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November 14, 2017

Honorable Senator Dianne Feinstein
San Francisco State Office
One Post Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco, CA 94104
(415) 393-0707 (p)
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RE: Letter of Support urging Congressional action to uphold Federal commitment to local communities to fully fund the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program (PILT) for FY 2018 and to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools program (SRS).

Dear Honorable Senator Dianne Feinstein,

On behalf of the Nevada County Board of Supervisors, I am sending you this letter of support urging Congressional action to uphold the federal commitment to local communities with significant percentages of federal land within our jurisdictions by fully funding the Payments In Lieu of Taxes program (PILT) for FY 2018, and to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools program (SRS) until a permanent solution is developed. Sixty-two percent of counties (including Nevada County, California) in 49 states nationwide have untaxable federal land within our boundaries, and are required to provide critical services to residents and public lands visitors including search and rescue services, emergency management, law enforcement and education.

Nearly 1,900 counties, boroughs and parishes in 49 states rely on PILT to make up for lost property tax revenue from untaxable federal public lands. In FY 2017, Congress appropriated \$465 million to fully fund PILT, which local governments greatly appreciated. Unless Congress guarantees full funding for PILT for FY 2018, local governments will be negatively impacted which may jeopardize sustainable capacity to provide public services such as emergency management, law enforcement, education, healthcare and road maintenance. We therefore urge you to support efforts to fully fund PILT for FY 2018 and eliminate the annual funding uncertainty faced by PILT counties in the long-term.

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Moreover, the SRS program provides over 720 counties and 4,000 school districts in 41 states with significant U.S. Forest Service lands with funding to make up for the shortfall resulting from declining timber sales off federal forestlands beginning in the early 1990s. SRS was last reauthorized retroactively for FY 2014 and FY 2015 with final payments going to counties and schools in spring 2016. Because Congress has not reauthorized SRS, local governments are scaling back after school programs, laying off teachers, cutting search and rescue services on federal lands, and are unable to construct or repair roads and other public infrastructure. Moreover, some of Nevada County's most effective fire prevention programs will be negatively impacted.

Additionally, if SRS is not reauthorized, it will also hurt those communities that receive PILT, as SRS payments will no longer be deducted under the PILT formula, spreading PILT across more localities. We urge Congress to reauthorize SRS as a bridge funding mechanism until a more permanent, sustainable solution is enacted. Counties and our local communities need a strong federal partner to uphold the federal commitment from these programs to provide certainty at the local level. I respectfully urge you and other Congressional leaders to take action to uphold federal commitment to local communities to fully fund the PILT for FY 2018 and to reauthorize the SRS.

Sincerely,

Hank Weston
Chair, Board of Supervisors