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contagious passengers in the middle of a global pandemic?" DeFazio wrote in his letter. "I appreciate that even in the absence of leadership from the executive branch, many airlines have voluntarily taken on measures to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 to protect crewmembers and those who still need to travel during this health crisis. I urge you to continue to put health and well-being first."

The pandemic has been a major focus of the representative for the past few months. His contributions to the latest version of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act legislative support package were tailored to address concerns regarding medical workers, small businesses, Native Peoples and lower-wage earners.

DeFazio has given particular focus to assuring workers in small businesses are receiving the support envisioned when the CARES package was passed.

"The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) has provided Oregon's small businesses a critical lifeline as they deal with the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. But it was clear that more assistance to small businesses was needed," DeFazio said. "With passage of this legislation, we'll add more than \$300 billion to the PPP, and I'm proud that we were able to secure \$60 billion for small and mid-sized banks, credit unions and community-based lending institutions to ensure that unbanked and underserved businesses that have been pushed to the back of the line can access this vital program."

The safety of medical workers has also been a subject of heated discussion across the nation and there was some additional assistance added to this week's third CARES installment that included what DeFazio considered to be critical.

"While I believe even more funding is needed, I'm also pleased the bill includes \$75

billion in relief to hospitals and healthcare providers to cover expenses or lost revenue attributable to COVID-19, and \$25 billion to expand our nation's COVID-19 testing capacity, \$11 billion of which will go directly to states and localities to help them bolster testing shortfalls in their communities," he said. "Widespread testing is the key to fighting this virus, reopening the economy and, above all else, protecting the health and wellbeing of Americans so that we can safely begin to resume our normal lives."

The latest relief package also secures \$37 million for direct support to Oregonians working in the construction and fabrication sectors of the economy.

DeFazio has also pushed back strongly against complaints from the Trump administration regarding the work done by the U.S. Postal Service.

"Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, Americans and businesses around the country have depended on

a reliable Postal Service, especially customers in rural areas and seniors who count on six-day and door-to-door service for their mail and prescription medications," said DeFazio. "Unfortunately, the COVID-19 crisis has threatened the survival of the USPS and placed its vital services for the millions who rely on it at risk. In any subsequent relief legislation, Congress must ensure that this vital agency has the financial security to continue its essential operations."

DeFazio also recently received an important endorsement from Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, in his primary bid.

Nelson believes that many jobs were saved due to his work in this area.

"I want voters in this district to know that the historic workers-first relief package that saved 2.1 million jobs is thanks to Congressman DeFazio," she said. "He was our first, loudest and most dedicated advocate in Congress."

DeFazio told *Siuslaw News* he is also concerned that municipalities facing reduced revenue from taxes garnered through room taxes and reduced spending in their communities may be unable to provide basic services for their communities.

"Today, our county governments are not only dealing with an unprecedented uptick in the demand for essential services but are doing so during an unprecedented economic downturn that has caused considerable hardship and growing shortfalls in tax revenue," DeFazio said. "These realities place a strain on the budgets of our counties at a time when citizens need their support the most. Moving forward, we must empower our local governments with greater flexibility to spend federal relief dollars as they see fit, including to help make up for the loss of expected tax revenues or other unexpected budget shortfalls."

For more information about DeFazio, visit defazio.house.gov.

SCHOOLS from page 1A

"I never met Hyak before. I went to Hyak to ask them for help for this issue," he said. "I went to them because they were the only company in town with the ability to fulfill the need I see, which would be students that are going to face a huge financial burden next year."

Rosinbaum stated that Hyak will be putting fiber optic cables throughout the region with or without the help of the district.

"One of the things we asked for initially was, 'How fast could you get it done?' — thinking we might need connectivity come September," he said. "The answer was, 'Probably not much fast-

er than what we can do now, but we'll see what we can do with a second crew.' No matter what we do here, Hyak is going to be building out their network. It just might not be more conducive to our students."

Ultimately, Rosinbaum said the goal was to educate students.

"We're more than likely going to see some form of continued distance learning going forward," he said. "If we don't have a way to communicate with our students, I don't see how we can educate. I don't think this idea of sending work home and getting it back two days later is really conducive to meeting the educational needs of our students going forward for the

next year or two. ... And if we're not educating students, I'm not really sure what our purpose is."

