February 21, 2015

Honorable John Boehner  Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Speaker of the House  Senate Majority Leader  
H – 232, U.S. Capitol  317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  Washington, D.C. 20510  

Honorable Nancy Pelosi  Honorable Harry Reid  
House Minority Leader  Senate Minority Leader  
H – 204, U.S. Capitol  522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515  Washington, D.C. 20510  

Dear Speaker Boehner, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Pelosi and Minority Leader Reid:

Authorization for payments to counties under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act (SRS) (16 USC 500) expired on September 30, 2014. Unfortunately, the 113th Congress came to a close without a reauthorization of the Act. As you are aware, this program provides essential funding to timber-dependent counties to provide necessary government services to their citizens.

SRS superseded an earlier law that authorized payments to timber-dependent state and local governments based upon a 25% share of timber receipts from sales on adjacent National Forest System lands. Without reauthorization of SRS, calculations for payments to timber-dependent communities revert back to the provisions of the previous law.

This change represents an 83% reduction in funding for these counties and a loss of over $200 million to communities in the West. This reduction will cripple the ability of forest counties and school districts to fund critical education, infrastructure, and other community priorities in jurisdictions adjacent to federal forests.

We are encouraged by congressional expressions of support for this program. We request that Congress pass and send to the President a one-year reauthorization of SRS as quickly as possible to ensure continuous operation of vital services.
We understand and support the need for a permanent solution to the issues addressed by SRS. We stand ready to assist in the development and execution of such a solution.

Respectfully,

Brian Sandoval
Governor, State of Nevada
Chairman, WGA

cc: Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairman, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
     Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
     Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources
     Honorable Raul Grijalva, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources
     Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
     Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations
     Honorable Hal Rogers, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations
     Honorable Nita Lowey, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
     Honorable Mike Enzi, Chairman, Senate Committee on Budget
     Honorable Bernie Sanders, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Budget
     Honorable Tom Price, Chairman, House Committee on Budget
     Honorable Chris Van Hollen, Ranking Member, House Committee on Budget