

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.

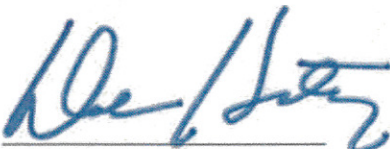
Due to the continued inability of the federal government to manage National Forest lands and provide local communities with a meaningful share of revenues from timber receipts, Congress has approved SRS payments to States to fund education, infrastructure, and emergency services. The SRS program was most recently extended through FY12 as part of the "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st 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 1st, the agency made no mention of an impact on SRS payments until March 20th. 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,



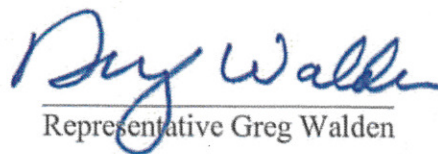
Representative Doc Hastings



Representative Rob Bishop



Representative Tom McClintock



Representative Greg Walden



Representative Don Young



Representative Cynthia Lummis



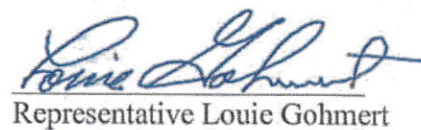
Representative Paul Gosar



Representative Scott Tipton



Representative Steve Southerland



Representative Louie Gohmert



Representative Glenn "GT" Thompson



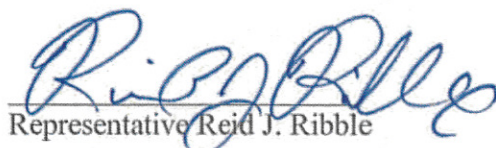
Representative Jason Chaffetz



Representative Kurt Schrader



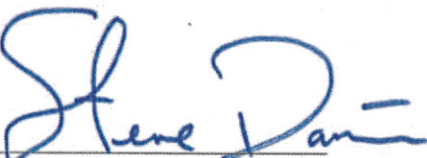


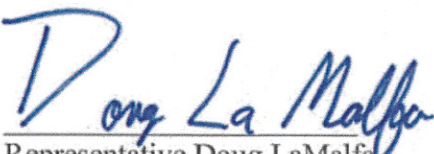

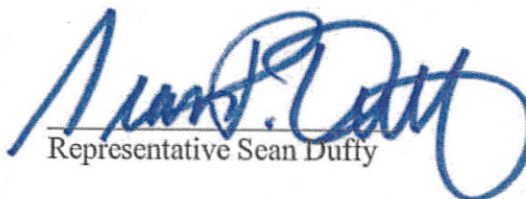
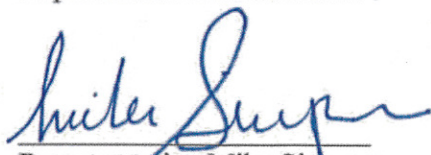
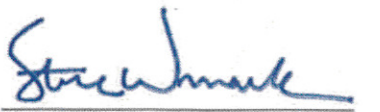
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