

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 16, 2008

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Ranking Minority Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Colleagues:

As you develop an emergency supplemental appropriations bill to fund critical government programs, we appeal to you to include the language of Senate Amendment 709 to reauthorize and fully fund a four-year extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-393) ("county payments program") and fully fund the Payments in Lieu of Taxes Program ("PILT").

The Senate recognized that the bipartisan proposal would provide a necessary economic safety net to thousands of counties across the country, and it passed the Senate by a 74-23 vote on last year's supplemental appropriations bill. Unfortunately, despite the overwhelming support for the proposal, only one year of funding for the county payments program was enacted in the conferenced version of last year's emergency supplemental bill. One year of funding was also included in the Senate-passed version of the previous emergency supplemental passed earlier this year, but was not included in the final version of the bill.

The PILT program supports more than 1,900 counties in 49 States across the country, and the county payments program, and funding for it, is vital to the survival of over 775 rural counties and 4,400 schools near national forests in 42 states across the country. A number of counties and schools around the country have already sent out hundreds of pink slips notifying employees of layoffs that will become permanent if the county payments program is not reauthorized. The thousands of counties and schools that rely on these programs currently are facing even further economic challenges. The dramatic downturn in the real estate market has had a particularly acute impact on local budgets. It is thus even more urgent today than it was last year to provide counties with both the immediate support and the ability to plan a long-term recovery strategy that the four-year extension would provide. Without reauthorization of and funding for these programs, the predicament will be an emergency without rescue for hundreds and hundreds of counties across America.

We very much appreciated your support for this proposal last year, and look forward to working with you again this year to finally enact it into law.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senate



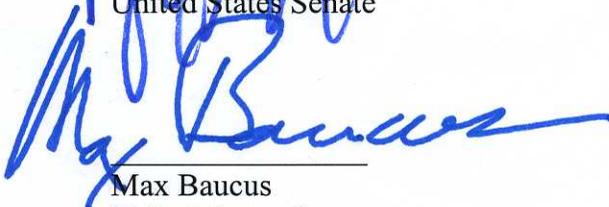
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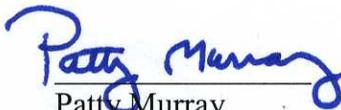
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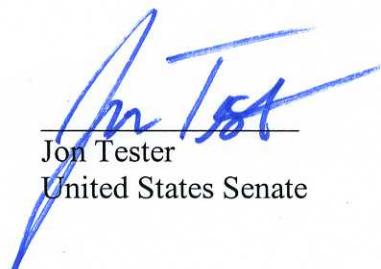
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Robert Bennett  
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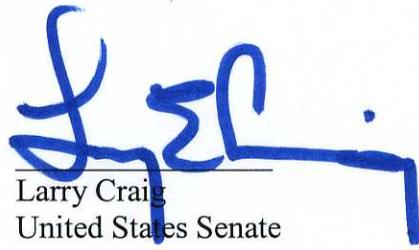
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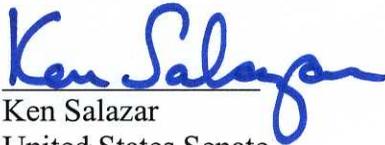
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Carl Levin  
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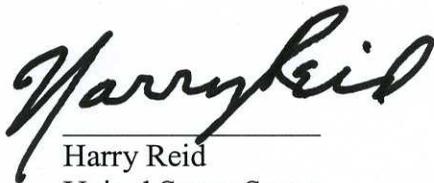
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