tens of billions to guarantee that one million aviation industry workers continued to receive their regular paycheck and ensure that those corporations taking taxpayer dollars use funding for workers' wages and benefits—not for executive pay, golden parachutes, or stock buybacks.

While these laws dramatically expanded critical lifelines for individuals, families, and small businesses, it is abundantly clear our economy has not improved nearly enough. Congress must do more, and I am committed to ensuring that our state, localities, and the country have the tools and funding to continue our fight against this virus and promote a strong recovery.

Continuing Our Recovery

That's why the House passed the Heroes Act in mid-May. This bill provides vital, direct relief to millions of Americans, including additional economic impact payments, an extension of safety-net unemployment benefits, critical supports to assist renters and homeowners with making monthly rent and mortgage payments, expansion of our nation's nutrition programs, \$10,000 in debt relief for student borrowers, and support for the U.S. Postal Service. The Heroes Act

also includes \$100.15 billion for education needs of states, school districts, and institutions of higher education (IHE).

Unfortunately, while other countries around the world have committed to supporting their citizens with additional relief, Senate Republicans continue to ignore the financial struggles Americans are facing and refuse to vote on the Heroes Act.

Safeguarding Affordable Healthcare

While the coronavirus pandemic has shown the dramatic need for affordable, reliable healthcare for every American—regardless of income—President Trump has been pushing to fully repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA) through a lawsuit being considered by the Supreme Court which claims that the ACA's individual mandate provision renders the entire ACA unconstitutional.

According to the Center for American Progress, repealing the ACA would severely disrupt our country's health care system—taking away health insurance from 20 million Americans, including 72,000 in OR-04 alone, and threatening coverage for the 135 million Americans with pre-existing conditions, including 317,000 people in my district.

Protecting the USPS

The US Postal Service (USPS) is an essential agency, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, financial challenges have consistently threatened the agency's existence and the vital services that Americans rely on.

Much of the Postal Service's financial troubles stem from a law passed in 2006 which requires the USPS to prefund 75 years' worth of retiree health benefits in just ten years. This law has created a financial crisis at the USPS resulting in billions of unnecessary losses. According to a report from the non-partisan Government Accountability Office (GAO), it is the main cause of USPS' losses since 2013.

That's why I introduced the USPS Fairness Act. This bill repeals the onerous prefunding mandate on future retiree health benefits. The funding saved by repealing this short-sighted law will allow the USPS to invest in their workers, upgrade equipment for maximum efficiency, and ensure it can continue to provide the services all Americans depend on.

My bill passed the House of Representatives in February with wide bipartisan support.

Lowering Prescription Drug Costs

Skyrocketing prescription drug costs continue to prevent many Oregonians from having the health and financial security they deserve. That's unacceptable anytime, but especially in the midst of a global pandemic.

I voted in support of H.R. 3, the Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act, which reduces out-of-pocket prescription drug costs for Medicare Part D beneficiaries and limits price increases under Medicare Part B and D by creating an inflation rebate.

I believe Congress can and must do more to combat rising drug prices, prevent price-gouging from big pharmaceutical companies, and ensure that all Americans can afford the prescription drugs they need.

I've reintroduced H.R. 4640, the Affordable Pricing for Taxpayer-Funded Prescription Drugs Act, which would end price-gouging on prescription drugs developed with taxpayer-funded research. Americans should not pay to develop a drug only to see it put on the shelves in the U.S. at a much higher price than other nations.

Due to public health concerns, I am not holding in-person town hall meetings this August.

For information on virtual town hall meetings, visit www.defazio.house.gov, follow me on Twitter @RepPeterDeFazio, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/RepPeterDeFazio, or sign up for my e-newsletter at defazio.house.gov/contact/newsletter.

How to reach me: www.defazio.house.gov

**405 East 8th Ave. #2030
EUGENE, OR 97401
(541) 465-6732
1-800-944-9603**

**125 W Central Ave. #350
COOS BAY, OR 97420
(541) 269-2609**

**612 SE Jackson St. #9
ROSEBURG, OR 97470
(541) 440-3523**

**2134 Rayburn HOB
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-6416**