

PETER DEFAZIO

REPORTS



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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Dear Friend:

The focus and intensity of my work in Washington, D.C. has changed dramatically as a result of the September 11 terrorist attacks. That's not to say that issues that were important before September 11 aren't still of long-term importance to our state and the nation. But the crush of legislation directly related to the attacks - emergency assistance, the military response, aviation security, domestic security and economic stabilization - have dominated the congressional agenda.

Efforts to overhaul our failing system of aviation security (page 2) and craft an effective, targeted and fiscally responsible economic stimulus package (page 3) have been my primary focus. I am also continuing my work on a number of other important issues: Social Security stabilization, battling misguided trade policies (both on page 2), continuing the fight against energy deregulation, and increasing education funding (both on page 4).

My frequent trips home have been curtailed due to the hectic congressional schedule, so I had to delay the town hall meetings planned for this fall. Likewise, the interruption to my Washington office due to the anthrax threat, has slowed my response to your calls, e-mail and regular mail. I apologize. We have not received a regular mail delivery since October 12, and may never receive some of the letters that have been mailed since then. So I would urge you to use e-mail, if you have computer access, or call my toll-free phone number (1-800-944-9603) to share your views and opinions, or if you need assistance with a federal agency. Your thoughts and concerns are important to me, particularly as we face the difficult and uncertain times ahead.

Sincerely,

A Difficult Trip To Ground Zero

NEW YORK, September 26, 2001—As a member of the Homeland Security Task Force, I was invited to see for myself the destruction wrought by terrorists on U.S. soil.

I have not been a frequent visitor to New York, but the dramatic change in the skyline was immediately apparent as we crossed the harbor. There was a huge opening in that famous cluster of skyscrapers; and smaller buildings that had once stood in the shadow of the Twin Towers, now stood out against the sky. As we drew closer you could still see smoke rising from the rubble. We walked streets that had already been cleared of nearly a foot of pulverized concrete, broken glass, and scattered papers and were now crowded with rescue and recovery vehicles and workers.

The actual site of the destruction of the Twin Towers is now called "Ground Zero." It does, in fact, look like a scene of death and destruction from some of the most horrific bombing raids from WWII. Rescue and recovery workers we spoke with described their efforts to penetrate and remove the wreckage. Much of the steel is still hot, and the more than seven stories of rubble above ground is just pulverized concrete and twisted steel. The spirit of the workers on site and all the related support personnel was powerful, and I made a pledge to do all that I could to support their efforts.

We met with officials from federal, state, local and private relief efforts to discuss the measures taken to assist the victims' families and the thousands of others displaced by the tragedy. The relief effort has been awesome by all accounts. The involved government agencies have responded professionally and comprehensively. The private relief

efforts, supported by a wave of generosity from citizens across the U.S. and overseas, has been truly remarkable.

All my colleagues in Congress should make the trip to New York to better understand the devastating magnitude of the attacks and help steel them to the challenges of a determined response.

Our nation has had many proud moments since the craven terrorist attacks on September 11. The extraordinary valor shown by police officers, firefighters, and emergency services workers has inspired us all. The rapid response, sacrifice, and service of the National Guard, Coast Guard, and active duty military personnel to ensure our national security is comforting. It has also been heartening to witness the generosity of average Americans who have donated blood and money, volunteered time, and helped in any way possible. Despite the shock and uncertainty since the terror attacks, America has drawn strength from a renewed sense of unity and national purpose.



Although the terrorist attacks September 11 changed the world forever, my visit to Ground Zero highlighted the unique strength and resilient spirit of America.

The Long Fight for Aviation Security

The September 11 attacks have shaken the American public's confidence in the safety of air travel and brought to light many problems with the current aviation security system. Despite my long-standing concerns about the safety and security of our nation's airports, I never imagined that an airplane and its innocent passengers would be turned into a weapon of mass destruction, killing thousands.

