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October 15, 2007

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

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of all of our colleagues in the Western Governors' Association we ask you to pass out of the House of Representatives H.R. 3058, the Public Land Communities Transition Assistance Act of 2007. The House Natural Resources Committee approved the bill on September 26th.

H.R. 3058 reauthorizes the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act for five years with a ramp down in funding. This "county payments" program aids over 600 counties and 4,400 school districts in 39 states. H.R. 3058 would also fully fund, for the first time, the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program for five years. Both of these programs are critical to rural communities across the United States. The programs represent 100-year-old federal commitments to our rural communities that depend on these payments to support schools, fund first responders and search and rescue, as well as police and fire protection. The failure of previous Congresses to secure a multiyear reauthorization of county payments has needlessly wrought budget planning havoc on hundreds of communities, requiring many to prepare for massive layoffs of school teachers and public safety personnel.

Thank you for your leadership to gain swift passage of this crucial measure.

Sincerely,

Dave Freudenthal
Governor of Wyoming
Chair, WGA

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