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NACo Applauds Federal Support for Public Lands Counties

WASHINGTON – After [many months of advocacy](#) on Capitol Hill, the National Association of Counties (NACo) today celebrated an historic achievement for [public lands counties](#) in the 2018 omnibus legislation. It contains reauthorization of the important Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program for 2017 and 2018. It also fully funds another key program, Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), at \$530 million, an historic level for the program. The omnibus legislation also provides new tools for active forest management and a responsible wildfire funding fix that gives land agencies certainty in discretionary funding.

“These important public lands programs invest in public services at the local level, including emergency services, search and rescue, fire protection, forest management, education and transportation infrastructure,” said NACo Western Interstate Region President Joel Bousman, commissioner, Sublette County, Wyo.

“The success of public lands counties is the result of a strong partnership between the federal and local government. My local economy will continue to thrive, thanks to renewed support for SRS and PILT,” said Gila County, Ariz. Supervisor Tommie Martin.

“A broad coalition of county commissioners, teachers and school administrators got the message across. Without SRS and PILT payments, many schools in rural America would not be able to keep their doors open. These programs also help us connect our communities by maintaining the county roads that access public lands. We appreciate this step forward,” said Pend Oreille County, Wash. Commissioner Karen Skoog.

“Garfield County is 93 percent federally owned, making access to PILT and SRS critical for the county government to provide essential services to residents and public lands visitors. Support for PILT and SRS in the omnibus appropriations bill will ease the financial burden on our county to meet our needs in improving infrastructure, educating our kids and providing emergency services,” said Garfield County, Utah Commissioner Leland Pollock.

“To our bipartisan congressional champions, thank you for keeping our communities at the forefront in the process. This victory shows that hard work, dedication and passion can make the difference,” said Multnomah County, Ore. Commissioner Loretta Smith.

“We are grateful to the broad, bipartisan group of congressional champions who worked with us to achieve these much-needed investments in our communities. This federal partnership helps to ensure that counties can deliver services to millions of residents and visitors to public lands counties,” said Deschutes County, Ore. Commissioner Tammy Baney.

With 62 percent of counties having federal land within their boundaries, PILT and SRS funding is fundamental for supporting critical county services. NACo has long advocated for restoring full mandatory funding for PILT, which compensates counties for untaxable federal land within their boundaries. NACo has also supported extending SRS as a transitional funding mechanism until the federal government fully implements a sustainable long-term forest management program with adequate revenue sharing for forest counties and schools. Many of these counties also live under increased threat of catastrophic wildfires, and NACo is pleased to see federal efforts to mitigate the threat.

For the latest news and resources from NACo regarding matters relating to SRS and PILT funding, click [here](#).

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The [National Association of Counties](#) (NACo) unites America's 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public's understanding of county government and exercise exemplary leadership in public service.