



# WESTERN GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

*Serving the Governors of 19 States and 3 US-Flag Pacific Islands*

## **Congress Urged to Continue Support for Rural Communities, Restoration of Nation's Forests**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 28, 2011

**DENVER** -- Western governors, counties and cities are calling on Congress to reauthorize existing legislation that will assist rural communities that have high unemployment due to reduced management activities on federal lands, and to support active forest management and restoration of federal lands.

The Western Governors' Association, Council of State Governments-WEST, Western Interstate Region of the National Association of Counties, and Western Municipal Association sent a joint letter to House and Senate leaders today supporting reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS). They support continuation of three important goals or provisions under the Act:

- active management and restoration of federal forests;
- revenue sharing consistent with historic federal land management receipts with states, counties and school districts; and
- collaborative processes, such as the Resource Advisory Committees and community fire planning.

"The revenue sharing provisions of SRS are vital to local communities and represent a strategic intergovernmental agreement that dates back to 1908," the letter stated. "The revenue helps fund wildfire mitigation, watershed restoration, and states' and rural counties' ability to deliver public services to thousands of communities throughout the nation. We believe that reauthorization and pursuing management and restoration of the nation's forests will generate tremendous environmental and social benefits and create needed jobs and revenue for rural economies."

The SRS aids more than nine million school children in 4,400 school districts in 39 states. Reductions in SRS funding from 2008 to 2011 have limited local government's ability to deliver important services to rural constituents.

"Without reauthorization of SRS before 2012, schools and counties will be forced to: terminate hundreds of county employees; cancel teacher contracts; close libraries; and curtail or eliminate sheriff patrols, rescue operations, mental health care services and substance abuse programs," the letter stated. "Some counties and school districts have indicated they may be forced to file for bankruptcy."

A copy of the letter is available on the Western Governors' Association Web site at [www.westgov.org](http://www.westgov.org).

#####

### **Contact:**

**Ann Walker**  
[awalker@westgov.org](mailto:awalker@westgov.org)

**303-623-9378 ext. 109**