

September 20, 2006 **Press Release** | Contact: Danielle Langone (202) 225-6416

WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio today voted against HR 4844, which would require Oregonians voting by mail to submit a photocopy of their federal ID and proof of citizenship each time they vote in a federal election, opening the door to breaches of privacy of this sensitive information. We must be certain that all voters are citizens of the U.S. But once registered, they should not have to provide proof of citizenship each and every time they vote.

“I strongly support the 9/11 Commission's recommendation of establishing more secure identification for American citizens,” DeFazio said. “That's why I voted in favor of the REAL ID Act, which provided federal standards for the issuance of driver's licenses and ensures that licenses are only given to American citizens or immigrants in the U.S. legally.

“The problem with HR 4844 is not its requirement of proof of citizenship when registering to vote, but its continual requirement to present such proof every time a citizen votes. That means each time Oregonians mail in their ballots for a federal election, they would also be required to include a copy of a document proving their U.S. citizenship. I have serious concerns about the inconvenience and cost this would add to the voting process, as well as privacy concerns about access to this sensitive information, which are not addressed by this bill.

“Further, there is no evidence of a voting fraud problem in Oregon. According to the Oregon Secretary of State, since 1991, over 10 million votes have been cast in Oregon. Of those 10 million votes, only 10 people have met the criteria that would warrant an investigation into their citizenship. Of those 10, two have been prosecuted. It is important to keep in mind that the penalties for voting fraud are already severe. Immigrants who try to vote are automatically given a one-way ticket home. No criminal conviction is necessary.

“If the majority were truly concerned about guaranteeing the integrity of federal elections, we would be focusing on widespread concerns about new electronic voting technology. In recent elections, voting machines have failed, votes have been lost, and hard drives have been damaged. Secure and auditable electronic voting machines that provide a paper ballot for verification should be the focus of Congress, not this hastily written bill.”