

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 16, 2016

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

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
U.S. Capitol Building, Room: S-221  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Reid,

As the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress comes to an end, counties and school districts across the United States are reducing their budgets and facing significant shortfalls because the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act (SRS) has not been reauthorized. Accordingly, it is critical that a retroactive extension of this important program be included in an appropriate legislative vehicle likely to be signed into law before the end of the year.

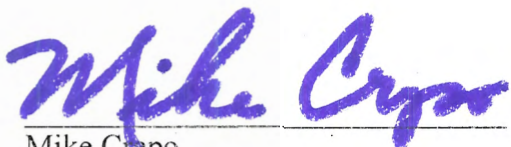
The SRS program expired on September 30, 2015 and in March of 2016 the last authorized payments to forest counties and schools under SRS were distributed by the federal government. School districts across the country are beginning this school year with fewer school nurses, and reduced arts, music and other student educational services. Counties are reducing road and county service budgets. This affects the health and welfare of everyone who lives in or visits these counties.

Today, we write to express our deep hope that SRS will be reauthorized for FY 2016 and beyond and to express our willingness to support efforts to do so. The SRS program provides crucial support to forest counties, local schools, transportation infrastructure, law enforcement, fire and safety, and other county services in more than 720 counties and 4,000 school districts, impacting nine million students in 41 states.

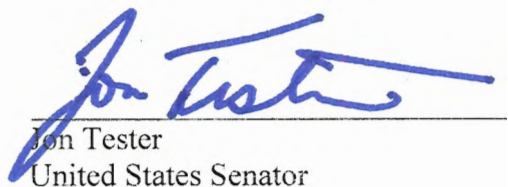
According to the National Association of Counties, when the authorization for SRS lapsed in FY 2014, forest payments to counties decreased by over 80 percent. Counties and school districts nationwide faced dramatic budgetary shortfalls. Many began preparations to halt infrastructure projects, terminate employees, cancel teacher contracts, and reduce numerous other critical local services. In that instance, Congress reauthorized the SRS program retroactively. However, in many cases services had already been impacted in counties and school districts.

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. We urge you to work in a bipartisan fashion to reauthorize the SRS program for FY 2016 and into the future. We stand ready to work with you in support of this important program.

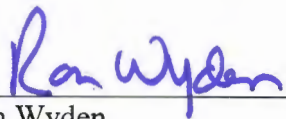
Sincerely,



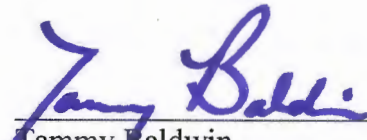
Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



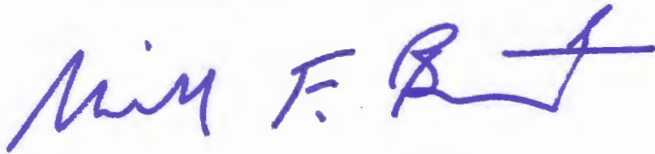
Jon Tester  
United States Senator



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



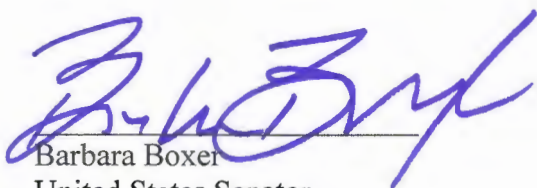
Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



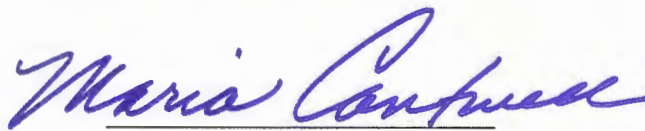
Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator



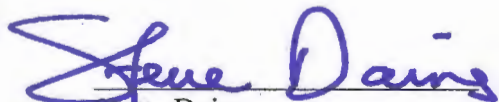
Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



