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DeFazio donates pay hike for scholarships

By Dan Eisler
Emerald Contributor

For the past four years, Rep. Peter DeFazio has returned his congressional pay raises to the U.S. Treasury.

But lately the Springfield Democrat has been returning less than he used to — only about half. The rest is being sent to college scholarships for Oregon students, including the University's Presidential Scholarship program.

Beginning in November or December, DeFazio will donate \$2,000 of his pay raise to the program, designed to recruit the best and brightest Oregon high school graduates to attend Oregon colleges and universities. The funds will be available for this school year, said Nancy Graham, associate director of the University Foundation's annual fund.

DeFazio specified the recipients must be graduates of high schools in the 4th Congressional District who intend to live in Oregon and pursue careers in public service, Graham said.

Public service includes local, state and federal employment, or private non-profit employment in community service, DeFazio said.

The Presidential Scholarship program awards \$2,000 a year, for up to four years, to incoming freshmen on a rotating basis, Graham said.

In addition, Lane, Umpqua and Southwestern Oregon community colleges will get slightly more than \$2,000 each for a one-year, full-tuition scholarship.

Those scholarships are offered through the Oregon State Scholarship Commission and designed to primarily serve dislocated workers, such as those in the timber industry, living in the 4th District.

Beginning in January, DeFazio will start a new payment schedule, returning part of his raise to the public debt account of the Treasury's general fund for six months and sending checks to the two scholarship programs the rest of the year, said Betsy Boyd, district director for DeFazio's Eugene office.

"This is his way of making a little bit of money available to the people in his congressional district," Boyd said. "He bene-

fit from financial aid, (but) financial aid is nothing compared to what it was."

DeFazio said he received federal student loans while attending the University of Oregon and Tufts University in Massachusetts.

"I could not have gone to college without federal student loans and this is my way of giving someone else a hand," he said.

DeFazio said he had thought about donating part of his raise for scholarships for several years but wasn't prompted until the latest raise went into effect in January.

At town meetings people told



Peter DeFazio

DeFazio he should spend the money in Oregon, and "things coalesced when Congress got the pay raise. I didn't think there'd be any objection to a 50-50 split," he said.

"In times of financial crisis Congress should lead by example," DeFazio said. "I don't believe the massive pay raises for members of Congress were appropriate."

Congressional pay has increased twice since DeFazio took office four years ago — a 61 percent increase from \$77,400 to \$125,100. DeFazio has accepted an amount equal to the cost-of-living raises given Social Security recipients and returned the rest to the Treasury, putting his current salary at \$92,000, said Ann Larsen, DeFazio's press secretary.

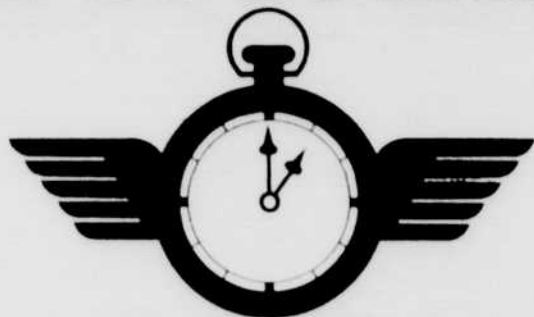
That leaves \$16,000 after taxes, half of which he continues sending back to the Treasury, with the other half going to the scholarships, Larsen said.

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