

PETER DEFAZIO REPORTS

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House of Representatives
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U.S. REPRESENTATIVE · 4TH DISTRICT · OREGON

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M.C.
Presorted Standard

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Putting Americans Back to Work

For two years, Congress has been held hostage by intractable partisanship that demands ideological purity over pragmatism and compromise. Good pieces of bipartisan legislation that address serious problems have been sacrificed to pass electoral talking points that have no hope of becoming law. The system is broken.

Congressional inaction hasn't helped the millions of Americans that have struggled with long-term unemployment, reduced education opportunities, diminished social safety net, and cuts to basic public services.

Here are a few ways I am trying to break the partisan gridlock and pass legislation that will create good-paying American jobs and jumpstart the economy.

JOB CREATING TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENTS

As a senior member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I have worked hard to rein in wasteful projects and pushed for smart investments that will put people back to work and rebuild our roads, bridges, highways, transit systems, and other critical infrastructure like water and sewer systems. Every billion dollars invested in transportation infrastructure creates or sustains more than 34,000 jobs and produces \$6.2 billion in economic activity, according to the U.S. Dept. of Transportation. Transportation investment has the strongest buy-America requirements to ensure federal dollars use American products for these projects.

Unfortunately, meaningful negotiations to craft bipartisan long-term transportation legislation have been held hostage by a minority of representatives who believe the federal government has no role in transportation. These so-called devolutionists would stop all federal investment, create a fractured transportation network, and shift the responsibility for raising needed funds to the 50 states.

When the transportation bill expires at the end of 2014 Congress will be forced to make a choice. Do we continue to fight about the role the federal government should play in our crumbling transportation infrastructure, or do we make job-creating investments in cutting-edge infrastructure to compete with our economic rivals.

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Keeping College Affordable

College tuition at Oregon's four year institutions has increased by nearly 50% over the last 10 years according to the Oregon University System. For the first time ever student loan debt tops credit card debt, exceeding \$1 trillion. To help overcome this financial burden in these tough times, Congress has kept student loan interest rates at a low 3.4% since 2011. That rate expired earlier this year, forcing congressional action for future borrowers.

CONGRESS FINALIZES STUDENT LOAN RATES

In July, Congress passed a bipartisan compromise with my support to cap student loan interest rates and provide some long term certainty for students by keeping the interest rates fixed over the life of the loan. Thankfully, Congress ignored the House Republican student loan bill that would force students to pay higher interest rates and let interest rates increase year to year. According to the non-partisan Congressional Research Service, allowing rates to vary would have doubled the amount students pay in interest on their student loans.

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JOB: Investing in Oregon Workers

REBUILDING CRUMBLING HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES

The bridge collapse along I-5 in Washington State was a dramatic reminder that we need to make significant investments in our nation's transportation system just to bring our current system up to a state of good repair. This isn't a partisan issue. Structurally deficient and obsolete bridges exist in red and blue districts all across this country. This problem won't fix itself. That's why I have cosponsored the SAFE Bridges Act, which would provide \$5.5 billion to reduce the backlog of more than 150,000 structurally deficient and functionally obsolete bridges across the country. **This bill will make needed federal investments so we can begin to address our most critical needs, and it will create tens of thousands of jobs for steel and ironworkers, laborers, machinists, engineers, and architects.** Hundreds of small businesses in construction, design, manufacturing, and others that supply base materials like sand and gravel will receive new contracts, providing a much needed boost for our economy.



Rep. DeFazio fights to maintain Oregon's ports and coastal businesses

DREDGING OUR PORTS AND HELPING THE COASTAL ECONOMY

Oregon's ports are in serious need of dredging and repair. Jetties at the mouths of the Columbia River and the Port of Coos Bay are failing. The Port of Port Orford is shoaling in. The Corps of Engineers has long been shorted in the budgeting process leaving them cash-strapped and unable to

deal with its \$40 billion backlog of critical projects. The ports are a critical lifeline that fuels the local economy, keeps Oregon fishermen working, and protects the future of the coastal communities. I previously kept Oregon's small ports dredged with earmarks. Since Congress banned earmarks, I have been working on a bipartisan bill to ensure these harbors will have

verge of bankruptcy and have had depression-like unemployment for years. Vital county services like public safety, education, road maintenance, and public health have already been severely restricted because of deep budget cuts. The only way to help our O&C counties is with a long-term solution that provides financial certainty and protects our natural treasures

and old growth forests for future generations-- and it has to come from Congress.

For the last two years, that's exactly what I have been working on. Together with Representatives Greg Walden and Kurt Schrader, I developed a bipartisan proposal that breaks us out of the decades-long

logjam on federal forest policy, puts thousands of Oregonians back to work, improves forest health and protects our environment, and disentangles the health of rural county budgets from unpredictable federal support payments that Congress cannot afford and will not reauthorize forever.

In July, our bipartisan bill was passed out of the House Natural Resources Committee. That means our bipartisan legislation can now be considered for passage out of the House, and I am optimistic that the House will vote on it later this fall

On the other side of Capitol Hill, Senator Wyden has made it clear that he is working on and will likely introduce a comprehensive legislative solution to the O&C lands that can pass the Senate and move the legislative process to a conference committee. As the most senior Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, I will be one of the conferees who works out differences between the House and the Senate O&C bills and work towards a comprehensive, balanced solution that can be signed into law.

I will continue to work closely with the Oregon Delegation, Senators Wyden and Merkley, Governor Kitzhaber and all stakeholders until we sign into law a balanced solution that creates private sector jobs, provides revenues to failing counties, and permanently protects old growth and other irreplaceable environmental treasures.

Benefits of the Bipartisan O&C Bill

Environmental

- Protects the last 1 million acres of remaining mature and old growth forests on O&C lands
- Designates 130 river miles as Wild and Scenic to safeguard drinking water
- Adds 90,000 acres of new wilderness, including around Rogue river
- Protects an additional 300,000 acres of streams, rivers, ponds, and wetlands

Economic

- Creates thousands of private sector jobs
- Prohibits raw log exports to ensure milling happens here at home
- Provides revenues to county governments to keep criminals in jail, sheriffs on roads, and teachers in classrooms
- Saves federal government \$1 billion over 10 years

an opportunity to compete fairly for dredging dollars, tapped from the currently underutilized Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund. I am also pushing for a new state - federal dredging partnership to ensure the smaller ports don't get left behind. **Congress and the Corps of Engineers must fulfill its commitment to safeguard our infrastructure in ports both big and small.**

TAKING THE REINS OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The House Natural Resource Committee has jurisdiction over all federal lands, our oceans and fisheries, and it is responsible for safeguarding critical protections that keep our air and water clean, and protect our national treasures for future generations. In the coming months, this committee will address critical issues that have a profound impact in Oregon and the entire Pacific Northwest. Last month, I was selected to be the top Democrat on the Committee. This is a unique opportunity for our region—members representing Oregon, Washington and Alaska now hold every major Natural Resource committee leadership position in both the House and the Senate. **My new position is already having an effect in Oregon.**

BIPARTISAN O&C BILL TAKES BIG STEP FORWARD

Many rural, timber dependent counties in Oregon are on the

How Will the New Health Care Law Affect You?

The Affordable Care Act was upheld by the Supreme Court last year. Now the law is in the process of being implemented. I have always said the law is not perfect, and I have been vocal about needed improvements such as antitrust protections and individual mandate reform. I am committed to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to make common sense changes to the Affordable Care Act. Some provisions of the law are already having positive impacts. **We recently learned that the preliminary bids by private insurance companies suggest that premiums will be significantly reduced next year for Oregonians who don't get insurance through their employer.** No matter how you feel about the law, you should understand how the law will, or in many cases will not, affect you:

Medicare

- If you are a senior on Medicare, you can now visit your doctor for preventative services without paying anything out of pocket. **Nothing else about your Medicare will change.**
- Over 41,700 seniors in Oregon who fall into the dreaded “donut hole” have already had their prescription drug costs reduced. **The donut hole will be completely eliminated by 2020.**

Small Business

- **If you run a small business with fewer than 50 employees, you will not be required to provide insurance to your employees.** If you want to provide insurance, you may be eligible for a 50% discount beginning in 2014. You can keep your current insurance agent or you can shop for insurance yourself at Cover Oregon: <http://coveroregon.com/employers.php>.

Individual Private Insurance

- If you buy your own insurance or are currently uninsured, beginning in October you will be able to shop for competing private insurance plans at Cover Oregon's online marketplace: http://coveroregon.com/individual_families.php. If you make less than \$44,680 as an individual or \$92,200 as a family of 4, you will receive a discount on your premium. You can instantly calculate your premium on the Cover Oregon website.

All Private Insurance

- **Insurance companies can no longer deny you care because of a pre-existing condition** beginning in 2014. Without this protection more than 1,692,000 people in Oregon could be denied insurance for having had conditions as common as high blood pressure or cholesterol.
- **Kids can no longer be kicked off of their parents' insurance** the day they graduate from college. Now kids can remain covered by their parents' policy until age 26.
- **Your insurance company is no longer allowed to place a cap on how much your policy will pay** for medical care each year and over your life.
- **Insurance companies now have to pay at least 80% of premiums back to customers** as benefits. They used to be able to spend as much of your premium as they wanted on bonuses for executives and other things that did not benefit you.

All statistics from U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

Veterans Finally Getting a New Clinic

In the late 1990's I convinced the VA to build one of the first Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) in the country in Eugene. The staff at our CBOC has served veterans well, but our veteran population has outgrown the small facility.

Nearly five years ago I secured funding for a larger CBOC in Eugene. Unfortunately the VA bureaucracy repeatedly delayed the final decision on siting the clinic despite my continued efforts to move the project along. After years of fighting with the VA and waiting for appeals to be resolved, I am thankful the VA has finally committed to a site for the new CBOC.

