



Advocacy Challenge

April 27, 2017

AESA is partnering with AASA and the National School Boards Association (NSBA) to advocate for restoration of the Secure Rural Schools funding under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act (SRS/Forest Counties). Our associations remain committed to the SRS program and the important role it plays in supporting education, transportation and public safety in rural communities across the county. AESA, AASA and NSBA call on Congress to uphold its commitment to rural communities and their respective school districts by restoring funding to the SRS program.

As Congress returns from their two-week Spring work period to finalize appropriations for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17), it is critical that any funding bill address the needs of our rural school districts by restoring SRS funding at FY15 levels and extending the program through FY 2018 to ensure certainty for communities.

We have outlined a brief background and the explicit advocacy ask below. We ask for your support in contacting your members of Congress and in mobilizing others within your state to weigh in with members of Congress. Please feel free to use the information included below as the basis for any email you share with your members:

PROGRAM BACKGROUND:

SRS was intended as a safety net for forest communities in 41 states. SRS payments are based on historic precedent and agreements began in 1908 removing federal lands from local tax bases and from full local community economic activity. The federal government and Congress were expected to develop a long term system based on sustainable active forest management. On March 7, since Congress continued to fail to act on SRS and forest management, the National Forest Service issued 25 % payments of timber receipts to states based on the original 1908 Act. Your 2016 payments, actually based on timber receipts, are well below Secure Rural Schools funding.

POLICY CONTEXT:

As a direct result of Congressional inaction, 775 Counties and over 4,400 schools serving 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. The negative impact of lost SRS funds for counties and schools in Rocky Mountain states are compounded by reduced PILT payments. All these funding cuts negatively affect everyone who lives in or visits forest counties. Congress must continue the historic national commitment 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 ASK:

Reach out to your members of Congress, and tell your story:

- Share specific information illustrating the loss of SRS funding in your county and the schools in your region.
- Be specific: what programs are being cut, what students lose, and how these services will not be replaced without SRS funding.
- Tell your Member and staff what SRS funding means to his/her schools and communities.
- ASK your Member of Congress to tell his/her leadership to include SRS authorization and short term 2016-2017 funding when Congress finalizes FY 2017 funding by April 28.
- ASK for SRS 2016-2017 Funding - critically needed to support essential safety, fire, police, road and bridge, community and education services, and
- ASK for action on legislation to actively manage and restore National Forest and BLM lands promoting social and economic stability in local communities.

If you need additional information about the program, about your members of Congress, or contact information-please contact Noelle Ellerson Ng, nellerson@aasa.org.