



WESTERN
GOVERNORS'
ASSOCIATION



September 28, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, US Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Reid and McConnell and Representatives Boehner and Pelosi:

The Western Governors' Association, the Council of State Governments-WEST, the Western Interstate Region of the National Association of Counties, and the Western Municipal Association jointly support reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS). Furthermore, we support continuation of three important goals or provisions under the Act: 1) active management and restoration of federal forests; 2) revenue sharing consistent with historic federal land management receipts with states, counties and school districts, and 3) collaborative processes such as the Resource Advisory Committees (Title II) and community fire planning (Title III).

The revenue sharing provisions of SRS are vital to local communities and represent a strategic intergovernmental agreement that dates back to 1908. The revenue helps fund wildfire mitigation, watershed restoration, and states' and rural counties' ability to deliver public services to thousands of communities throughout the nation. We believe that reauthorization and pursuing management and restoration of the nation's forests will generate tremendous environmental and social benefits and create needed jobs and revenue for rural economies.


Today, SRS aids over nine million school children in 4,400 school districts in 39 states. Reductions in SRS funding from years 2008 to 2011 have already limited local government's ability to deliver important services to rural constituents. Without reauthorization of SRS before 2012, schools and counties will be forced to: terminate hundreds of county employees; cancel teacher contracts; close libraries; and curtail or eliminate sheriff patrols, rescue operations, mental health care services and substance abuse programs. Some counties and school districts have indicated they may be forced to file for bankruptcy.

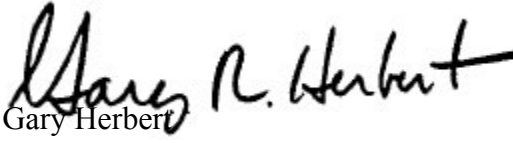
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Affected western rural communities are already struggling with higher unemployment due to reduced management activities on federal lands. We urge you to support reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-393) and support active forest management and restoration of federal lands.


Thank you for your immediate attention to this critical issue.

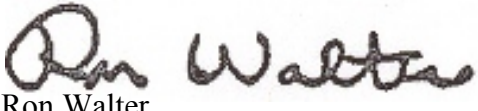
Sincerely,


Christine O. Gregoire
Governor of Washington
Chair, WGA


Gary Herbert
Governor of Utah
Vice Chair, WGA


Marcus Oshiro
State Representative, Hawaii
Chair, CSG-WEST


Rosie Berger
State Representative, Wyoming
Chair-Elect, CSG-WEST


Ron Walter
Commissioner, Chelan County, Washington
President, NACo Western Interstate Region


Lou Ogden
Mayor of Tualatin, Oregon
Chair, Western Municipal Association

cc: The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Max Baucus, Chairman, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch, Ranking Member, Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Jeff Bingaman, Chairman, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Ranking Member, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Hal Rogers, Chairman, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Norm Dicks, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Doc Hastings, Chairman, House Natural Resources Committee
The Honorable Edward Markey, Ranking Member, House Natural Resources Committee