

SENIORS

DeFazio earned a graduate degree from the University of Oregon in gerontology and founded Eugene's Senior Companion Program, a senior employment program authorized under the Older Americans Act. He has continued his commitment to our nation's seniors in his congressional career.

"DeFazio has long been an advocate of senior citizens and has put much effort during his elective-office career into trying to guarantee that their needs are met."

Siuslaw News, March 13, 2002

"DeFazio, who is one of the most knowledgeable men in the country when it comes to the Social Security program - because he's studied the system thoroughly and dedicated himself to finding a 'fix for it'..."

Port Orford News, March 13, 2002

"He has been a watchdog for hard-working Oregonians and a strong voice for senior citizens."

The World, September 25, 2001

In the 108th Congress (2003-2004)

- ▶ **DeFazio voted against the House Republican budget resolution for FY04 and FY05, which largely mirrored President Bush's budget proposals. One of the reasons for his vote is that the Republican proposals would spend \$2 trillion over ten years in the Social Security and Medicare trust funds on other government programs and to fund tax cuts for the richest Americans.**
- ▶ **DeFazio is a cosponsor of H.R. 2262, the Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers Act, which would establish a CPI-E for Social Security recipients that would more accurately measure cost-of-living increases for seniors by focusing on the rising cost of products most often purchased by seniors, such as prescription drugs. This would lead to higher and more realistic COLAs for Social Security recipients.**
- ▶ **DeFazio voted against H.R. 1, the Republican Medicare Prescription drug bill, which provides scant benefits to seniors while lavishly subsidizing the pharmaceutical and insurance industries.**
- ▶ **In August 2004, DeFazio released a report on the Medicare drug discount card program prepared at his request by the Democratic Staff of the House Committee on Government Reform. The report found that the discount cards failed to provide real savings to most seniors.**

- ▶ **DeFazio supported several bills that would truly address the high cost of prescription drugs and provide Medicare coverage of prescription drugs.** The bills would require companies to offer seniors on Medicare the same prices they offer their most-favored customers, enable Americans to take advantage of lower costs of drugs manufactured to FDA specifications in other countries by allowing reimportation, bring generic drugs to market faster, and requiring drugs developed with taxpayer funds be provided at a reasonable price.
- ▶ **In September 2004, DeFazio joined several other Oregon Representatives in contacting HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson urging him to support Governor Kulongoski's plan to reimport drugs from Canada.**
- ▶ **DeFazio reintroduced H.R. 757, the Drug Company Gift Disclosure Act,** legislation to require prescription drug manufacturers, packers, and distributors to disclose certain gifts provided in connection with detailing, promotional, or other marketing activities to health care entities. The legislation is intended to publicize drug company gifts that may influence prescribing practices of physicians and contributing to rising drug costs.
- ▶ As he has in past congresses, DeFazio is a cosponsor of H.R. 97, the “Notch Fairness Act.” This bill would provide notch victims a choice of either a \$5,000 lump sum payment over four years, or an improved benefit computation over 10 years.
- ▶ **DeFazio has supported alternative federal budget proposals, and offered his own amendment, to roll back the tax cuts for those making more than \$373,000 a year in order to reduce the federal budget deficit and stop the raiding of the Social Security trust fund to pay for other government functions and tax cuts for the wealthy.**
- ▶ **DeFazio is a cosponsor of H.R. 1677, legislation to protect seniors with defined benefit retirement plans by ensuring that retirees are protected if employers convert defined benefit plans to cash balance pension plans.** DeFazio also voted in favor of an amendment by Representative Sanders (I-VT) to H.R. 5025, the fiscal year 2005 Treasury-Transportation Appropriations Act, to prohibit the Treasury Department from moving forward with regulations to promote cash balance pension plans. This amendment was adopted 237-162 on September 21, 2004. The Senate has not yet acted on this measure.
- ▶ **Similarly, DeFazio joined dozens of colleagues in writing to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in opposition to an April 2004 EEOC ruling that employers were well within their rights to drop health care coverage for retirees. This ruling was issued shortly after Congress approved the Medicare prescription drug legislation.**
- ▶ **DeFazio is a cosponsor of H.R. 594, which would repeal both the Social Security Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO).** WEP affects the way Social Security retirement or disability benefits are calculated. This law was passed by Congress to prevent federal retirees from collecting sizable Social Security benefits in addition to their full federal retirement annuity. Unfortunately, the formula used by Social

Security to calculate benefit amounts was arbitrarily modified, giving federal retirees a lower Social Security benefit. With respect to the GPO, under current law, the offset reduces the amount of one's Social Security spouse's or widow's benefit by two-thirds of the amount of their government annuity. H.R. 594 would repeal the law so that annuitants could keep more of their spouse's Social Security benefits. **DeFazio has also signed a discharge petition to bring H.R. 594 to the House floor. If 218 members sign the petition, then the House Republican leadership is forced to allow a vote on the bill. To date, the petition has 193 signatures.**

▸ **DeFazio wrote to the House Appropriations Committee in support of increased funding in fiscal year 2004 for nutrition programs under the Older Americans Act, including meals at senior centers and home delivered meals.**

▸ DeFazio is a cosponsor of H.R. 3111, legislation to establish 211 as a non-emergency number to learn about social service programs for which seniors may be eligible.

