

December 9, 2019

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room: S-230  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Hart Senate Office Building, Room: 419  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room: H-232  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room: H-204  
Washington, DC 20515

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

With the deadline to finalize an appropriations package for FY 2020 approaching, we ask that you uphold the federal commitment to local communities with significant percentages of federal land within our jurisdictions by reauthorizing the Secure Rural Schools program (SRS) until a permanent solution is developed and fully funding Payments In Lieu of Taxes program (PILT). Sixty-one percent of counties in 49 states nationwide have untaxable federal land within our boundaries and are required to provide critical services to residents and public lands visitors including search and rescue services, emergency management, law enforcement and education. As Congress develops appropriations legislation for FY 2020, we strongly encourage you to reauthorize SRS and fully fund PILT.

### **Secure Rural Schools**

The SRS program provides over 720 counties and 4,000 school districts in 41 states and Puerto Rico with significant U.S. Forest Service lands with funding to make up for the shortfall resulting from declining timber sales off federal forestlands beginning in the early 1990s. SRS was last reauthorized retroactively for FY 2017 and FY 2018 with final payments sent to counties and schools in spring 2019.

Should Congress not reauthorize SRS, payments to national forest counties and schools will revert to the permanently authorized 25 percent revenue sharing payments under the National Forest Revenue Act of 1908. This will negatively impact county government and school revenues. When SRS authorization expired in FY 2016, county payments nationwide decreased by a staggering 80 percent. Another revenue cut like this will force many public lands counties and schools to lay off vital employees, including schoolteachers, road crews, law enforcement and emergency services personnel, as well as scale back classes, reduce school extracurricular activities, and even close schools and libraries in some areas. Additionally, without long-term, mandatory funding of PILT, local governments that receive PILT may see a payment reduction as SRS payments would no longer be deducted under the PILT formula, spreading PILT thinner across more localities.

**To ensure local communities and schools do not face these funding shortfalls, companion bills have been introduced in the House and Senate to reauthorize and extend SRS for FY 2019 and 2020, H.R. 3048 and S. 430.** We strongly support the adoption of language in a final appropriations bill to ensure SRS

funding for an additional two years at FY 2017 levels. **Finally, national forest counties and schools support the bipartisan long-term funding solution for SRS, S. 1643, the Forest Management for Rural Stability Act.** This bill would establish an endowment fund to permanently fund these necessary payments to national forest counties and schools. Reliable funding to underwrite essential county service and education programs will assist rural forest communities to develop and sustain local economic productivity and jobs. We encourage Congress to act on this legislation as a potential long-term solution for national forest counties and schools.

#### **Payments In Lieu of Taxes**

Nearly 1,900 counties, boroughs, and parishes in 49 states rely on PILT to make up for lost property tax revenue from tax-exempt federal public lands. PILT provides an important safety net so local governments can reliably provide essential services to their constituents. In FY 2019, Congress appropriated the necessary \$515 million to fully fund PILT, which counties greatly appreciated. Unless and until Congress guarantees full funding for PILT, counties will not be able to provide public services such as emergency management, law enforcement, education, healthcare, and road maintenance to residents and federal lands visitors. In both the Senate and House Interior Appropriations bills, PILT was treated as a mandatory program with full funding for one fiscal year, which is the same funding language from the past two fiscal years. Counties support this approach and urge the adoption of this language in any final appropriations package.

**Additionally, counties support efforts to eliminate the annual funding uncertainty faced by PILT counties in the long-term by passing either H.R. 3043, the Permanently Authorizing PILT Act, which would fund PILT in perpetuity, or S. 2480, the PILT Reauthorization Act, which would fully fund PILT for ten years.** Furthermore, counties under 5,000 in population are not on an equal footing with larger counties due to monetary and population caps under the PILT formula. **To remedy this, legislation has been introduced in both chambers, H.R. 3716 and S. 2108, to fix the PILT formula to benefit smaller population counties without impacting the PILT payment for any counties above 5,000 in population.** We encourage Congress to explore all available options for adopting these pieces of legislation to improve the PILT program and support local governments.

