



**California State Association of Counties**  
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**Regional Council of Rural Counties**  
1215 K Street, Suite 1650  
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December 5, 2011

The Honorable Tom McClintock  
U.S. House of Representatives  
428 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative McClintock:

On behalf of California's counties that are represented by the Regional Council of Rural Counties (RCRC) and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), we are writing to express our strong support for the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS). Together RCRC and CSAC represent county government before the California Legislature, administrative agencies and the federal government. Representing all 58 of California's Counties that encompass over 35 million acres of United States Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, we understand how critical SRS is for job retention, successful schools and safe county infrastructure.

Specifically, we are writing to you as a member of the Committee on Natural Resources to thank you for your work on the discussion draft "*National Forest County Revenue, Schools, and Jobs Act of 2011*." The draft proposal signals an ongoing commitment to the nation's forest counties and schools at a time when we cannot afford to lose any funding. As you know, California currently has the nation's second highest unemployment rate, with forest counties suffering more than their urban counterparts. The reauthorization of SRS is critical to the viability of these communities.

We realize that the draft represents a first step in a larger discussion of reform of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) policies toward maintenance of our forested lands. California's counties are committed to being a partner in these discussions as local decision-makers in forest communities. As local leaders, the protection of lives, property, and the environment from devastating wildfire is a top priority.

Additionally, the Committee draft continues the commitment of revenue sharing with forested communities. As you are aware, since 1908, the federal government has helped forest county governments and schools succeed by compensating counties for the tax-exempt status of federal forested lands in their jurisdictions.

While we are encouraged by the Committee's plan to move forward to reauthorize SRS, we are concerned that the underlying policies included in the Committee draft will take time to debate and develop, and counties and schools may be left with no funding for the coming year. County officials are already facing significant uncertainty as they begin the 2012-13 budget process. With the SRS program in limbo, forest counties and schools are unsure how much, if any, funding they can rely on.

If Congress does not act quickly, counties will begin the process of laying off employees, cancelling contracts, and reducing services.

We look forward to the discussions on the draft legislation, but would urge the Committee to also work on a possible short term extension of funding for counties and schools to give Congress time to deliberate these important policy issues. We want you to fully understand that any loss of SRS funding will be devastating to our members and to rural California.

California's counties strongly support a long-term reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act. We believe that extending funding for our nation's poorest rural areas will help stabilize the economy. We look forward to working with you on the Committee draft and passage of legislation to extend this vital funding. Should you have any questions regarding our position or would like additional information, please contact Melissa White, RCRC Federal Affairs Coordinator at (916)447-4806, or Karen Keene, CSAC Deputy Director of Federal Affairs at (916)327-7500 ext. 511.

Sincerely,



Karen Keene, CSAC  
Deputy Director, Federal Affairs



Melissa M. White, RCRC  
Federal Affairs Coordinator

cc: The Honorable Doc Hastings, Chairman, Committee on Natural Resources  
The Honorable Edward J. Markey, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources  
The Honorable Rob Bishop, Chairman, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands  
The Honorable Raul M. Grijalva, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands