



1201 16th St., N.W. | Washington, DC 20036 | Phone: (202) 833-4000

Lily Eskelsen García  
*President*

Rebecca S. Pringle  
*Vice President*

Princess R. Moss  
*Secretary-Treasurer*

John C. Stocks  
*Executive Director*

May 1, 2017

United States Senate  
Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

On behalf of our three million members and the 50 million students they serve, we thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments in connection with tomorrow's hearing on payments pursuant to the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act (SRS) for schools and community services in 775 rural counties located near national forests in 41 states.

Historically, this law provided critical support for over 9 million students in 4,400 schools. Funding for many of these schools had dropped dramatically due to declining revenues from timber sales — in some cases, to less than ten percent of historic levels. Students suffered as educators were laid off, extracurricular programs eliminated, and desperately needed building repairs postponed.

SRS expired on September 30, 2015 and in March 2016 the last authorized payments were distributed. Based on the original 1908 law, the National Forest Service paid 25 percent of timber receipts to affected states in March 2017 — far less than they had been receiving. As a result, rural counties across the country are now facing draconian cuts in education programs and student support as well as essential road, fire and safety services. The cuts adversely affect everyone who lives in — or visits — the affected areas.

Time is of the essence. We urge you to support reauthorizing SRS and stand ready to work with you to make that happen. Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan  
Director of Government Relations