
May 23, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
419 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
House of Representatives
H-204 U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Western Governors respectfully request your active support for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act (SRS) programs during the current Congressional session. Western Governors have long advocated that the federal government must fulfill its obligation to fund these programs for rural counties with tax-exempt federal lands and for timber-dependent counties that rely on this funding to provide necessary government services to their citizens.

PILT compensates counties for lost property tax revenue from tax-exempt federal lands, a majority of which are in western states. These payments are not a subsidy to local governments. PILT provides funding to offset the loss of property tax revenues, because federal lands cannot be taxed. These payments also help to fund critical services on public lands, including law enforcement, search and rescue, fire management, solid waste management, and emergency medical services. Without PILT payments, local governments often lack even minimal resources to manage these important functions.

Congress passed SRS in 2000 to compensate more than 700 forest counties and school districts for timber harvesting revenue lost due to changes in federal forest management policy. SRS payments help fund critical education, infrastructure, and other basic needs in rural, forest-dependent communities.


SRS and PILT payments have been reauthorized through fiscal years 2018 and 2019 respectively. Congressional leadership is necessary to ensure that rural communities do not experience financial hardships due to delayed or discontinued payments from these programs.

Western Governors' Association Policy Resolution [2017-03](#), *Tax-Exempt Federal Lands and Secure Rural Schools*, expresses and explains Governors' support for these two important programs. We hope that the Governors' perspectives are helpful and that Congress fully funds PILT and SRS in the coming year.

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The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
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May 23, 2019
Page 2

Western Governors appreciate the positive effects that PILT and SRS payments have had in communities across the West. Thank you for your leadership on this matter.

Sincerely,


David Ige
Governor of Hawai'i
Chair, WGA


Doug Burgum
Governor of North Dakota
Vice Chair, WGA