



Rural Education

Secure Rural Schools and Communities (Forest Counties): The Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program was intended as a safety net for forest communities in 41 states. SRS payments are based on historic precedent and agreements established in 1908 removing federal lands from local tax bases and from full local community economic activity. The expectation was that the federal government and Congress would develop a long-term system based on sustainable active forest management. Both the 114th and 115th Congress failed to act on SRS and forest management. On March 7, 2017, the National Forest Service issued 25 percent payments of timber receipts to states based on the original 1908 Act. These payments, actually based on timber receipts, are well below Secure Rural Schools funding and also are subject to a 6.9 percent sequestration cut. In total, 775 counties and over 4,400 schools serving over 9 million students in 41 states now directly face the grim financial reality of budget cuts and the loss of county road, fire and safety services, and reductions in education programs and services for students. This Congress must continue the historic national commitment established in 1908 to the 775 rural counties and 4,400 schools in rural communities and school districts served by the SRS program. Without immediate Congressional action on forest management and SRS, forest counties and schools face the loss of irreplaceable essential fire, police, road and bridge, community, and educational services. The 115th Congress must act on Secure Rural Schools with short-term FY 2016-2017 funding as it develops active long-term forest management programs generating revenues and local jobs to actively manage and restore National Forest and BLM lands promoting social and economic stability in local communities.

AESA Talking Points:

- ASK House members to cosponsor H.R.2340 to extend the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000.

AESA TALKING POINTS – TUITION TAX CREDITS

- ASK Senators to cosponsor S. 1027 to extend the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000.
- ASK Members of Congress to request their leadership in the House and Senate to act on Secure Rural Schools authorization and short-term funding for Fiscal Years 2016-2017.

Rural Education Achievement Program: This program was included in reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and is level funded in FY17. Congress appears to recognize both the value and importance of this program, something that must be maintained and cultivated.

AESA Talking Points:

- NEW for FY17: Applicants need to submit an online application to receive REAP monies. Some applicants have reported difficulties with the online portal and that the process is cumbersome. Let your members of Congress know about your application experience.
- Encourage your members of Congress to continue to invest in REAP. Let them know the importance of investing in formula programs that provide federal dollars to all schools, and the importance of formula funds for rural schools.

Impact Aid: Impact aid is the federal government's obligation to school districts financially burdened by the presence of nontaxable federal property (i.e., military installations, Indian lands, federal low-rent housing, national laboratories, and grasslands) and/or the costs of enrolling federally connected children. Funding appropriated annually by Congress goes directly to over 1,200 public school districts and may be used for any general fund purpose, including academic materials, technology, staff, or transportation. This flexibility allows school districts to target funds based on need, as determined by district leadership, supporting all students.

AESA TALKING POINTS – TUITION TAX CREDITS

AESA Talking Points:

- Right now, the focus is on ensuring adequate and continued investment in Impact Aid, particularly as it relates to FY18.
 - Impact Aid funds are efficient, flexible, and locally controlled.
 - Impact Aid funds are appropriated annually by Congress. The US Department of Education disburses the funding directly to school districts.
 - School district leaders decide how Impact Aid funds are spent, including for instructional materials, staff, transportation, technology, facility needs, etc.
 - The final FY18 budget allocation must include robust investment in Impact Aid. AESA is opposed to program cuts in the program, including the proposal to eliminate funding for the support payments for federal property program (within Impact Aid).
- SUPPORT a \$51 million increase for Impact Aid in FY18:
 - \$2 million increase for Impact Aid Federal Properties. This increase would reject the Administration’s proposal to eliminate funding for this line item. The \$2 million increase would be a continued step toward covering the cost of new school districts, as the federal government continues to acquire property.
 - \$49 million increase for Impact Aid Basic Support. This increase would provide much-needed resources and help to ensure funding for federally impacted school districts is on par with non-impacted school districts who have a regular tax base.