

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 3, 2025

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Hakeem Jeffries
House Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Minority Leader Jeffries,

With broad bipartisan support in both chambers, we urge swift consideration of S.356, the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Reauthorization Act of 2025. On June 18, 2025, the Senate unanimously passed this bipartisan legislation, which is co-sponsored by 27 U.S. Senators, and companion legislation (H.R. 1383) is co-sponsored by 75 Members of Congress. We request prompt action to advance this measure in an end of year vehicle or as a standalone bill, to uphold the federal government's responsibility to communities impacted by federal land ownership.

Since 1908, federal law has required the U.S. Forest Service to share 25 percent of revenue generated on federal land with local governments for "public schools and public roads of the county or counties in which the forest reserve is situated."¹ For decades, timber sales were the largest source of revenue for local jurisdictions in these areas. However, as revenues declined, this created unexpected and prolonged fiscal challenges for local governments home to untaxed National Forest lands. In response, Congress enacted the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, giving counties the option to receive SRS payments to support public services like road maintenance, infrastructure, education, wildfire mitigation, and other efforts to address public safety. Congress has consistently reauthorized these payments with overwhelming bipartisan support, with the most recent reauthorization expiring at the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2023.

In FY 2023, the SRS program provided \$281 million to more than 700 counties across 41 states supporting rural communities across Republican and Democratic districts, underscoring the program's broad, bipartisan importance to local governments that are home to federally managed land. However, following the program's expiration at the end of FY 2023, counties and school districts across 41 states have seen a 63 percent cut in funding.² This \$177 million loss is devastating for rural communities, leading to school closures, delayed road and bridge maintenance, and reduced public safety services. These are not abstract policy debates; they are tangible consequences for local governments and the communities that steward untaxed federal lands. Failing to reauthorize the SRS program also jeopardizes the critical Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program, which provides federal assistance for local governments home to large amounts of U.S. Department of Interior lands.


We urge the U.S. House of Representatives to advance S.356 for immediate consideration as a standalone measure or as part of a broader end of year legislative funding vehicle. Rural counties, parishes, and boroughs across the country are already facing the impact of the program's expiration. The SRS program underscores the vital partnership between federal land management and local government services, supporting everything from wildfire mitigation and forest health to the maintenance of roads and support of public schools. With longstanding and strong bipartisan support behind SRS, Congress must reaffirm its commitment to these rural counties.

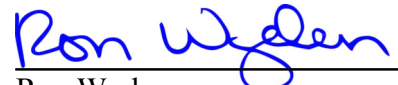
¹ 16 U.S.C. § 500 (1908).

² National Association of Counties, "Primer for Counties: Payments in Lieu of Taxes and Secure Rural Schools Program," 2025.


The undersigned stand ready to work with leadership in both chambers and from both parties to ensure that SRS reauthorization moves forward in any viable legislative vehicle before the end of this year.

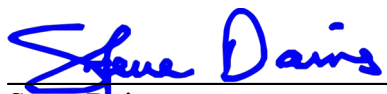
Sincerely,



Mike Crapo
United States Senator


Ron Wyden
United States Senator


Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress


Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



Steve Daines
United States Senator



John Hickenlooper
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator


Jeff Hurd
Member of Congress


James E. Risch
United States Senator

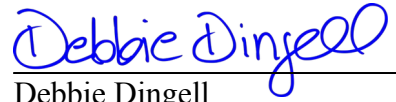

Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress


Marie Gluesenkamp Perez
Member of Congress


Greg Landsman
Member of Congress



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Troy Downing
Member of Congress



Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



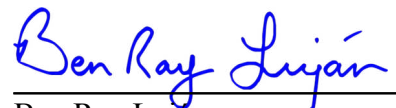
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress



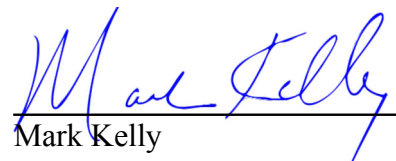
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



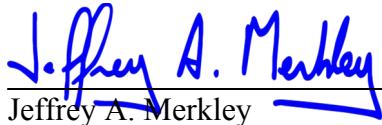
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



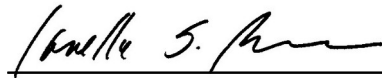
Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



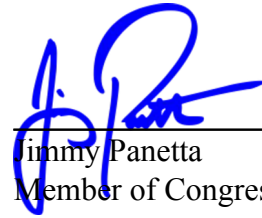
Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



