Impact of Non-renewal of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act on School Districts
Compiled by the American Association of School Administrators

Alaska

As the superintendent of Petersburg City Schools in Petersburg, Alaska, the failure of passage of the forest receipt program would be disastrous for Petersburg. We really depend on the forest receipt program to continue our educational programs. We receive as much as $800,000 and to cut that much from the budget would eliminate many programs and needed staff. As it is, we have students funding their own travel for state activity events. We have fees that help alleviate the cost of some programs such as Vocational Education. Without the forest receipts we would have to cut some major programs that would cause some students to drop out of school as well as move to another district that could provide the programs. We have a total budget of just less than $6 million and cutting 13% of the budget would be disastrous.

Dr. Gary Jacobsen
Superintendent
Petersburg City Schools
Petersburg, Alaska

Think how devastating it is and will be for forest communities and schools like Haines, Alaska where energy costs have soared. People who live here are not wealthy and costs are rocketing not only for fuel for boats, automobiles, electricity and heating fuel, but also for food, and almost every other essential service. This heavy burden has affected everything and everyone. Now, at this moment of crisis, we are also facing the loss of the essential revenues provided by the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act. For our community, the loss is approximately $450,000. The Haines Borough is helping to make up some of the loss to the school district, but dealing with such a loss to a community as small as ours is a daunting task in these difficult times. Our school district is looking at a loss of $150,000 of revenue.

This amount is extremely significant for us. If the reauthorization of this act does not pass, we will be in a deficit situation. Our ability to recruit and retain good staff and our ability to sustain the programs that directly affect the education for our students will be compromised. I appeal to congress. Please reauthorize this act for our communities and students.

Michael Byer
Superintendent
Haines Borough School District
Haines, AK

In response to your request regarding the impact of discontinuation of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act (aka: forestry receipts), let me begin by saying the
results to the Klawock City School District would be devastating. Forestry Receipts represent approximately 10% of our total budget. In addition, due to the way Alaska State foundation monies are distributed, there is a rippling effect on the District which would result in an additional 3 to 4% loss of revenue. The result of the loss of revenue to this magnitude would mean significant reductions of programs and staff. Over a two-year period I would project a reduction of 25 to 35% of our staff, elimination of programs such as music, art, many student activities as well as reduction in academic courses being offered. Without question, national Forestry Receipts are a major source of revenue which allows us to provide a quality education. Without such a revenue stream, our educational programs would be reduced to be bare bones.

Richard Carlson
Superintendent
Klawock City School District
Klawock, AK

Just a quick note to let you know not getting timber receipts in our school district would be devastating. We would have to lay off the equivalent of seven full time teachers. Our class sizes would sky rocket. The quality of education we currently give would be gone.

We believe that the federal government should pay our community since they own the lion share of all the land surrounding us. We have no taxing authority. If we were allowed to use the land for an economic purpose or if the government allotted some of the land to the community we could understand not giving us money in lieu of taxes.

Please let the members of congress know that passing the Secure Schools Legislation is the right thing to do out of fairness to our community and for the preservation of quality education for our children.

Woody Wilson
Superintendent
Wrangell Public Schools
Wrangell, AK

Arkansas

61% of the Hector School District in Hector Arkansas is National Forest which means we only receive property taxes on 39% of the property. The area is very rural and poor. If the federal government doesn’t continue to fund the federal forest program it will be detrimental to my district. Our five year average on what we receive in federal forest dollars is $225,000. Without this money I would have to cut staffs that are needed and we would also have to cut out all non-essentials like extra-curricular clubs such as FBLA, FFA, FCCLA, and BETA Clubs going on any kind of trips.

Karen C. Smith
Superintendent
Hector School District
Hector, AR

Regarding: Impact on Lamar School District if forest reserve funds were to be cut
Forest Fund Revenues from the past 5 years
07/08 $376,717.91
06/07 $117,000
05/06 $117,942.89
04/05 $112,867.98
03/04 $96,211.86

Total $820,740.64

Five year average $164,148.12

Losing this funding would have a significant impact on Lamar School District. The five year average is equivalent to the cost of over 2 new school buses.

