

This week, hundreds of cyclists from around America will descend on Capitol Hill to advocate on behalf of America's 100 million people who enjoy bicycling for recreation, for their livelihood, and some for basic transportation.

With 176 members of the Congressional Bicycle Caucus, I know there will be great receptivity in many offices, but it is time for everybody to take these men and women very seriously when they bring their message to Capitol Hill.

Yes, bicycling is fun. We know that from our youth. Everybody seems to have a bicycling story that they love to tell. However, there are many reasons why bicycling should be taken very seriously by policymakers. Consider the times. Remember last year when oil averaged \$72 per barrel and gasoline averaged \$2.81 per gallon and how people were deeply concerned about those increases over just the year before? Well, already oil is significantly over \$100 a barrel and rising gasoline prices are expected to perhaps reach as much as \$4 a gallon this summer.

There is also an emerging consensus on global warming that it is not just an urgent problem, but that transportation is the largest source of carbon emissions that we can manage quickly to reduce. The carbon emissions from riding a bicycle to work or to the store or for exercise are zero.

Consider the livability of our cities and neighborhoods as we are struggling with traffic congestion, air pollution, and the quality of life in every neighborhood and downtown and everywhere in between. Bicycles, obviously, make a huge difference there.

Last but not least, impacts on our health. There is great unease about soaring health care costs. There is a childhood obesity epidemic. The bicycle is the simplest, most cost-effective way to be able to enhance our health as we enhance the quality of life for our young people. Think for a moment right now how many people somewhere in America are stuck in traffic on their way to ride a stationary bike at a health club. These are all initiatives that can be dealt with by taking over 100 million bicycles that are stored in our garages and basements and locked to a back porch and putting them to use. The role for the Federal Government is not to tilt in favor of cycling, although I could certainly make that argument, but just to level the playing field.

Why do some Members of Congress think it's all right to give tax benefits to commuters that burn gasoline to help them cushion their costs, but are against providing modest tax benefits for those who burn calories instead? Three times the House of Representatives has passed a modest reform for bike commuter equity, but it has yet to be enacted into law.

Mostly it's time to set the table for the massive transportation reauthorization that will be before us next Congress. I have introduced House Concurrent Resolution 305, which would be the first comprehensive bicycling policy statement as a guide for authorization and beyond.

I urge my colleagues to look at it. It's the simplest, most cost-effective direction the Federal Government can give to make more transportation choices for Americans, to provide safer opportunities for our children to get to school, to deal with health and climate change, and to heal our communities while we strengthen our bodies and improve our spirits.

Bicyclists are an indicator species of a livable community, a place where our families are safe, healthy and economically secure. It's time for the Federal Government to step up and do its part.