State and local governments are responsible for implementing a broad array of services, such as educating our nation's youth, responding to emergency calls, and maintaining public infrastructure. As Congress finalizes an appropriations package for FY 2020, we encourage the extension of the SRS program and the inclusion of full funding of PILT. We urge Congress to protect these vital revenue streams that ensure public services in rural communities will not be interrupted now and in the long-term.

Sincerely,

#### **National Organizations**

AASA, The School Superintendents Association  
Association of Educational Service Agencies  
National Association of Counties (NACo)  
National Education Association  
National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition  
National Rural Education Advocacy Consortium (NREAC)  
Western Interstate Region of NACo

## **Alabama**

Barbour County Commission

## **Alaska**

Alaska Municipal League

Denali Borough

Haines Borough

Ketchikan Gateway Borough

Petersburg Borough

City and Borough of Sitka

City and Borough of Wrangell

## **Arizona**

Arizona Association of Counties

Arizona Association of County School Superintendents

Arizona County Supervisors Association

Apache County Schools Superintendent

Ash Fork Joint Unified School District

Beaver Creek School District

Camp Verde Unified School District

Chino Valley Unified School District #51

Clarkdale-Jerome Elementary School District

Coconino County Board of Supervisors

Congress Elementary School District

Cottonwood-Oak Creek School District No. 6

Crown King School District

Gila County Board of Supervisors

Gila County Superintendent of Schools

Graham County Board of Supervisors

Greenlee County Board of Supervisors

Hillside Elementary School District #35

Humboldt Unified School District

Maricopa County Regional School District

Mingus Union High School

Mountain Institute Career Technical Education District

Navajo County Superintendent's Office

Pima County School Superintendent's Office

Pinal County Schools Office

Prescott Lakes Parkway School

Seligman Unified School District

Skull Valley Elementary School District #15

Valley Academy Career & Technology Education

Williamson Valley School District #2

Yavapai Accommodation School District

Yavapai County Board of Supervisors

Yavapai County Education Agency  
Yuma County Board of Supervisors

**Arkansas**

Johnson County Judge  
Montgomery County Judge  
Montgomery County Office of the Treasurer  
Pope County Judge

**California**

California County Superintendents Educational Services Association  
California Teachers Association  
Accelerated Achievement Academy  
Alameda County Board of Supervisors  
Alpine County Board of Supervisors  
Alpine County Unified School District  
Amador County Unified School District  
Anderson Valley Unified School District  
Big Valley Joint Unified School District  
Calaveras County Office of Education  
Colusa County Office of Education  
Del Norte County Office of Education and Unified School District  
Fresno County Government  
Fresno County Superintendent of Schools  
Glenn County Board of Supervisors  
Humboldt County of Education  
Janesville Union Elementary School District  
Kern County Superintendent of Schools  
Lassen County Office of Education  
Leggett Valley Unified School District  
Los Angeles County Office of Education  
Mariposa County Unified School District and County Office of Education  
Mendocino County Board of Supervisors  
Mendocino County Office of Education  
Merced County Board of Supervisors  
Modoc County Board of Supervisors  
Mono County Office of Education  
Nevada County Superintendent of Schools  
Placer County Office of Education  
Plumas County Office of Education & Unified School District  
Ravendale-Termo Elementary School District  
Richmond Elementary School District  
Riverside County Office of Education  
Round Valley Unified School District  
County of San Diego

San Luis Obispo County Office of Education  
Shasta County Office of Education  
Sierra County Board of Supervisors  
Sierra County Office of Education  
Siskiyou County Office of Education  
Solano County Board of Supervisors  
Susanville School District  
Tehama County Auditor-Controller Office  
Tehama County Department of Education  
Three Rivers Charter School  
Trinity County Board of Supervisors  
Trinity County Office of Education  
Tulare County Office of Education  
Tuolumne County Business Council  
Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools Office  
Ventura County Office of Education  
Willits Unified School District  
Willits Elementary Charter School