Kelly Hardgrave
District Treasurer
Lamar School District
Lamar, AR

The Perryville School District in Perryville, Arkansas receives forest funds. Our five year average for these funds is $221,000.00 annually.

Ron Wilson
Superintendent
Perryville School District
Perryville, AR

Magazine School District is a small rural district in Arkansas. We depend upon the forestry money to help support our district. The 5 year average for the money received is $72,000 which is 2% of our total budget. The money is used to support the operations for the school. I hope that you will consider renewing the government contract. Thank you for your consideration.

Sandra Beck
Superintendent
Magazine School District
Magazine, AR

The forestry funding received by Western Yell County School District is very important in meeting the needs of our small rural school students. This is an area where there isn’t very much industry to generate funds for the districts. To lose the forestry funding would have a very negative impact on our students.
Shanna McCourt  
Western Yell County School District  
Havana, AR

To date, the Dover School District had received $208,000 dollars from Forest Reserve funds. This money goes directly to the teachers and students. Without this money, we would be forced to cut staff and student services. Any help that you could provide to our district in this matter would be appreciated.

Jerry Owens  
Superintendent  
Dover School District  
Dover, AR

**Indiana**

Perry Central is a small district in the heart of the Hoosier National Forest. We have a low assessed valuation, which directly impacts our property tax levy and therefore the amount of funding for our school corporation. The Hoosier National Forest takes up a significant part of our district, which is one of the main reasons our assessed value is low. Federal Impact funds go a long way in making up this deficit. We believe that even though many of our families are isolated and poor, our students deserve the best possible educational experiences. Impact funds make that difference. They do not provide "extras" but allow us to make up the difference that is lost due to the forest land property tax losses. We appreciate the many resources that are provided by living in the heart of the beautiful Hoosier National Forest. Unfortunately, financial resources are not among the benefits of having this resource in our backyard. Please consider the difference Impact funds make to our small rural community before any decision is made to cut them. Thank you for your consideration,

Mary Roberson  
Superintendent  
Perry Central Community School Corporation  
Leopold, IN

**Missouri**

This proposed reduction in National Forest Land revenue to Oak Hill R-1 School District would have a devastating effect on our continued ability to provide for our educational goals at all levels to our students and district. The proposed amount would be the equivalency of the loss in revenue of the costs of two teachers. In addition to our other economic stresses at this time - which include increased monies for operational support, energy and transportation - (and in rural areas transportation costs are already forcing us to further eliminate/consolidate bus routes), this added reduction impacts us to the point of survival.

Rexanna Shackelford  
Oak Hill R-1 School  
Salem, Missouri
Pennsylvania

Forest Area School District is the 18th smallest district (out of 501) in Pennsylvania. Its 2006-07 average daily membership was 668, K-12. Their annual budget is approximately 10 million. Most of the district is state and national forest and game lands. What taxable property exists is most often owned by non-residents and vacation homes, or hunting lodges. This property is assessed at a high market value. This gives the district a false combined aid ratio, since the personal income component of the ratio is extremely low. This causes Forest to get less state aid than they would if their poverty were accurately displayed.

In 2002 the Pennsylvania Supreme Court accepted the arguments of the Oil and Gas Association and disallowed local municipalities from levying taxes on oil and gas resources, at the wellhead. In fact, the court ordered that taxes paid the district by oil and gas interests while the case was in litigation had to be repaid. This was an enormous loss to the schools and the taxpayers.

Now operating at a deficit, the Forest School Board asked its taxpayers to approve a referendum that would let it tax them at a higher rate than the one allowed by the state law that annually establishes an index districts may not exceed without voter approval. This was defeated. The only township in this far flung district that voted for it is the one where most of the people with children reside.

The loss of $775,000 a year from the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act is probably the final blow. The board has requested management assistance from the state Department of Education. While appreciated, it brings them no additional revenues. If nothing happens to deter them from the path they are on, bankruptcy will have to be declared no later than the end of the 2009-10 school year.

Joe Bard
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools

Failure to renew Secure Rural Schools and to maintain the level of funding this school district has relied on for the past six years will result in this district going into distress by the 2009-2010 school year. Secure Rural Schools funds made up 7% of the district’s revenue. With the loss of these funds and the inability of the school district to raise local taxes because of Act 1 Tax Relief state law, our district will lose $1.5 million dollars in revenue in the next two years.

The Forest Area School District covers all of Forest County. Forest County has been declared economically distressed by the Appalachian Regional Commission. This county is the only county in Pennsylvania to have this designation. Our school district is over 500 square miles. We have two K-12 buildings that are 30 miles apart. We transport students an average of 4,000 total miles a day to get them to and from school. Our district has already reduced expenditures for the 2008-2009 school year by $800,000. With spiraling fuel costs, decreasing state subsidies, and with loss of Secure Rural Schools, Forest Area School will be $1,000,000 short of meeting expenditures in 2009-2010. When a school district such as ours has such a small operating budget, less than $10,000,000 per year, this type of loss cannot be made up with cuts in our
expenditures without severely affecting the operation of our school buildings and education of our students.
The closing of the schools will only contribute to the downward spiral of economics and poverty in this region.

Nancy Cherico
Interim Acting Superintendent
Forest Area School District
Tionesta, PA

The Kane Area School District, located in Northwest Pennsylvania, has been able to enjoy the beauty of over 100,000 acres of National Lands of the Allegheny National Forest found within District boundaries. Throughout the years, these acres have provided employment opportunities for generations of area residents, as well as provided necessary funding for school districts and townships. These taxing authorities have been dependent upon continued funding from the Federal Government from the forest land situated in this area.

Since 1925, the Federal Government has made a commitment to return 25% of the National Forest revenue back to the State where the National Forest Lands are located. Therefore, local tax rates have been set with the understanding this promise would be kept. Over the last several years, several Federal Legislative actions have had a significant impact on funding received by the Kane Area School District. As a result of reduced revenues received from the National Forest Lands at the turn of this century, the Kane Area School District was forced to increase the Local Real Estate Rate for area residents in order to continue its current operations.

School districts and Townships of the area rely very heavily on receipts from the National Forest Lands. Total audited Local Revenues for the 2006-07 fiscal year for the Kane Area School District were $4,648,743. Payment in Lieu of Taxes from the National Forest Lands for that same fiscal year totaled $557,311; thus, representing 12% of audited Local Revenues for that year.

Although National Forest lands receipts have been relatively consistent for the last five years, uncertainty of continued funding at current levels exists. As a result of this uncertainty, school districts and townships find it difficult to make long-range plans; therefore, increasing the burden of current officials to plan for the educational needs of the students of tomorrow. In addition, Board Members and Township Supervisors find it difficult to meet the ever-increasing demands of attempting to meet their fiduciary obligations to area residents.

Proposed reductions or possible elimination of National Forest Lands revenue will have a detrimental effect on the economy of the area, as well as the on the Kane Area School District. Taxing authority limitations placed on all Pennsylvania school districts by Act 1 of 2006, the District will have no other alternative other than to reduce programs and to make other severe cut-backs, should National Forest Lands revenue be significantly reduced. As a result of these reductions, the educational programs of the District would be reduced to the bare minimum. No longer would there be an opportunity for students of the District to participate in Advanced Placement Programs or Vocational Programs. In addition, the District’s plans for technology
would be adversely affected; thus, lessening the opportunity for students of the Kane Area School District to meet the needs to compete in the global economic environment.

In conclusion, the reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act would provide an opportunity for the Kane Area School District to continue to provide educational opportunities for children for years to come so that they too, may be better prepared to become the leaders of tomorrow.

