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WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio voted today against House Republicans' most recent attempt to convince the American people that they are working to reduce gas prices, the Refinery Permit Process Schedule Act (H.R. 5254). Premised on the misguided assumption that environmental regulations are slowing the issuance of refinery permits, the bill would create a new federal bureaucrat to coordinate the process and would impose additional procedural requirements on state and local governments. The additional bureaucracy is more likely to delay the process, not improve it.

“This bill would do nothing to reduce gas prices,” DeFazio said. “While it is true that more refineries would help lower gas prices, oil company memos tell us that it is oil company executives themselves who have shut down refineries in order to keep profit margins high. Not one of the 55 refineries shuttered in the last 10 years was closed for environmental reasons. They were closed to curtail capacity and drive up profits. The refinery share of a gallon of gas is up 2.55 percent in 1 year.

“It is ironic that the party of small government has proposed adding more regulations and bureaucracy to the issuance of refinery permits, claiming it will improve the process. Americans deserve an effective, comprehensive solution to the problem of high gas prices and growing dependence on foreign oil. Unfortunately, all they get out of this Republican Congress is a lot of hot air.”

As an alternative, DeFazio supports several measures that would address rising gas prices:

He voted for H.R. 5253, which will outlaw price gouging by oil companies, and create strong penalties for gouging. It will also permit states to bring lawsuits against wholesalers or retailers for price gouging.

He sponsored H.R.3544, which would impose a windfall profits tax on oil producers and refiners, ensuring that oil companies do not profit on the backs of American consumers. It would also increase fuel efficiency standards and crack down on oil monopolies by imposing a

moratorium on oil company mergers.

He cosponsored H.R. 4409, which would require a reduction in U.S. oil consumption by 2.5 million barrels a day within 10 years by investing in alternative fuels and conservation.

He cosponsored H.R. 5248, which would subject all oil trading to the same regulation as other commodities to ensure markets aren't manipulated by speculators trading oil behind closed doors.

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