

Chris Taggart

From: Glenda Wiles on behalf of Ravalli County Commissioners Office
Sent: Friday, December 1, 2017 3:26 PM
To:
Subject: FW: Requesting Co-Sign on Hatch/Wyden SRS Letter
Attachments: Hatch Wyden Ltr to Leadership re SRS December 2017.pdf
Importance: High

From: MACOleg [mailto:MACOleg@mtcounties.org]
Sent: Friday, December 1, 2017 3:14 PM
To: MACOleg <MACOleg@mtcounties.org>
Subject: Requesting Co-Sign on Hatch/Wyden SRS Letter
Importance: High

Commissioners,

On behalf of the Montana Coalition of Forest Counties we are sending a request from the National Forest Coalition asking that Senators Tester and Daines be contacted about co-signing the attached letter to Majority Leader Senator Mitch McConnell and Minority Leader Chuck Schumer to include SRS in any end-of-year packages that move through Congress. (The deadline is Monday, December 4 at noon.)

We are getting this information to our Senators, so it is not necessary for everyone to bombard their offices, but gentle reminders never hurt! Both of our Senators have been unwavering in their support of SRS and PILT so **this would be a good opportunity for you to thank them for their past support.**

Here are contacts for Senator Tester and Senator Daines:

Senator Tester

- Henry Ring, Henry_Ring@tester.senate.gov, 202.228.1276

Senator Daines

- Matthew Ketron, Matthew_Ketron@daines.senate.gov, 202.224.2651
- Jason Thielman, Jason_Thielman@daines.senate.gov, 202.224.2651

Thanks,

Harold Blattie, Executive Director
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 29, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
U.S. Capitol, S-230
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
U.S. Capitol, S-221
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

We write to strongly urge the inclusion of a two-year reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program, which enjoys tremendous bipartisan support, in any end-of-the-year omnibus package.

On U.S. Forest Service land, the federal government has historically shared 25 percent of timber harvest revenues with counties to compensate for federal ownership. On certain land managed by the Department of Interior, the Bureau of Land Management shares 50 percent of the revenue from federal timber sales with counties. Due to declining timber harvests, a critical source of funding for rural counties, sometimes referred to as "forest counties," has seen significant decreases, often decimating impacted county budgets.

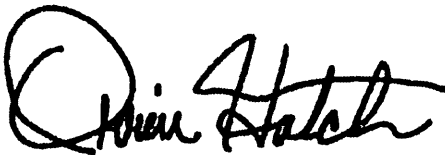
In 2000, Congress passed SRS with broad bipartisan support as a fiscal solution to help fund essential services resulting from the reduced revenue-sharing receipts. Since then, SRS has been a critical lifeline for over 775 counties in over 40 states across the country by helping fund more than 4,400 schools, road maintenance, law enforcement, and search and rescue operations. However, SRS authorization lapsed last year and rural counties are now back to simply receiving the timber revenue-sharing receipts. These receipts are up to 80 percent less than what forest counties received under SRS.

We are now witnessing firsthand the hardships rural counties face as a result of SRS authorization lapsing. Without the certainty of SRS payments, schools, libraries, and jails will close. Schools that remain open will see a reduction of teachers. Roads go unpaved and become unsafe. Mental and physical health services are scaled back or even ended. Fewer and fewer law enforcement officers are forced to patrol larger and larger areas.

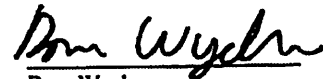
The SRS program continues to be a critical safety-net for forest counties as we work to diversify rural economies, improve forest management and forest health, strengthen historic forest revenue sharing with local governments, and ensure that our forests provide a range of values such as clean water, jobs, and wood fiber for local economies.

In the interest of working together in a bipartisan way to support local rural communities, we ask that you include a reauthorization of Secure Rural schools in any end-of-the-year package. We appreciate your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,



Orrin Hatch
U.S. Senator



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator