

Commissioners

From: MACO <MACO@mtcounties.org>
Sent: Thursday, January 16, 2014 12:06 PM
To: MACO
Subject: PILT Update
Attachments: DRAFT SENATE LETTER ON PILT FARM BILL.pdf; FLO14027.pdf; PILT colloquy with Reps. Bishop and Lucas.docx; SIL13659.pdf

MEMORANDUM

TO: NACo Public Lands Steering Committee members
Western Interstate Region Board of Directors
NACo Rural Action Caucus
State Association Executive Directors

FROM: Ryan R. Yates, NACo Associate Legislative Director
RE: Update on PILT Funding
DATE: January 16, 2014

As many of you know, much has occurred this week concerning funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. We have been working closely with key House and Senate members and staff to find a source of funding and legislative vehicle to extend PILT payments for FY 2014. Your direct grassroots outreach with your congressional delegations and members of the media have had a positive impact on the overall PILT effort – THANK YOU.

On Sunday January 12th, congressional leadership and House and Senate appropriators made the decision to exclude PILT from the FY 2014 omnibus appropriations bill. The bill has since been passed by the House of Representatives and is pending immediate action in the Senate. The exclusion of PILT came as a significant disappointment to NACo, our members, governors, and members of Congress who had pressed for PILT funding for several months. The resulting outcry has spawned tremendous response from House and Senate leadership and numerous other members of Congress that support PILT.

Here is what has occurred this week:

Speaker Boehner met with more than 20 members of Congress on Tuesday, January 14 to discuss concerns about the PILT program. The Speaker has committed to funding PILT in the upcoming Farm Bill conference. At this point, it is unclear whether Congress will include a multi-year extension or just the FY 2014 funding on the bill.

Following the formal commitment from Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Cantor, a formal colloquy (see attached) took place yesterday on the House floor between Chairman Frank Lucas (House Agriculture Committee), Chairman Ken Calvert (House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee), and Chairman Rob Bishop (House Subcommittee on Public Lands and Environmental Regulation) in which they discussed the PILT program and committed to funding the program.

Chairman Lucas stated, “I have already had preliminary conversations with Chairwoman Stabenow who is a strong supporter of PILT funding as well as Chairman Hastings of the House Natural Resources Committee whose committee oversees the program. I also have the backing of House Republican Leadership. I can assure you both that it is my intention to provide funding for PILT in the final conference agreement on the farm bill. I

am very much aware of the importance of this program for rural communities across America in providing funding for necessary functions like police, education, and infrastructure.”

In the Senate, a bipartisan coalition of Senators is circulating a letter to the farm bill conference committee requesting crucial funding for public land counties (see attached). The effort led by U.S. Senators Michael Bennet, Mike Crapo, Mark Udall, and Jim Risch makes the case for including PILT in the farm bill and states, “Counties across the country, particularly those containing significant federal landholdings rely on PILT funds as sizeable percentages of their budgets. Many of the same rural counties that rely on programs in the Farm Bill also depend on PILT to sustain their economies and serve their citizens.” Further, “Without an extension of PILT, rural counties will face drastic budget cuts in June and may struggle to fund the most basic of services.”

ACTION REQUESTED: The letter is still open for signatures and NACo requests counties urge their Senators to sign the letter. Currently the following senators have signed: Michael Bennet (D-CO), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Mark Udall (D-CO), Jim Risch (R-ID), Tom Udall (D-NM), Jon Tester (D-MT), Mark Begich (D-AK), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), Mark Warner (D-VA), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Patty Murray (D-WA), Mark Pryor (D-AK), Tim Kaine (D-VA), and Dianne Feinstein (D-CA). Staff contacts for the letter are: [Sean Babington@bennet.senate.gov](mailto:Sean_Babington@bennet.senate.gov) and [Peter Stegner@crapo.senate.gov](mailto:Peter_Stegner@crapo.senate.gov).

In addition to the efforts on the omnibus appropriations bill and farm bill, Senator Mark Udall this week introduced S. 1913, “A bill to make permanent the Payment in Lieu of Taxes Program.” Udall's bill would permanently authorize and fund the PILT program and ensure that counties are not left in budget limbo every year due to the uncertainty of the Congressional budget process. NACo supports S. 1913 and encourages other Senators to cosponsor the legislation.

Today, January 16, Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY) plans to deliver a speech on the Senate floor to support funding for the PILT program and to make the case for continuation of the program.

Lastly, Senator Barrasso intends to file an amendment (attached) to the omnibus bill today to restore funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. The amendment would provide \$421 million for PILT in FY 2014, which represents the amount authorized in fiscal year 2013 before sequestration. The funding for PILT is offset by reductions of \$421 million from several international climate change programs. It is unclear if the amendment will have any traction as the negotiations on the omnibus have been finalized and the likelihood of new amendments to be successful is slim.

Again, thank you all for your continued efforts to send a strong message to the media, the public, and to members of Congress about the critical need to continue mandatory funding for the PILT program and the urgency of the situation. We need to continue to be vocal and vigilant on this issue. Thank you for your continued efforts.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

RYAN R. YATES
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