Back in 1987, during my first term in office, I introduced my first bill on aviation security to improve methods of airport security screening. But, every attempt to enhance aviation security over the past 14 years was blocked or delayed by the airline industry because of cost concerns. The huge loss of life on Sept. 11 finally convinced the rest of my colleagues and the airlines that security must be improved.

Under the current system, the airlines are responsible for screening their passengers, but they contract out this work to private security companies. This low-bid arrangement has created a system with many minimum wage employees and an extraordinary rate of turnover- up to 400 percent a year at some airports. Even with heightened awareness at airports following the recent attacks, there have been numerous instances across the country where security screeners have failed to detect knives and guns. The airlines' overriding desire to keep costs down has resulted in security on the cheap. It's time to change this broken system and provide the American people with the best security available.

Although the House leaders rushed through a \$15 billion airline bailout within ten days of the terrorist attacks, they unconscionably delayed the aviation security bill for seven weeks! Our comprehensive package (identical to the 100-0 Senate-passed bill) narrowly failed in the House after weeks of arm-twisting by the House leadership. The House ended up passing the Republican leaders' bill which left in place a system that has failed us for the last 30 years. Merely proposing higher standards and stricter regulations for companies that are already violating the current minimal standards would not change a thing. Instead of bringing in professional federal law enforcement officials to provide real aviation security, the bill simply would have dressed people up with badges and uniforms to create the appearance of security. We would have been left with the same sieve of security at our nation's airports.

I was one of a small group of House and Senate members appointed to the conference committee on aviation security which was responsible for working out the differences between the House and Senate bills. Agreement was quickly reached on a majority of the security provisions in the bill including securing cockpit doors, increasing the number of Air Marshals, screening all individuals who have runway and aircraft access and improving screening technology. The status of airport screeners, however, remained a sticking-point. After intense negotiations, the conferees agreed to have the federal government



Rep. DeFazio is joined by pilots and flight attendants at an event in front of the U.S. Capitol to call for immediate federalization of airport security.

immediately take charge of screening at airports and begin to place highly trained federal screeners and law enforcement officers at our nation's airports. I am proud that the committee was able to work out an agreement which will significantly improve security at our nations airports and have a bill that the President will sign before Thanksgiving, one of the busiest travel times of the year.

Politics, they say, is the art of compromise, but the safety and security of the American public is too important to compromise. I am pleased that Congress did not compromise on the Aviation and Transportation Security Act. The traveling public should feel confident that real reforms are on the way.

Fighting Terrorism on the Homefront

Following the recent terrorist attacks, Americans have begun to rethink how vulnerable our nation is to attacks on our own soil. We can afford, and Americans are willing to pay, not only for an improved system of aviation security, but also to ensure that our law enforcement, public health infrastructure, Coast Guard, intelligence agencies, and our military have the resources necessary to deter or respond to future acts of mass terrorism against America.

I was extremely dismayed to learn many of the terrorists responsible for the September 11 attacks had been living for some time in the U.S. illegally. Reforms must be made at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to ensure that individuals are closely screened before they receive visas, and are accountable once inside the U.S. I am a member of the Democratic Homeland Security Task Force, which has proposed a comprehensive package to respond to the terrorist threat, including provisions to secure our borders. This package, the Bioterrorism Protection Act (BioPact), includes \$345 million to increase the number of border patrol agents along our Northern and Southern borders, integrate the various federal watch lists of potentially dangerous individuals into a single database, and increase the ability of INS to track visa overstays and tighten visa requirements.

BioPact also contains measures to help our

public health system prepare for and respond to bioterrorism, including \$1.4 billion to increase the national stockpile of anthrax, small pox and other vaccines. Our proposal would also fund a revived public health network across the U.S. for early detection and response to biological and chemical attacks. It also funds protection of our food and water supplies through increased inspection of food shipments, strengthened security at key agricultural facilities, and expanded security at water facilities. These provisions, plus funding to enhance law enforcement, improve coordination between government agencies and increased capability for the National Guard to assist communities during times of domestic crisis, will strengthen our nation's physical infrastructure and help communities become better prepared for potential threats in the future.

For more information on what we all can do to protect our families and communities from domestic terrorism, please visit:

- The Office of Homeland Security [www.whitehouse.gov/homeland]
- The U.S. Postal Service [www.usps.com]
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [www.hhs.gov]
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration [www.fda.gov]
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.cdc.gov]

Quick Updates

Social Security

The presidential privatization commission will report on a range of proposals in early December. Privatization options carry a high degree of risk and depend on higher taxes or reduced benefits. I have introduced a Social Security stabilization plan (HR 3315) that does not raise taxes on working families or cut benefits, but restores solvency to the program.

Trade

The Constitution grants Congress the authority to regulate trade. Unfortunately, Congress may side-step this duty by granting "fast track" negotiating authority to the President. Fast track allows the President to negotiate trade agreements without any accountability to Congress. I opposed fast track under President Clinton and I oppose granting it to President Bush.

The President wants fast track primarily to negotiate an expansion of NAFTA to the entire Western Hemisphere. NAFTA has failed and should not be expanded. NAFTA turned trade surpluses with Mexico into deficits. It led to job loss and wage cuts for U.S. workers. And, it allowed corporations to sue sovereign governments in order to overturn public health and safety laws.

Strong Medicine to Jump-Start the Economy

The outlook for the economy is grim. Even before the recent terrorist attacks, Oregon had one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. The State has suffered three straight quarters of job loss. Demand for food assistance has jumped by one-third. Workers are losing health insurance. Small businesses are teetering on the edge of bankruptcy.

Nationally, the numbers don't look much better. The national unemployment rate has jumped to 5.3 percent. The stock market bubble burst and destroyed \$8 trillion in wealth. The hemorrhaging of jobs in the manufacturing sector (more than one million lost since July 2000) is increasingly spreading to the service sector.

The economy clearly needs strong medicine to recover. That is why I joined my colleagues in the Progressive Caucus to draft an economic stimulus plan appropriately balanced between direct assistance for workers, investments in critical infrastructure, and tax rebates for those most in need. Just as importantly, our plan was fiscally responsible. The \$200 billion package would stimulate the economy without spending Social Security trust funds.

Assistance for Workers

The plan we drafted substantially expanded assistance for laid-off workers. It would:

- Extend the availability of unemployment benefits for 52 weeks.
- Expand the eligibility for benefits, including part-time workers.

- Provide a \$100 per week supplement to an individual's unemployment benefit.
- Cover 100 percent of the cost of COBRA health insurance coverage for 18 months. For workers who don't qualify for COBRA, our plan would reimburse states for extending Medicaid coverage.

By contrast, the economic "stimulus" plan approved by the House skimmed on health insurance assistance and unemployment benefits. In fact, Oregon workers likely won't be eligible for enhanced benefits at all under the House plan since it triggers only after a 30 percent increase in the unemployment rate. Oregon would have to reach an unemployment rate of 8.2 percent before our workers would qualify. Working families are hurting now. Congress needs to provide immediate relief.

Repairing Crumbling Infrastructure

In order to provide jobs in the short-term and improve the productive capacity of the U.S. economy over the long-term, our plan included \$35 billion in spending to repair and upgrade our nation's infrastructure. This money would go toward funding for Amtrak and high-speed rail, drinking water and waste water systems, helping communities build and repair schools, and construction of renewable energy resources, among other critical needs.

By contrast, the House leadership plan provided no money for infrastructure improvements.

Assistance for States and Small Businesses

Because many states are being forced to cut

programs or raise taxes to cover budget shortfalls (exactly the opposite of what should be done to combat a recession) our plan reestablished a revenue sharing program to shore up funding for vital social programs. The Caucus also proposed \$10 billion to assist small businesses and promote economic development in depressed areas.

By contrast, the House leadership plan provided no assistance to states and only minimal assistance to small businesses.

Tax Rebates for Working Americans

Our plan also included \$300 tax rebates for all Americans left out of the original round of tax cuts.

By contrast, the House leadership plan provided billions of dollars in tax rebates retroactive to 1986 for large, profitable multinational corporations. This was done by reopening a tax loophole closed by President Reagan.

The House leadership plan also included \$20 billion in tax cuts for the overseas operations of financial services companies as long as their profits remain abroad. In effect, big companies would be rewarded for not investing in the U.S. How can that provide jobs and needed economic stimulus at home?

Stimulus Plan Needs Immediate Action

According to Dean Baker of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, **the \$200 billion economic stimulus program I helped develop would translate into almost 4.2 million jobs over the next two years.**

The Vanishing Surplus: Where Did \$3 Trillion Go?

Just a few months ago, the debate in Washington was over how to divide up the projected ten-year surplus of \$5.6 trillion. I warned at the time that having projections is not the same as having the money in the bank. Unfortunately, the surplus has disappeared faster than even I imagined it would.

The ten-year budget surplus projection (including Social Security and Medicare) has plummeted from \$5.6 trillion in January 2001 to \$2 trillion today. Today's projected surplus is entirely made up of surplus Social Security funds. The Medicare surplus is entirely gone. Social Security will actually be in surplus by \$2.4 trillion over the next decade. **So, unless steps are taken, the rest of the federal budget will be \$400 million in deficit and Congress will again be borrowing from the Social Security Trust**

Fund.

The tax cut approved earlier this year, which I voted against, depleted nearly 51 percent of the projected surplus. The economic downturn has

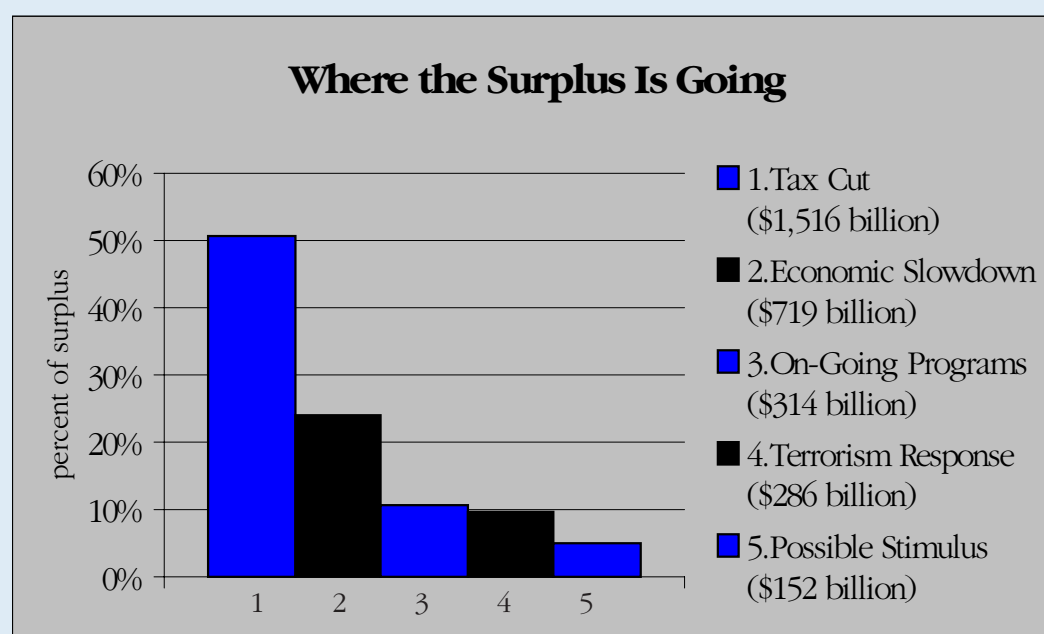
and other programs are responsible for an additional 11 percent decline in projected surpluses.

It is important that Congress maintain the fiscal responsibility that contributed to the nearly decade-long economic expansion and continue to safeguard the Social Security trust funds.

That is why I have proposed that my economic stimulus plan, as well as any necessary spending to respond to the terrorist attacks, be offset by postponing a portion of the tax cuts enacted into law earlier this year for the wealthiest one percent of taxpayers (those making more than

\$384,000 a year).

This approach would protect Social Security and maintain our commitment to paying down our staggering \$5.6 trillion national debt.



reduced the projected surplus by 24 percent. Emergency spending to respond to the September 11 terrorist strikes has depleted 10 percent of the surplus. Increases in defense spending

Protecting Congress' War Powers

Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution: "The Congress shall have the power to...declare war."

Decisions on war and peace are among the most profound decisions public officials are required to make.

The Constitution grants Congress the authority to determine when to send U.S. troops into battle. This right was confirmed by the earliest leaders of our nation. President George Washington, instructed his Administration that "no offensive expedition of importance can be undertaken until after [Members of Congress] have deliberated upon the subject, and authorized such a measure."

Unfortunately, later presidents of both parties did end-runs around the Constitution and committed U.S. troops to hostilities without the prior authorization of Congress. In response, Congress approved the War Powers Resolution in 1973.

While the War Powers Resolution restored the constitutional balance of power between the legislative and executive branch, it did recognize there are extraordinary circumstances when the President must use the U.S. military without a full congressional debate. The resolution authorized the President to use force to respond to "a national emergency created by attack upon the United States, its territories or possessions, or its armed forces." The terrorist strikes in September clearly meet this criteria.

Clearly, President Bush already had the authority to respond militarily against the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda terrorist network. However, there was

an effort by some in Congress to cede war powers in an open-ended manner far beyond that necessary to respond to the terrorist threat. I worked against this extraordinary and unconstitutional delegation of authority.

Protecting Congress' war powers is not a partisan issue for me, it is key to the separation and balance of powers in our representative democracy. The branch closest to the citizens, the legislative branch, must maintain the solemn authority to declare war.

I voted in favor of the resolution authorizing President Bush to use force to respond to the September 11 attacks, but not until a number of safeguards were added ensuring Congress would be able to conduct proper oversight of the military campaign.

To avoid military engagements unrelated to the campaign against terrorism, the use of force resolution limits the President to retaliating against only those nations, organizations or persons responsible for the September 11 attacks. The resolution allows the President to respond against those who harbor and finance those terrorists.

The resolution also requires the President to regularly consult with, and report to, Congress as required under the War Powers Resolution. This, along with Congress' control over the purse strings, will ensure adequate congressional oversight of military operations while providing the President with enough flexibility to conduct the campaign as he sees fit.

Quick Updates

Energy

I am continuing the fight against further energy deregulation in Congress and at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The good news is that on November 1, BPA lowered the estimate of a blackout or brownout this winter from 12 percent to 1 percent. The bad news is the damage to the wholesale market from the California deregulation fiasco means higher rates for at least twelve months.

Education

Congress is putting its stamp on reforming elementary and secondary education. Congressional leaders have been working out differences since mid-July and are expected to reach an agreement soon. Negotiations have focused on school choice, teacher quality requirements, standards for testing, and school accountability.

Make no mistake, Congress stands behind our young men and women in uniform who have been put in harm's way.

The terrorist attacks of September 11 resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, and were an attempt to undermine our system of government and our economy. My frank opinion is, if the terrorists are not destroyed, they have the resources and determination to carry-out further devastating attacks.

I was proud to join these local Scouts and my fellow Oregonians on Veteran's Day. We honored both the millions of men and women who have served in the armed forces and fought on the front lines to defend our nation and those who are bravely serving today to protect the rights and freedoms we, as Americans, cherish.



Congressman Peter DeFazio wants to hear from you

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