In the 107th Congress (2001-2002)

▸ DeFazio voted against the President's budget proposals as well as his tax cuts, which picked the lock on the Social Security lockbox and led to the raiding of the Social Security trust funds, which had been protected by the end of the Clinton administration. The President has proposed spending the entire 10-year Social Security surplus on other government operations.

▸ **DeFazio continued his role as a leading critic of plans by President Bush and others to partially privatize Social Security.** DeFazio testified in front of the House Ways and Means Committee in March 2002 against plans to privatize Social Security and in favor of his own plan to stabilize the program.

▸ **Authored legislation, H.R. 3315, the "Social Security Stabilization and Enhancement Act of 2001," that was certified by the Social Security Administration actuaries as restoring 75-year solvency to Social Security without resorting to privatization.** The DeFazio legislation exempts the first \$4,000 in wages from the Social Security payroll tax; lifts the cap on wages subject to the payroll tax (currently, wages above \$84,900 are exempt from payroll taxes) so, like Medicare, all wages are subject to the FICA tax; increases benefits up to five percent for those over age 85; and allows a portion of the Social Security trust fund to be invested in equities. The investing would be done by private fund managers selected by an independent Social Security Investment Oversight Board. The private fund managers would be required to act only in the fiduciary interest of beneficiaries and would be restricted to investing in broad index funds.

▸ **Requested the GAO investigate the causes of the flu vaccine shortage during the Winter 2000 flu season.** GAO concluded (1) delays in vaccine production and haphazard distribution created the shortages and drove up prices, (2) no mechanism is currently in place to distribute

the vaccine to high-risk individuals should there be a shortage in the future.

▶ **The results of the GAO investigation led DeFazio to draft H.R. 910, the “Influenza Vaccine Emergency Act,” legislation to strengthen the authority of the Secretary of Health and Human Services to respond to inadequate supplies of the flu vaccine.** In the case of a shortage, the Secretary could seize vaccines and mandate a new method of distribution to ensure those most at-risk receive the vaccine.

In the 106th Congress (1999-2000)

▶ **DeFazio voted repeatedly for so-called Social Security "lock boxes", which were supposed to wall off surplus Social Security revenue from being used for other government programs.**

▶ Author of H.R.2717, a bill to preserve Social Security for future generations without reducing benefits by making progressive changes in the payroll taxes that fund the Social Security system. DeFazio testified about his legislation before the House Ways and Means Committee in June of 1999 at a hearing on proposals to improve the long term solvency of Social Security.

▶ **Author of H.R. 773, a bill to reauthorize the Older Americans Act.** This Act expired in 1995 and authorizes funding for programs like Meals on Wheels. The bill had 233 cosponsors (218 votes are required to approve legislation in the House) and was endorsed by every major senior citizen advocacy group including AARP, the National Council on Aging, the National Council of Senior Citizens and the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare. The bill was also the subject of a discharge petition garnering 191 signatures. A discharge petition with 218 signatures will allow the bill to be brought to the House floor for a vote, even with the opposition of House leaders and the Committees of jurisdiction.

Overwhelming support for DeFazio’s bill forced the congressional leadership to finally reauthorize the OAA. On November 1, 2000 the bill was signed into law, five years after the programs had expired.

▶ **Secured approval of legislation that helped reopen Cottage Grove’s only hospital.** DeFazio first introduced legislation, together with members of the House Rural Health Care Caucus, to improve access to healthcare in rural areas. Parts of this bill, including the Cottage Grove hospital provisions, were included in the Medicare Balanced Budget Refinement Act, H.R.3194. **This legislation was approved by Congress and enacted into law on November 29, 1999 as part of the fiscal year 2000 Omnibus Appropriations Act.**

In the 105th Congress (1997-1998)

▶ DeFazio voted against the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 because of the deep cuts in Medicare that were included. The cuts were so deep that Congress began restoring them a few years

later.

In the 103rd Congress (1993-1994)

▶ Author of H. R. 1883, legislation to rectify the Social Security benefits discrepancy known as "the notch." DeFazio tried to force a floor vote on the notch issue by pushing notch reform as an amendment to H.R. 11, the Urban Aid Bill on June 29, 1992. He delayed the bill for a number of days, thus creating a minor crisis with the leadership. The bill was finally brought forward under suspension of the rules, no amendments allowed. Peter voted against the final Urban Aid bill because it had become a Christmas tree laden with tax goodies, including a repeal of the luxury tax on yachts, furs and expensive jewelry. CBO estimated the luxury tax repeal cost the Treasury \$389 million over five years.

In the 101st Congress (1989-1990)

▶ Author of legislation, H. R. 1564, to revise the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act of 1988. DeFazio voted against the Medicare Catastrophic bill which proved unpopular with seniors and was ultimately repealed by H. R. 3607, enacted into law on December 13, 1989.

In the 100th Congress (1987-1988)

▶ In 1988, DeFazio voted against the Medicare Catastrophic Protection Act, arguing that it would drive up health care costs for seniors without improving coverage or quality. In 1989, following protests by millions of seniors, Congress agreed, enacting legislation DeFazio sponsored to repeal the Act.