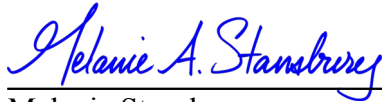
Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



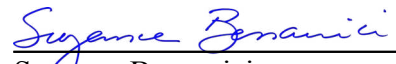
Janelle S. Bynum
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



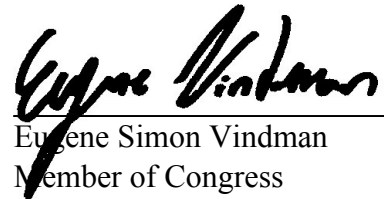
Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



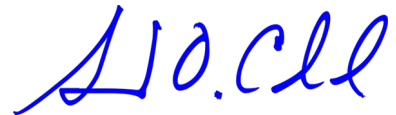
Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress



Eugene Simon Vindman
Member of Congress



April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress



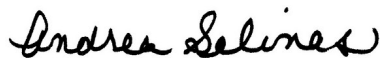
Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Jeff Crank
Member of Congress



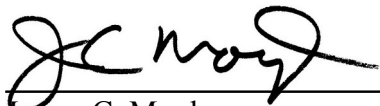
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



George Whitesides
Member of Congress



James C. Moylan
Member of Congress



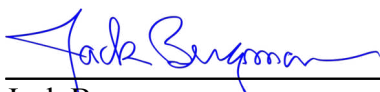
Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



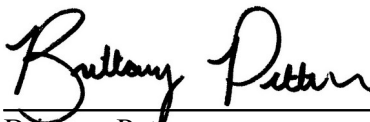
Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



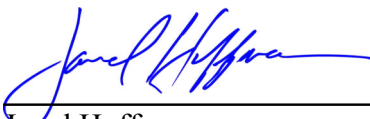
Jack Bergman
Member of Congress



Josh Riley
Member of Congress



Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



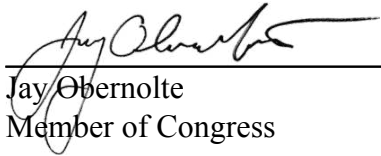
Ryan K. Zinke
Member of Congress



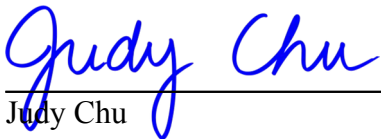
Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator



Donald G. Davis
Member of Congress



Jay Obernolte
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



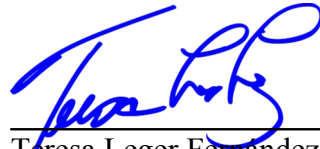
Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress



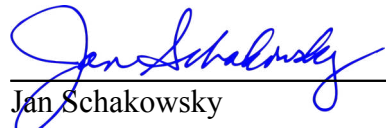
Vince Fong
Member of Congress



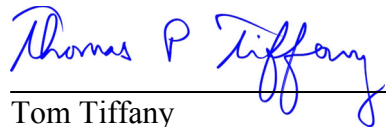
Teresa Leger Fernandez
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Tom Tiffany
Member of Congress



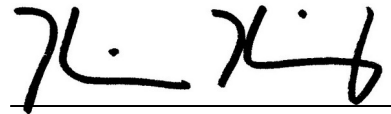
Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress



Ryan Mackenzie
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



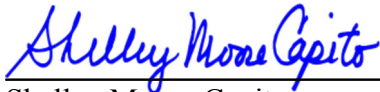
Kevin Kiley
Member of Congress



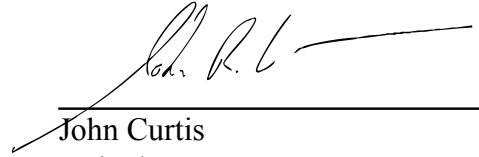
Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Steven Horsford
Member of Congress



Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator



John Curtis
United States Senator



Derrick Van Orden
Member of Congress



Tim Sheehy
United States Senator



Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress



James C. Justice
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Laura Friedman
Member of Congress



Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress



Wesley Bell
Member of Congress



Maggie Goodlander
Member of Congress



Nathaniel Moran
Member of Congress



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



David G. Valadao
Member of Congress



Eric Sorensen
Member of Congress



Josh Hawley
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable John Thune, U.S. Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Chuck Schumer, U.S. Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Patty Murray, Vice Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Steve Scalise, Majority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Katherine Clark, Minority Whip, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Tom Cole, Chair, U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Rosa DeLauro, Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Appropriations