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December 15, 2005

Mr. Joshua Bolten, Director
Office of Management and Budget
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Bolten:

On behalf of the Western Governors' Association, we request that the Administration include funding in its Fiscal Year 2007 budget to implement the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Reauthorization Act of 2005 (SRSA). The bi-partisan measure, pending before Congress as H.R. 517 and S. 267, reauthorizes the SRSA through fiscal year 2013.

The SRSA helps forest dependent counties and school districts meet their rural road and school needs through its revenue sharing mechanism. The twenty-five percent revenue sharing mechanism was enacted by Congress in 2000 to address the needs of these counties that were suffering from declining resource production within the National Forests. Without this source of income, rural counties and school districts will be hard pressed to provide rural students with the same level of educational services afforded to urban students. Thus, it is imperative that forest dependent counties continue to receive a fair share of guaranteed revenue based on federal land management receipts.

Beyond the revenue sharing provisions of the SRSA, the Act also augments federal and non-federal wildfire mitigation, habitat improvement, watershed restoration, road maintenance and recreational improvement activities. Through citizen-involved Resource Advisory Committees, the health of our public and private forestlands has significantly improved.

We firmly believe the SRSA merits reauthorization and funding since it helps states and rural counties deliver important public services to thousands of communities in the West.

Sincerely,

Dirk Kempthorne
Governor of Idaho
Co-Lead Governor on Forest Health

Janet Napolitano
Governor of Arizona
Co-Lead Governor on Forest Health