**Colorado**

Colorado Counties, Inc  
Chaffee County Board of County Commissioners  
Eagle County Board of County Commissioners  
Fremont County Board of County Commissioners  
Gilpin County Board of County Commissioners  
Kiowa County Board of County Commissioners  
Las Animas Board of County Commissioners  
Mesa County Board of County Commissioners  
Mineral County Board of County Commissioners  
Otero County Administrator's Office  
Otero County Board of County Commissioners  
Rio Blanco County Board of County Commissioners  
Rio Grande County Board of County Commissioners  
Routt County Board of County Commissioners  
San Miguel Board of County Commissioners  
Timberline Fire Protection District

**Florida**

Levy County Board of County Commissioners  
Okeechobee County Board of Commissioners  
Santa Rosa County Board of County Commissioners  
Volusia County Council

**Georgia**

Macon County Commission

## **Hawaii**

County of Hawaii County Council

## **Idaho**

Idaho Association of Counties  
Adams County Commissioners  
Bingham County Commission  
Blaine County Commission  
Custer County Commission  
Fremont County Commission  
Gem County Board of Commissioners  
Idaho County Commission  
Lincoln County Commission  
Shoshone County Commission  
Valley County Commission  
Washington County Commission  
Oneida County Commission  
Washington County Commission

## **Illinois**

DeWitt County Board, Clinton Unit Schools #15  
LaSalle County Board of Supervisors  
Macon County Board of Supervisors  
Stark County Board of Supervisors

## **Indiana**

White County Commissioners

## **Iowa**

Jackson County Board of Supervisors

## **Kansas**

Rawlins County Commissioner  
Stafford County Commission  
Trego County Government

## **Kentucky**

Jackson County Fiscal Court

## **Louisiana**

Iberia Parish Government  
Plaquemines Parish Government

## **Michigan**

Delta County Commission  
Houghton County Commission

Luce County Commission  
Roscommon County Commission

**Minnesota**

Aitkin County Board of Commissioners  
Itasca County Board of Commissioners  
St. Louis County Commission  
Traverse County Board of Commissioners

**Missouri**

Callaway County Commission  
Lafayette County Commission  
Taney County Commission

**Montana**

Montana Association of Counties  
Beaverhead County Commission  
Beaverhead County High School  
Beaverhead County Road Department  
Beaverhead County Superintendent of Schools  
Big Horn County Commission  
Blaine County Commission  
Blaine County Schools Superintendent  
Broadus Public Schools District 79J  
Broadwater County Board of Commissioners  
Broadwater County Treasurer and Superintendent of Schools  
Chinook Public Schools  
Chouteau County Commission  
Custer County Commissioners  
Dillon Elementary School District #10  
Flathead County  
Flathead County Superintendent of Schools  
Gallatin County Commission  
Garfield County Commissioners  
Glacier County Commission  
Glacier County Superintendent of Schools  
Golden Valley County Commission  
Golden Valley Treasurer and Superintendent of Schools  
Granite County Clerk & Recorder  
Granite County Commission  
Hays/Lodgepole School District #50  
Helmville School Dist. 15  
Hill County Commission  
Jefferson County Commission  
Judith Basin County Commission

