

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 28, 2013

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients  
Acting Director  
The Office of Management and Budget  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Secretary Vilsack and Director Zients,

We have been informed that the Forest Service has recently proclaimed that funds already distributed under the most recent extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS) or payments based on revenue generated in fiscal year 2012 are subject to the fiscal year 2013 sequester, and the agency will be requesting repayment of \$17.9 million in SRS and 25% fund payments that have already been disbursed to States.

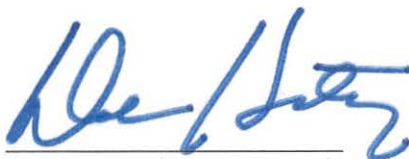
Due to the continued inability of the federal government to manage National Forest lands and provide local communities with a meaningful share of revenues from timber receipts, Congress has approved SRS payments to States to fund education, infrastructure, and emergency services. The SRS program was most recently extended through FY12 as part of the "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act," that was signed into law by President Obama on July 6, 2012. The Department of Agriculture distributed \$323 million to 41 states in accordance with that law in January of this year.

Though the Forest Service was aware of the pending automatic spending reductions for many months, and the sequester took effect on March 1<sup>st</sup>, the agency made no mention of an impact on SRS payments until March 20<sup>th</sup>. For the Administration to announce three months after the disbursement of these payments that they are subject to the sequester, and that States will receive a bill for repayment of funds already distributed to counties, appears to be an obvious attempt by President Obama's Administration to make the sequester as painful as possible.

We request that this action be halted. It retroactively takes funds that are already being used for rural schools, emergency services, infrastructure, and protecting communities from the risk of catastrophic wildfire. We also request a detailed explanation of the legal authority for demanding repayment of FY12 funds that have already been paid out by the federal government.

Thank you in advance for your immediate attention to this issue.

Sincerely,



Representative Doc Hastings



Representative Rob Bishop

  
Representative Tom McClintock

  
Representative Greg Walden

  
Representative Don Young

  
Representative Cynthia Lummis

  
Representative Paul Gosar

  
Representative Scott Tipton

  
Representative Steve Southerland

  
Representative Louie Gohmert

  
Representative Glenn "GT" Thompson

  
Representative Jason Chaffetz

  
Representative Kurt Schrader

  
Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler

  
Representative Reid J. Ribble

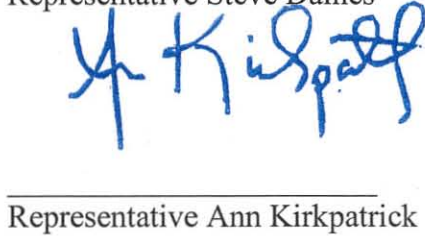
  
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Representative Morgan Griffin

  
Representative Peter DeFazio

  
Representative Steve Daines

  
Representative Stevan Pearce

  
Representative Ann Kirkpatrick

  
Representative Shelley Moore Capito

  
Representative Doug LaMalfa

  
Representative Rick Crawford

  
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Representative Bob Goodlatte

  
Representative Kristi Noem

  
Representative Sean Duffy

  
Representative Mike Simpson

  
Representative Jim Matheson

  
Representative Steve Womack