



"Serving Western Legislatures"

RESOLUTION 11-01

Resolution Regarding Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act

A. BACKGROUND

1. As large blocks of land were designated under the 1891 Forest Reserve Act, county representatives and community school districts were becoming very concerned that these areas would not be available for settlement, economic development, and taxation within their counties. Under the Transfer Act of 1905, the management of forest reserves was transferred from the Department of Interior to the Department of Agriculture recognizing the crop value of timber and forestland.
2. To accord a measure of compensation to the affected counties, Congress determined that the Federal Government should support communities in the affected states. In 1907, counties began to benefit from logging in national forests with 10% of gross receipts from timber harvests going to local governments. As even more land was transferred to forest reserve status, the U.S. Congress enacted the National Forest Revenue Act of 1908 which required the U.S. Treasury to return 25% of the revenues from the National Forests to the counties for public schools and roads. This historical agreement, implemented by law provided important financial support for counties and schools.
3. As timber sales on national forests declined significantly between 1986 and 1999, Congress enacted the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-393). This legislation continued the support for schools and roads in communities that traditionally shared in timber receipts from National Forest lands. The Act also provided for federal and non-federal wildfire mitigation, habitat improvement, watershed restoration, road maintenance, recreational improvement activities, as well as search and rescue response. Through citizen-involved Resource Advisory Committees, there is significant improvement in the collaborative approach to managing public and private forestlands.
4. In 2008, after a one-year extension, the SRSCA was reauthorized for three more years (PL 110-343). PL 110-343 established a new formula for calculation of Title I State payments based on several factors, including acreage of federal land, previous payments, per capita personal income and distributed funding to a larger number of states. The reauthorized Act provides for annual State payments to decrease each year through 2011 with no funding slated after thereafter.

5. The staged annual reduction in funding and the ultimate loss of funding will have devastating effects on local governments served by SRSCA. Schools, road systems, law enforcement and a host of other critical local services will be severely reduced, if not lost altogether. The prolonged effects of economic recession, particularly harsh on rural communities, combined with a continued decline in timber harvests and shared revenues from federal lands, have left counties served by SRSCA with no viable alternatives to replace SRSCA payments.

B. COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS-WEST (CSG-WEST) POLICY STATEMENT

1. The members of CSG-WEST recognize that the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRSCA) is an integral part of states' and rural counties' ability to provide stable local governmental services to thousands of communities throughout the West. The members of CSG-WEST support efforts to ensure counties continue to receive guaranteed revenue based upon historic federal land management receipts and funding to carry out the county-led public services expected on federally managed lands.
2. As Congress takes up reauthorization of the SRSCA, the members of CSG-WEST support long term reauthorization of the Act and encourages continuation of three important programs under the Act: 1) active management and restoration of federal forests; 2) revenue sharing consistent with historic federal land management receipts with states, counties and school districts, and 3) collaborative processes such as the Resource Advisory Committees (Title II) and community fire planning (Title III), which includes the general public, local government, and other local community stakeholders in federal land management.

C. CSG-WEST EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE

1. CSG-WEST shall post this resolution to its web site to be referred to and transmitted as necessary.
2. CSG-WEST will assist with reauthorization of the SRSCA through coordination with the Partnership for Rural America Campaign, the Western Governors' Association and the Western Interstate Region of the National Association of Counties (NACo).
3. CSG-WEST staff shall continue to monitor this issue and report to the CSG-WEST Executive Committee as necessary.

Adopted by the CSG-WEST Executive Committee on August 2, 2011
Assembled at the 64th Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii