

Representative Peter DeFazio (D-OR)



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Peter DeFazio was elected to the U.S. House in 1986. As Oregon's most senior member of Congress, he is dean of the Oregon House delegation and represents the fourth congressional district, which covers southwest Oregon, including Corvallis and the OSU main campus as of redistricting that took effect after the 2012 elections. DeFazio grew up in Massachusetts and came to Oregon for graduate school, earning a master of sciences degree from the University of Oregon in 1977. From 1977-1982, DeFazio worked for Congressman Jim Weaver as a legislative assistant; his career came full circle in 1986 when he won the House seat opened by Weaver's retirement.

DeFazio serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, where he is a senior member of the powerful Highways and Transit Subcommittee and a member of the Aviation and Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials subcommittees. DeFazio is a key architect of the highway authorization, a multi-year federal highway and transit spending bill, which informs infrastructure spending and influences job creation and economic activity.

DeFazio also serves as Ranking Member on the Natural Resources Committee, where he serves on the National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands subcommittee and the Energy and Mineral Resources subcommittee. DeFazio is the founder and current Co-Chair of the House Small Brewer's Caucus; he is also the founder of the Progressive Caucus. In addition, he serves as the current Co-Chair of the Northwest Energy Caucus, Organic Caucus and is Vice-Chair of the Populist Caucus.

DeFazio has a long history on forest management issues in the Northwest. He has called for ecologically-based thinning of overstocked and fire suppressed forests, as well as protection of rare old growth forest ecosystems. He is a champion of the county payments program, which provides economic support to rural communities, most of which have been historically dependent on natural resources, such as timber, from public lands. In February 2012, DeFazio and Oregon Reps. Greg Walden and Kurt Schrader introduced a bipartisan plan – the "O&C Trust, Conservation, and Jobs Act" – to ensure stable, long-term funding for rural Oregon counties while simultaneously protecting old growth and other important locations. The O&C Plan passed the House in September 2013.

In May 2013, twenty House Democrats endorsed DeFazio to be the next ranking member on the House Natural Resource Committee after Rep. Ed Markey (D-Massachusetts) left the position to run for the Senate in a special election race to replace Secretary of State John Kerry.

In April 2013, DeFazio introduced the "Genetically Engineered Food Right-to-Know Act" (H.R. 1699), which would amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to require genetically engineered food, including foods that contain genetically engineered ingredients, to be labeled accordingly.

DeFazio petitioned the White House in May 2013 to consider his legislation, the "Postal Service Protection Act" (H.R. 630), which would sustain the USPS in numerous ways, including eliminating the USPS's current requirement to pre-fund the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund for future employees for 75 years, a requirement that, according to DeFazio, contributes to over 70 percent of USPS's financial losses.

DeFazio is also committed to fiscal responsibility and has refused to accept congressional pay raises while the federal government is deficit spending, instead linking his pay to Social Security cost-of-living adjustments. He has used this extra pay to reduce the national debt and to fund scholarships at five southwestern Oregon community colleges; by the end of 2013, he will have contributed a total of \$363,000 of after-tax salary toward 227 scholarships and debt reduction. He considers these scholarships among his proudest accomplishments.

Recent visits to OSU

Now representing OSU's main campus, Rep. DeFazio frequently visits OSU to meet with students and faculty. During the 2012-13 academic year, he's visited campus on three separate occasions to meet with students from the Colleges of Agricultural Sciences, Pharmacy, the University Honors College, and the School of Public Policy. In January 2012, he toured the Linus Pauling Science Center and was briefed on the NIH-funded research underway at the Linus Pauling Institute.