Lake County Commission  
Lake County Superintendent of Schools  
Libby School District #4  
Liberty County Commission  
Liberty County Superintendent of Schools  
Lima School District  
Lima School District # 12  
Madison County Board of Commissioners  
McCone County Commission  
Meagher County Commission  
Meagher County School District #8  
Missoula County Commission  
Musselshell County Commission  
Park County Commission  
Park County Superintendent of Schools  
Petroleum County Board of Commissioners  
Office of the Petroleum County Manager  
Phillips County Commissioners  
Phillips County Superintendent of Schools  
Powder River County, School District #6  
Powell County Commission  
Prairie County Commission  
Ravalli County Commission  
Roosevelt County Commission  
Rosebud County Commission  
Sanders County Commission  
Somers School District #29  
Stillwater County Commission  
Stillwater County Sheriff's Office  
Sweet Grass County Commission  
Sweet Grass County Rural Schools  
Toole County Commission  
Townsend School District #1  
Valley County Commission  
Wheatland County Superintendent of Schools  
Yellowstone County Commission  
Yellowstone County Treasurer and Superintendent of Schools

**Nebraska**

Banner County Commission  
Box Butte County Commission  
Dawes County Commission  
Garden County Commission  
Otoe County Commission



**Nevada**

Nevada Association of Counties  
Churchill County Commission  
Elko County Commission  
Eureka County Commission  
Humboldt County Board of County Commissioners  
Lander County Manager  
Lyon County Commission  
Nye County Board of Commissioners  
Washoe County Commission  
Mineral County Commission

**New Hampshire**

Coos County Commission

**New Mexico**

New Mexico Counties  
Grant County Manager  
Guadalupe County Commission  
Sandoval County Commission  
Santa Fe County Commission  
Valencia County Manager  
Dona Ana County Commission  
Grant County Commission

**New York**

Cortland County Legislature  
Orange County Government  
Ontario County Board of Supervisors

**North Carolina**

Dare County Commission  
Rowan County Commission  
Washington County Commission  
Carteret County Commission

**North Dakota**

North Dakota Association of Counties  
Dunn County Commission  
Sioux County Commission  
Killdeer Public School District 16

**Oklahoma**

Grant County Commission  
Lincoln County Commission

Mayes County Commission

**Oregon**

Association of Oregon Counties

Oregon Education Association

Baker County Commission

Benton County Commission

Columbia County Commission

Coos County Board of Commissioners

Crook County Commission

Douglas County Board of Commissioners

Grant County Commission

Harney County Commission

Harney County Court

Hood River County Government

Jackson County Government

Lake County Commission

Malheur County Judge

Polk County Board of Commissioners

Tillamook County Commission

Union County Commission

Wallowa County Commission

**Pennsylvania**

Cameron County Commission

Jefferson County Commission

Juniata County Commission

**South Carolina**

Florence County Council

Edgefield County Council

**South Dakota**

Butte County Commission

Ziebach County Commission

**Tennessee**

Campbell County Mayor

Stewart County Government

**Texas**

Brazoria County Commission

Carson County Commission

Ellis County Commission

Foard County Commission

## **Utah**

Utah Association of Counties  
Beaver County Commission  
Daggett County Commission  
Davis County Commission  
Duchesne County Commission  
Garfield County Commission  
Iron County Commission  
Juab County Commission  
Morgan County Council  
Sanpete County Commission  
Sevier County Commission  
Wayne County Commission  
Carl Albrecht, Utah State Representative

## **Virginia**

Bath County Board of Supervisors  
Page County Board of Supervisors  
Alleghany County Board of Supervisors

## **Washington**

Washington Education Association  
Clallam County Board of Commissioners  
Ferry County Commission  
Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners  
Kitsap County Commission  
Pend Oreille County Commission  
Republic School District  
Skagit County Commission  
Skamania County Commission  
Snohomish County Council  
Stevens County Board of Commissioners  
Thurston County Board of Commissioners

## **West Virginia**

Braxton County Commission  
Hardy County Commission  
Nicholas County Commission  
Mercer County Commission  
Preston County Commission  
Wayne County Commission

## **Wisconsin**

Burnett County Government  
Green County Board of Supervisors

Shawano County Board of Supervisors  
Outagamie County Board of Supervisors

**Wyoming**

Wyoming County Commissioners Association  
Converse County Commission  
Lincoln County Commission  
Niobrara County Commissioners  
Sublette County Commission  
Sweetwater County Commission