Stephen C. Perry  
Business Manager  
Kane Area School District  
Tionesta, PA

Our district, Bradford Area, receives approximately $350,000 for the National Forest. As a rural district in a limited growth area, any reduction in funds is felt directly on student programs. Our board has not, and will not, raise taxes as our equalized mills are high. These funds is needed to sustain our current programs. Any help is greatly appreciated.

Kathy Kelly  
Director of Business Affairs  
Bradford Area School District  
Bradford, PA

South Dakota

The Lead-Deadwood School District in western South Dakota received $319,285 from the SRS act in 2007-2008. We believe we would lose about $237,000 which would be a significant loss in revenue. This past spring our district cut about $250,000 in expenditures and those reductions consisted of 5.5 teaching positions, one classified position, and 6 assistant coaching positions.

Dan Leikvold  
Superintendent  
Lead-Deadwood School District  
Deadwood, SD

Custer school district currently receives $310,000 and uses the funds to maintain appropriate class sizes and offer the basic curriculum. Without extension of the SRS, Custer could lose as much as $220,000 which would mean the loss of five teachers, increasing class size to a level that will make it very difficult to address the needs of students.

Dr. Tim H. Creal  
Superintendent  
Custer School District 16-1  
Custer, SD
Meade School District receives approximately $75,000 annually in forest county payments. We have just completed our preliminary budget for next year and we already show a revenue shortfall of $377,000. If we lose the forest county payments, this will certainly exacerbate an already significant revenue shortfall and will require the elimination of programs and services to students in order to balance our budget.

We must be the voice for the millions of public school children who have no voice in this process. Congress has a legal and moral obligation to do whatever is necessary to provide adequate replacement funding for the local funding that is lost because of the federal presence in these hundreds of school districts.

This should not be an option. I am hopeful that we can do something to turn this around.

James He inert,
Superintendent
Meade School District
Sturgis, SD

The Spearfish School District stands to lose about $68,000 in general fund revenue, which is only in place because our school district has a significant amount of federal land that does not generate tax revenue for our use. That amount of money means either two fewer teachers and cut programs or deficit spending a budget that has already cut well over $2 million in the past 8 years.

Dave Peters
Superintendent
Spearfish School District
Spearfish, SD

Utah

As a Superintendent of a small rural district which is heavily impacted by the ownership of state and federal lands, I am very concerned about how I am going to continue to provide excellent education, renovate, or even provide upkeep on our existing buildings. I cannot see Wayne School District building new school facilities any time in the future and all of our existing buildings are old with many internal problems such as heating, electrical wiring, plumbing, etc. It stretches our budget to the max to do a project such as re-shingle a roof, replace a few windows, or update a heating system, but all of these things are necessary over time. We have difficulty passing fire marshal inspections because of the age of our facilities and problems brought on by just simply being outdated with all of the new codes. 97% of the taxable land in Wayne County is off the property tax rolls. Students in Wayne School District are heavily impacted by this fact and we would appreciate concern and consideration for our dilemma.

Jessie Pace
Superintendent
Wayne School District
Wayne, UT

We were asked to report to you the impact of non-renewal of the above act. Emery School District is a declining enrollment district. We have lost over one-third of our student population over the past 12 years. While the amount we would lose is just over $13,000 - in our small declining district, any amount of loss compounds itself exponentially.

Kirk Sitterud
Superintendent
Emery County School District
Huntington, Utah

Most Western States are negatively impacted by large federal land holdings. The Sevier School District receives no revenue from PILT or Section 2002 of Impact Aid because it applies only for land purchased by the federal government since 1938. Most of the federal land in the West was part of the enabling acts as state gained statehood. The Secure Rural Schools Act with the recommended revisions in the formula would provide much needed revenue for capital outlay projects such as technology, remodeling or replacing outdated facilities and other critical needs, that are now very difficult due to the loss of local tax revenue from the large federal land holdings that are non taxable.

The Secure Rural Schools Act will go along way in helping students in rural Western State receive equitable educational opportunities that are now only possible through very high property taxes on our local citizens and businesses.

Let me know if you need further information.

Brent Thorne
Sevier School District
Richfield, UT

Virginia

Alleghany County (Virginia) receives about $84,147 per year as a result of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self Determination (SRSCD) Act. This modest amount may seem to be meaningless to many school divisions. For poor rural school divisions like Alleghany County however, this is a very visible amount money within our budget. We will do everything possible to avoid cutting a teaching position if we lose these funds. Most likely, the reduction will be applied to our replacement schedule for school buses and/or computers. Moreover, we already have eliminated four teaching positions this year due to declining student enrollment and due to other reductions in federal and local revenues. State revenues also increased at a much slower rate than was expected. The loss of the SRSCD money would simply worsen a situation that already is bad. The most shameful part of this discussion is the federal government’s unwillingness to accept its responsibility to pay for the acres of local property that it insists on maintaining as a national investment. We are most grateful to AASA for its continued advocacy and support. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance. - RPG
Dr. Robert P. Grimesey, Jr.
Superintendent
Alleghany County Public Schools
Low Moor, VA  24457

Craig County Public Schools is a very small school system in the state of Virginia in which 52% of our land mass is in the Jefferson National Forest. Please be advised that we have no industry to increase our tax base. Our funding that we have received over the years from this Act has been highly advantageous to the education of our children. I highly encourage our representatives and senators to renew this act.

Ronnie Gordon
Craig County Public Schools
Superintendent Designee
New Castle, Virginia

The Nelson County Public School Division is a small rural school system in Central Va. We are dependent on money from a variety of sources to meet our budget obligations. This year we cut 4.5 full time teaching positions to off set reduced funding from all sources. Losing SRSCD money would further worsen student teacher ratios and reduce valuable instructional money used in teacher classrooms for instructional purposes.

In our opinion it is important for the federal government to pay for the acres of local property that it maintains as a national investment. We are appreciative to AASA for its advocacy and support in this matter. Should you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Roger D. Collins
Division Superintendent
Nelson County Public Schools
Lovingston, Va.  22949

I am the Superintendent in Rockbridge Co., Virginia and assure you that I am in a similar situation. Our division receives nearly $59,000 in federal funds under this act. Without these funds, essential programs for next year will need to be cut from our budget. I appreciate the willingness of AASA to support us regarding this matter.

John Reynolds
Superintendent
Rockbridge County School District
Lexington, VA

The funding from the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act has a significant impact on our Grayson County Public School division. Our county is over 40% national forest lands, which results in less resources for school funding from property taxes than most other school systems.
Although the forest county payments may seem insignificant to some, these funds have become critical for the operation of our school division. Our school facilities have an average age of over 50 years old and our bus fleet has several buses that are over 15 years old. We have used forest funds to supplement heating system repairs in school buildings and to supplement the purchase of school buses.

Please help ensure continuation of the forest county funds. Thank you so much.

Dr. Elizabeth Thomas
Superintendent
Grayson County Public Schools
Independence, Virginia

I am writing to encourage you to continue to support full funding of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self Determination (SRSCD) Act. Each year, the Shenandoah County Public Schools receives $45,000 in revenue from this Federal source. Any decrease in revenue to Shenandoah County will greatly impact the level of services that we are able to provide or students. Due to changing economic conditions and an adjustment to a variable in the state funding formula, we will receive $2.8 million less in state funding next year than we would have normally received. This decrease has had a tremendous impact on the level of benefits that we are able to provide to our employees as well as the instructional programs that we can offer to our students. We need every possible dollar of revenue for us to be able to meet the increased demands that our staff faces on a daily basis. Additional decreases to our revenue stream will result in delaying the hiring of additional personnel that we desperately need. We believe that the Federal Government should accept its responsibility to pay for the acres of Shenandoah County property that it insists on maintaining as a national investment.

