

IDAHO ASSOCIATION OF COMMISSIONERS AND CLERKS
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RESOLUTION NUMBER 1

SUBJECT: Replacement for Loss of Secure Rural Schools (Craig-Wyden) Federal Funding

STATUTES AFFECTED: Idaho Code Section 40-801 and 63-802

COUNTY OFFICES AFFECTED: Commissioners, Clerks, County Road and Bridge Departments

FISCAL IMPACT: \$14.4 million

ISSUE: At this time, attempts to reauthorize Secure Rural Schools funding to counties has failed in Congress. A number of efforts are underway since Congress reconvened on September 8th, but significant concern exists as to whether the pre-election politics will allow either a single or multi-year reauthorization. The Secure Rural Schools Funding is critical to the Road and Bridge Departments and Highway Districts in our timber counties. A total of 34 of Idaho's counties receive the funding. Amounts distributed to each county are listed on the back of this resolution.

PROPOSED POLICY: This legislation is intended to allow counties a one-time opportunity to replace Secure Rural Schools funding with additional levying authority for the Road and Bridge Departments without the limitations imposed by a budget cap.

BACKGROUND:

- In 1908, Congress promised rural counties 25% percent of all revenues generated from the multiple-use management of the newly created National Forests to support public roads and public schools.
- Beginning in 1986, management of the forests has been steadily declining along with the revenues promised to local communities.
- In 2000, Senators Craig and Wyden restored the 1908 compact by passing the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act and ensuring a predictable payment level for 5 years. The funding was reauthorized for one year in FY07.
- The last of the payments has already been distributed, yet National Forest management practices are still not generating enough revenue to support the public roads and schools in forest counties.
- Public roads and schools are faced with a serious decline in revenue if the Act is not reauthorized.

ARGUMENTS FOR: With the downturn in the economy and the decline in federal highway funds, the loss of this funding will be disastrous for county budgets and for maintenance of Idaho's roads.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST: The politics of the legislature as well as the state's economic outlook will make this a difficult battle.

SPONSOR: Concept proposed by Bill Brown, Idaho Association of Commissioners and Clerks