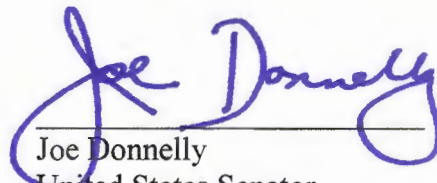
Barbara Boxer  
United States Senator



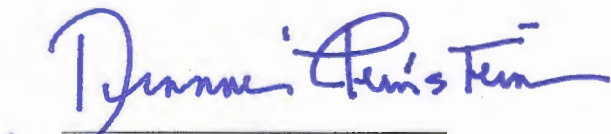
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Steve Daines  
United States Senator



Joe Donnelly  
United States Senator



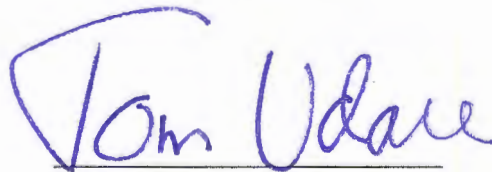
Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



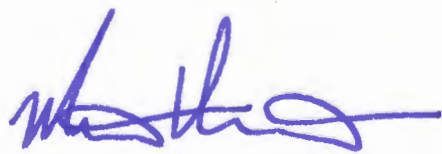
Al Franken  
United States Senator



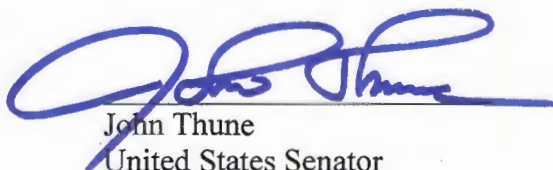
Cory Gardner  
United States Senator



Tom Udall  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



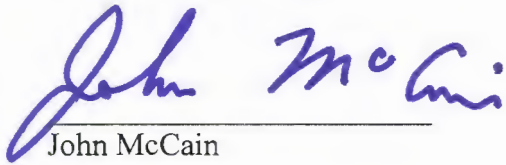
John Thune  
United States Senator



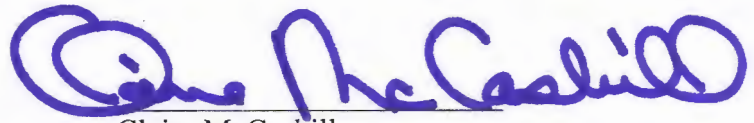
Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator



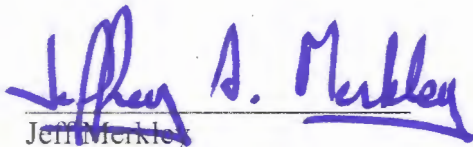
Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



John McCain  
United States Senator



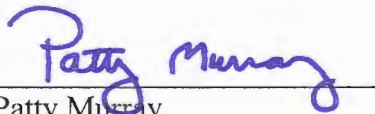
Claire McCaskill  
United States Senator




Jeff Merkley  
United States Senator



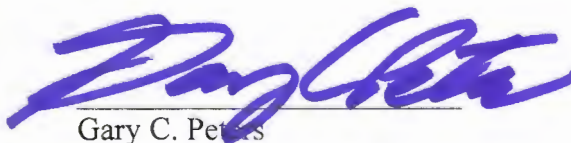
Debbie Stabenow  
United States Senator



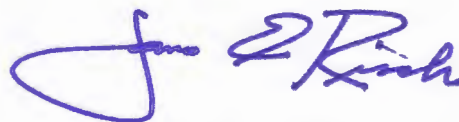
Patty Murray  
United States Senator



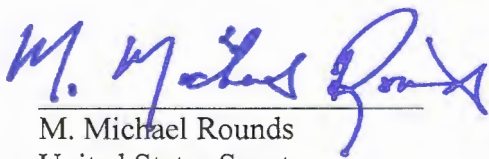
Bill Nelson  
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters  
United States Senator



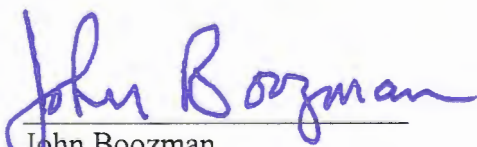
James E. Risch  
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



John Boozman  
United States Senator