The public comment on the possible deal was split, though all who that spoke at Wednesday's meeting brought up concerns about the financial difficulties the district would face.

One public commentator stated that it was important and honorable for the district to be considering connectivity, but there were issues of equality.

"If we're going to give it free to some kids, and others are going to be paying, equality should be across the board," they said. "It isn't fair that some people have to be paying for their education

while others are getting it for free. I think you need to be thinking about providing it across the board for the staff, because staff is paying for it. And there are staff members that are really tight budgeted as well."

Teacher Tamara Carpenito was concerned that if the budget shortfalls were too extreme, educators could lose their jobs.

School bus driver James Neider, who is also the union president of classified staff at the district, said that teachers were seeing an overall drop off of kids working with their Chromebook laptop computers.

Members of the school board decided they needed more information before they made a decision.

"I think it's something we need to explore and talk about," said Bob Sneddon. "I don't see us jumping into this right this second. We're in the information gathering stage. ... I think distance learning is going to be with us for a long, long time. I think it is part of our role to explore that; however, it's an awful lot of money for the district to lay out over the five years. I don't know if it is the school district's responsibility to foot that entire bill."

Fellow board member Suzanne Mann-Heintz suggested the district look for partnerships on the project.

"To me, it seems like if we want to have fiber optic cable, which is the way of the future as it's more reliable than other sources, it's got the speed and there are lots of advantages," she said. "But I kind of feel like if we want to bring that into Florence areas where students live, there should be some partnerships involved. There are other municipal agencies that could benefit from having this available. ... Maybe the City of Florence wants to jump in, maybe the hospital wants to jump in."

Regarding partnerships, Florence Councilor Joshua Greene, speaking on his own behalf and not for the city, stated that he loves the idea of fiber in the community, but agreed that the district should look for partnerships.

"I think some of the things that have been said tonight, about possibly partnering with other entities, or finding other people to help lessen the financial burden is a worthwhile pursuit," he said. "I would certainly not recommend throwing in the towel. I encourage you to work locally. Maybe the way you present this package, there might be a way to make it more attractive to other parties. I can't speak on behalf of the city, but I would be happy to take it to them and champion the cause. But at the end of the day, that's a decision that needs to be made by the city council, and there has to be a work session."

Rosinbaum stated that if there is a solution to the problem, it should be coming from state or federal governments.

"But we don't sit on any of those boards. We sit on this board, and it's a problem we're going to have to deal with if nobody else does," he said.

Siuslaw School Board decided to hold a work session on the issue next Wednesday, and tasked the administration with gathering as much information as possible. This could include getting feedback from other entities that could provide internet.

"The intermediate steps is, in essence, a request for information," Rosinbaum said. "The board defines the problem, puts it out to companies to get a real quick overview of what they could and could not provide in the area. And we'll see who is interested in even tackling the problem without going to a proposal or bid. Really, it's a little more of an expanded process of what we did with Hyak. Can you prove the concept for us?"

Another component for Wednesday's work session will be the school's budget. While Director of Finance and Operations Officer Kari Blake was able to provide a draft budget for the next year, there are still unknowns.

"I want to be optimistic about this. I feel like the state, at least for the next year, will likely tap into rainy day funds," she said. "Looking at their plans, they're doing some shifting internally with ODE to save some money." But the \$3 million in reserve funds that the school currently will most likely be slashed due to a number of factors.

"People are feeling like the property tax collection is probably going to be down by a little bit," she said, which would decrease revenue by around 2 percent.

Both federal and state grant funding for specific programs will most likely be cut, and it's still unknown how much state funding will be affected by the shutdowns — A state financial report is due out on May 20, which will give the district a better understanding of where they stand.

"Essentially, while we have some reserves, I basically had to scrap \$1 million out of the budget and we do not have those reserves any longer," Blake said. "It's almost a perfect storm converging without knowing 100 percent of the feds and the state."

To contact the Siuslaw School District, visit siuslaw.k12.or.us.

Next week in the Siuslaw News, look for more information on the school district's mobile food service, the state of online schooling and the length of the school year.



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We will be live streaming from
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Link to our website
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www.florencenewlife.Lutheran.org

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Traditional Worship Service 10:00 a.m.,
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Assembly of God

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Sunday morning.
www.florencecrossroadag.org/church-online

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