

**June 8, 2008**

WASHINGTON, DC—Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) today sent another letter to President Bush and Speaker Pelosi calling on them to support critical county payments funding in the upcoming emergency spending bill. DeFazio has already sent letters to both asking that they consider including county payments funding in the emergency spending bill. It is currently included in the Senate version of the measure.

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The President has requested \$108 billion for the war and \$770 million for international food assistance in the emergency spending bill but, has repeatedly stated he would veto legislation that included any domestic spending for emergencies here in the U.S. However, Administration sources have indicated that a one year extension of the county payments program in the supplemental would not force a veto threat. DeFazio is pushing the President to make a public declaration that he will not veto a bill including county payments so House leadership can include it in the emergency spending bill.

"I have been lobbying Congressional leaders to include county payments funding in the supplemental but, they say they will not include the program in the bill if it will trigger a veto by the President," DeFazio said.

In the House, Speaker Pelosi has been a long time supporter of the county payments program however, the House passed emergency spending bill did not include funding for county payments because of the president's veto threat on domestic spending. The Senate recently passed the legislation with a one-year extension of the county payments program. If the President will make it clear that he won't object to an extension of county payments in the emergency supplemental, it will be easier to keep the funding in the legislation.

"The possibility that county payments will not trigger a veto by the President is encouraging. I am asking the President to confirm this fact and, in light of this information, I am urging Congressional leaders to fund the program in the emergency supplemental," DeFazio said. "Counties in southwest Oregon are about to start laying off employees by the hundreds into a bad economy -- we're losing sheriffs patrols, jail beds, teachers and other vital public services. We are at the 11th hour and it is critical that something be done now. Curry and Josephine counties could go bankrupt if the funding isn't extended."

The Secure Rural Schools Act expired on President Bush's watch with a Republican controlled Congress in 2006. Last year, the Democratic Congress gave counties a one-year extension while we continue to work on a longer-term solution. The county payments program provides nearly \$280 million a year to 33 Oregon counties for services like schools, roads and law enforcement. Counties receiving funding under the program have a high proportion of federally owned lands. Prior to the enactment of the county payments program, they had received a percentage of receipts from timber harvests, which fluctuated from year to year. However, harvest levels decreased precipitously in the late 1990s due to changes in federal forest policy. Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act in 2000 to help stabilize these payments and ensure proper funding for vital county services.