Jeremy J. Raley
Director of Finance
Shenandoah County Public Schools
Woodstock, VA

**West Virginia**
Impact of National Forest Land Funds in previous year’s to Nicholas County Schools, West Virginia

1) Personnel position – allowed for contracted drivers to transport students from remote mountainous areas to school
2) Facilities upgrade – allowed for school facilities upgrade generally not available in yearly school budget (athletic field repairs, walking paths, paved outside school areas, air conditioning, increased school safety equipment)
3) Curriculum and instruction – allowed for school interventionists to assist students not meeting academic standards, allowed for credit recovery to decrease the student dropout rate, allowed offering more advanced placement courses in high schools
4) Technology – allowed for upgrades such as bandwidth, whiteboards, electronic assessment for schools, and electronic curriculum offerings (virtual, online courses)

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Beverly Kengery, Superintendent
Nicholas County Schools
Summersville, WV

I am writing for Pocahontas Woods Inc, a non-profit woodworking education program which has been incubated with the help of Title III of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Act. You can learn about us at www.pocahontaswoods.org. The attached letter is written by one of our students, Michael Hefner, a paraplegic young man who has outstanding potential as a woodworker. I hope you will read it and use it if you think it would be of help. What he says is true – without the Act, we would never have been able to get started, and it will be difficult to continue to grow in the low-income rural area without continued support.

As a 14 year veteran of the Pocahontas County Board of Education (1986-2000) I can testify that these funds are absolutely essential to the operation of our school system as well. With a poor economic base and a declining population, the 3 per student cost of providing quality education is constantly rising. The USFS dollars make up about 10% of the total school budget; losing them would mean going without art, music, and libraries in our schools.

Gibbs Kinderman
Executive Director
Pocahontas Woods Inc.
503 3rd Ave
Marlinton WV 24954

My name is Michael Hefner. I am writing my story in reference to the renewal of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act. Pocahontas Woods, a non-profit woodworking school in Marlinton, WV, has operated primarily by aid from Title III of this act since 2002. I have witnessed many students benefit from the Pocahontas Woods programs. As for me, the benefits have been life altering.

I have a class T12 permanent disability that I sustained from a construction injury. I became drug dependent on medications prescribed for this injury. At one point, I was disabled and drug addicted. I learned of the woodworking programs at Pocahontas Woods and visited the shop. Life has since taken a positive direction. With the help of Pocahontas Woods, I have become drug free, and now have a purpose in life as an aspiring and quickly advancing furniture maker.

Pocahontas Woods strives to become self-sustaining, but I can see that educational expenses make this effort challenging. Without this Secure Rural Schools and Communities Act, there is a real possibility that Pocahontas Woods won't be able to keep their doors open. I appreciate the opportunities given me, and I hope that others may be given the same opportunities. Please vote to continue the support of this act. Thank you for your time.
Randolph County located in the Monongahela Forest in West Virginia cannot balance their budget without the Secure Rural and Communities money. We have a very small tax base due to federal lands and a low density population in the largest county in West Virginia. Without this funding we will be devastated and will be unable to provide the needed educational programs of a rural county.

Susan Hinzman
Superintendent
Randolph County Schools
Elkins, West Virginia

The Secure Rural School and Communities Self-Determination Act (Forestry Money) benefited Greenbrier County West Virginia last year in the amount of $167,000. This money was used to enhance instruction in many area including modern technology, reading especially in our Summer Energy Express program for children in poverty, and our Pre-K program. Without this money there would definitely be a cutback in services in these and other areas.

John D. Curry
Superintendent
Greenbrier County Schools
Lewisburg, WV

Pocahontas County Schools in West Virginia will be greatly impacted by a loss of the National Forest funding. The nonrenewal of these funds would result in a loss of approximately 10 positions. This may not sound like a lot to someone from a large county with thousands of employees, but for a county with only 190 employees it would be devastating. In addition, because our county is the most sparsely populated county east of the Mississippi (1.23 students per square mile), we cannot consolidate our five schools to make up for this loss. Consolidation would result in our students riding buses for hours and hours. Please continue the National Forest Funding.

Patrick Law
Superintendent
Pocahontas County Schools
Marlinton, WV