



## WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

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Governor of South Dakota  
Chairman

Dave Freudenthal  
Governor of Wyoming  
Vice Chairman

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Executive Director

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May 2, 2007

The Honorable Diane Feinstein, Chair  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
131 Hart SOB  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Larry Craig, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
131 Hart SOB  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Feinstein and Senator Craig:

As the Subcommittee considers the fiscal year 2008 Interior-Environment appropriations bill, the Western Governors' Association urges you to continue your past support for the following key programs that are of vital importance to citizens in western states.

Full funding for the PILT program is crucial to Western communities. We understand that funds were successfully added to the Senate version of the Supplemental Appropriations bill. Should that effort ultimately fall short, we ask you to make PILT funding a priority and fund it to the maximum extent possible. In its FY 08 proposed budget, the Administration would fund the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program at \$190 million. The proposed amount is far short of the program's authorized level. Communities throughout the West depend on this program to help fund schools, roads, and emergency services.

Funding for fire suppression and forest restoration activities have long been important to western states. Regretfully, the Administration is proposing a 14 percent reduction in funding for the State Fire Assistance (SFA) program that is managed by the U.S. Forest Service. State Foresters estimate that SFA funding needs to increase nearly 85 percent to \$145 million in order to meet the current and emerging community needs for wildland fire preparedness and protection. Additionally, the SFA is the only federal program tailored to address the challenges unique to the wildland urban interface.

The West has, by far, the largest number of species listed as threatened or endangered. Therefore, funding for the Endangered Species

The Honorable Diane Feinstein  
The Honorable Larry Craig  
May 2, 2007  
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Act is crucial to the West and we urge the Subcommittee to at least maintain, if not increase funding for ESA related activities. Our states have been supportive partners in this effort. In particular, therefore, we encourage you to provide funding for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Section 6 grants to states at the Administration's proposed level of 480 million. We also urge you to increase funding for the State Wildlife Grants Program to a level of \$85 million for FY 08. In addition, we strongly believe private landowner incentive programs are an important component in protecting species. We therefore, ask you to provide \$21.6 million for this program.


We also ask that you reject the Administration's proposed reduction to \$688 million for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund as well as, as the proposed cuts for State and Local Air Quality Management Programs. It is particularly troubling that EPA is proposing to nearly eliminate funding for the regional air quality planning organizations, including the Western Regional Air Partnership (WRAP), that have been so effective in helping states meet their requirements under the Clean Air Act. We are also concerned by the \$3.2 million reduction to the Cadastral Survey, and the \$1.8 million reduction for the Alaska Conveyance Program, both contained in the BLM's proposed budget. We respectfully urge the Subcommittee to reject proposals that would eliminate or reduce the Urban Indian Health Program.

Lastly, funding for the USGS Cooperative Water Program (CWP) and National Streamflow Information Program (NSIP) are vital for informed decision-making. The Administration has proposed eliminating all CWP money for new hydrologic studies or investigations, with a corresponding increase in NSIP basic data gathering activities. Both programs are seriously under-funded and given water data needs, we would hope you would consider a substantial increase in funding for both programs.

In closing, we hope the Subcommittee will continue to invest in these Interior-Environment priorities that provide so much benefit to the West.

Sincerely,

  
M. Michael Rounds  
Governor of South Dakota  
Chairman

  
Dave Freudenthal  
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The Honorable Norman Dicks, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
B-308 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Todd Tiahrt, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
B-308 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

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