



# BIDEN MY TIME

*For the first time in 10 years, Democrats have the White House and Congress. So what's next?* BY HENRY HOUSTON

**T**he last time Democrats had both chambers of Congress and the White House, Barack Obama had overcome the odds and had been elected the first Black president.

When Congressman Peter DeFazio recalls those two years of Democratic Party control, he says Obama made a mistake in economic recovery after listening “to that jerk Larry Summers” when pushing for the Troubled Assets Relief Package (TARP) legislation during the Great Recession, which resulted tax cuts too small to notice and minimal job creation.

Summers was President Bill Clinton’s treasury secretary, and during Obama’s first year served as the director of the National Economic Council.

DeFazio says TARP cost the party dearly in 2010. The party lost the House and wouldn’t be in the majority until 2018. The congressman says he remembers former Congressman John Mica (R-Florida) telling him after the 2010 election that the Transportation and Infrastructure committee chair would have been DeFazio’s if the

Democrats had done real infrastructure investment and created real jobs during those two years. Eight years later, DeFazio became the chair when Democrats took the House.

After four years of the Trump administration, two of which were dominated by a Republican Congress, President Joe Biden and the Democrats have retaken the White House and a slim majority on Capitol Hill. Biden’s first days are crucial for setting the tone for the next four years, because those early days could set the pace for his presidency, says Chris Stout, an Oregon State University associate professor of political science.

And two of Oregon’s federal delegation will be there to help: DeFazio and Sen. Ron Wyden.

With help from the slim Democratic control in Congress, Biden will work on COVID-19 relief legislation, economic recovery bills that include investing in the U.S.’s infrastructure, addressing voters’ rights and elections, as well as Trump’s likely trial in the Senate.

The Democratic Party is in a different ideological place compared to 2008, Stout says, in part because of Sen. Bernie Sanders’ previous presidential campaigns and Biden’s diverse cabinet picks. With this arsenal, Biden has

the opportunity to not to sign an easy legislative victory like a COVID-19 relief bill but also push for progressive policies.

To avoid a Republican midterm takeover in two years, DeFazio says, Democrats have to strike right away, and move quickly and aggressively to restore the middle class and create new jobs, proving to the Americans who voted for Trump that Democrats can create a strong economy.

In the upper house of Congress, Wyden has spent much of the past four years criticizing the Trump administration and Republicans. His critiques include saying the Trump campaign colluded with the Russian government in July 2017; defending Portland Trail Blazers basketball player Enes Kanter’s criticism of the Turkish government in March 2019; and openly calling Trump “a clear and present danger” to the U.S. and its democracy on Jan. 13 via Twitter.

Wyden is now the chair of the Senate Finance Committee and agrees with DeFazio that Congress has to move strongly on the economy. And he says the Senate can address both the COVID-19 ravaged economy and convict former President Donald Trump of inciting the insurrection in the U.S. Capitol at the same time.