Construction will begin in early 2014 on the new CBOC on Chad drive. I will be doing all I can to make sure the VA sticks to their schedule. I will also be working with my colleagues in Congress to reform the VA contracting process so no other veterans have to endure the delays that have plagued our CBOC project. Veterans who sacrificed for our nation should not have to wait in line for years and fight bureaucracy to get the quality medical care that they earned and were promised.

Helping Small Companies, Stopping Patent Trolls

Imagine owning a small coffee shop that provides wi-fi internet to customers. Then imagine getting a letter in the mail saying the router you use to deliver that wi-fi infringed on someone's patent, and you owe them compensation. If you don't pay up you could face a lengthy and expensive lawsuit. This is just one example of what patent trolls are doing to businesses across the country.

Patent trolls pad their pockets by buying overly broad, generic patents on products they didn't create and then suing people and businesses for supposed infringement. They drained over \$29 billion from American businesses in 2011 alone, according to a Boston University study.

I had never heard of a patent troll until I visited a small tech company in Oregon. They were being forced to pay off a troll instead of hiring new staff. In response I wrote a bill called the SHIELD Act that would deter patent trolls from harassing small businesses. It would also help businesses defend their creations if a troll did take them to court.

This is one of the few issues in Congress that has strong bipartisan support. In the coming months, I am confident Congress can pass a bill that will protect our job creators, and stop the people who hijack their ideas to get rich quick. We cannot afford to allow extortion that squeezes billions from our economy and prevents job creation.

STUDENTS: Lowering Interest Rates

Congress should have passed Senator Elizabeth Warren’s (D-MA) Bank on Students Loan Fairness Act (I am a cosponsor of the House companion bill). The bill would lower interest rates for student loans by giving borrowers the same special– super low interest rates – that the Federal Reserve currently gives in a sweetheart deal to big Wall Street banks. It’s outrageous that students and recent graduates would pay nine times the rate that Wall Street banks -- responsible for tanking the economy -- pay for their government loans. This legislation would lower student loan payments saving them thousands of dollars.

Students didn’t create the fiscal mess facing this country, and Congress shouldn’t attempt to shake them down to balance the budget. You can be assured that I will continue to fight for students and their ability to get a good education that doesn’t leave them saddled with burdensome debt when they graduate.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SOUTHWESTERN OREGON

I’ve voted against every congressional pay raise. By the end of 2013, I will have turned back \$363,000 of after-tax salary toward 227 scholarships and debt reduction. I relied on federal financial aid to go to college and know that a few thousand dollars can be the difference between going to school or not.

What’s On Your Mind? Come To A Town Hall Meeting

Since I came to Congress, I have held over 300 town hall meetings across Southwest Oregon. I have developed many legislative initiatives based on my conversations with Oregonians at these meetings. The dates and locations of my upcoming town hall meetings are listed below. I hope you will attend one in your area. I look forward to discussing current issues before Congress, and to hearing your ideas and opinions.

Monday, Sept. 23

Reedsport

10:00 - 11:00 AM
Umpqua Discovery Center
409 Riverfront

Coos Bay

12:00 - 1:00 PM
Coos Bay Public Library
525 Anderson Ave.

Bandon

3:00 - 4:00 PM
Bandon Public Library
Sprague Room
1204 11th St. SW

Gold Beach

5:30 - 6:30 PM
Gold Beach City Hall
Council Chambers
29592 Ellensburg Ave.

Tuesday, Sept. 24

Brookings

10:00 - 11:00 AM
Chetco Activity Center
Rooms A and B
550 Chetco Ln.

Cave Junction

1:00 - 2:00 PM
Cave Junction Community Building
102 S Redwood HWY

Canyonville

4:00 - 5:00 PM
Seven Feathers Hotel
Huckleberry Room
146 Chief Miwaleta Ln.

Roseburg

6:00 - 7:00 PM
Roseburg City Hall
Council Chambers
900 SE Douglas

Wednesday, Sept. 25

Florence

10:00 - 11:00 AM
Siuslaw Public Library
Bromley Room
1460 9th St.

Eugene- Seniors

1:00 - 2:00 PM
Petersen Barn
Community Center
Main Hall
870 Berntzen Rd.

Springfield

2:30 - 3:30 PM
Willamalane Adult
Activity Center
McKenzie Room
215 W C St.

Eugene

5:30 - 6:30 PM
Hilyard Community
Center
Multi Purpose Room
2580 Hilyard St.

Thursday, Sept. 26

Monroe

12:00 - 1:00 PM
Monroe Community Library
380 N 5th St.

Lebanon

2:00 - 3:00 PM
Lebanon Public Library
Community Meeting Room
55 Academy

Albany

4:00 - 5:00 PM
Albany City Hall
Council Chambers
333 Broadalbin SW

Corvallis

6:00 - 7:00 PM
Corvallis Benton County
Public Library
Main Meeting Room
645 NW Monroe Ave

I hope you can attend a townhall meeting near you!
Pete

Keep in Touch

www.defazio.house.gov

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