



SKAMANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Skamania County Courthouse
240 NW Vancouver Ave | PO Box 790
Stevenson, WA 98648

(509)427-3700
Fax (509) 427-3708

Christopher Brong
District 1

Doug McKenzie
District 2

Bob Hamlin
District 3

September 7, 2016

Senator Patty Murray
The Marshall House
1323 Officer's Row
Vancouver, Washington 98661

Senator Maria Cantwell
1313 Officers Row
Vancouver, WA 98661
Phone: (360) 696-7838
Fax: (360) 696-7844

Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler
O.O. Howard House (Officers' Row)
750 Anderson Street, Suite B
Vancouver, WA 98661
Phone: (360) 695-6292
Fax: (360) 695-6197

Dear Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, and Congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler:

We strongly urge you to work within your caucus and your leadership for the urgent need to extend mandatory funding for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program and Secure Rural Schools (SRS) payments. PILT and SRS are discretionary payments (subject to the annual appropriations process.) The yearly PILT and Secure Rural Schools payments compensates counties for property tax exempt federal land, and Endangered Species Act land use restrictions which have severely limited timber harvest, large scale fire prevention, fire and emergency services, and other multiple uses of federal land. The US Forest Service has continued to acquire private lands which permanently reduce the County private property tax base.

If Congress fails to act and we do not receive the full PILT and SRS payments due to our county next year, we are required to reduce the level of school services and County government services provided to our residents and visitors in 2017.

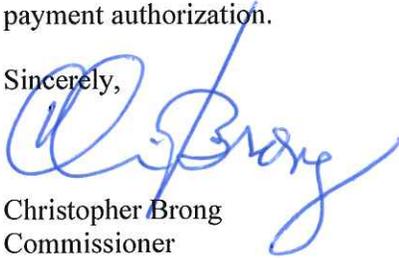
Only 2% of our County is available for commercial and residential development and yearly full assessment of property taxes. **(90% of Skamania County land use is controlled by federal laws and regulations.** The US Forest Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service own 80 %.) Private land use is severely restricted in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic, 10% of the County.



SRS payments provide basic local government services to the community and our schools, including local law enforcement, search and rescue, emergency response, and forest restoration projects on US Forest Service lands.

We thank you for your past support for the extended two years (2014 and 2015) Secure Rural Schools payment authorization.

Sincerely,



Christopher Brong
Commissioner



Doug McKenzie
Commissioner



Bob Hamlin
Chair

Cc: Chris Marklund, National Association of Counties
WSAC Laura Merrill
Governor Inslee
Washington State Senator Cutis King
Washington State Representative Norm Johnson
Washington State Representative Gina McCabe
ALL SRS, Title II and III recipients.
Karen Douglass, Stevenson Carson School District
Washington State Commissioner of Public Lands, Peter Goldmark
The Skamania County Pioneer