Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 30, 2007

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Boehner
Republican Leader
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable David Obey
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Room H-218, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Republican Member
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Colleagues:

As you develop the Emergency Supplemental (Supplemental) to fund vital government programs we implore you to include in it language to reauthorize and fully fund a one-year extension of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-393). This program, and funding for it, is critical to the survivability of over 615 rural counties and 4,400 schools near national forests in 39 states across the country.

P.L. 106-393 expired at the end of September 2006, and if not reauthorized and funded, will result in a substantial and excruciating funding cut for rural counties across America. This act was passed by Congress to provide funding to offset the loss of revenues to counties resulting from severely reduced federal timber sales. The law has kept schools open, roads maintained, search and rescue missions operating, and many other essential local services afloat. The federal government made a pact with rural communities nearly a century ago when it established the federal timber sale program which provided counties a portion of revenue from federal timber sales.

Harvest levels on federal lands have been significantly reduced over the past decade by changes in federal forest policy. In 2000, Congress demonstrated its commitment to continue the pact they made with rural counties by passing the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. To not reauthorize and fund the Act would break the federal government's pledge to these rural communities all across the country.

We have attached a copy of a letter sent by the National Governors Association to the House and Senate leadership in September of 2006 urging support for reauthorization of this program. Clearly, a law important enough to be supported by the association representing all 50 governors deserves the full attention of the Congress and favorable action in the first hours of the 110th Congress. The Emergency Supplemental would be the last opportunity to address this critical issue before counties have to start implementing cuts to schools and services. A number of counties around the country have already begun sending out pink slips notifying employees of potential lay offs. Without reauthorization of and funding for the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act, the predicament will be an emergency without rescue for hundreds and hundreds of rural counties across America.

Thank you for your serious consideration of including language to reauthorize and fully fund P.L. 106-393 in the forthcoming Emergency Supplemental.

Best regards,

Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

Greg Walden
Member of Congress

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Lois Capps

Phil Hare

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Dennis J. Kucinich Gene Taylor

Bob Filner Ron Kind

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NATIONAL
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Governor of Minnesota
Vice Chair

Raymond C. Scheppach
Executive Director

September 19, 2006

The Honorable Bill Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Frist, Senator Reid, Speaker Hastert, and Representative Pelosi:

We write to urge reauthorization this Congress of Public Law 106-393, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. This extremely successful law sunsets at the end of September 2006. Failure to reauthorize this law by passing either H.R. 517 or S.267 would be a significant blow to over 800 counties in 42 states that depend on the program to fund their schools, roads, forest improvement projects and other essential services.

P.L. 106-393 maintains a congressionally approved arrangement to share revenue generated from our national forests with the rural counties that play host to these federal lands. Without reauthorization, rural forest dependent communities across the nation will lose over $400 million annually. This economic loss will be devastating to the economy and spirit of rural America, as well as to the timber, mining and recreation industries.

Beyond the revenue sharing provisions of P.L. 106-393, the law augments federal and non-federal wildfire management, habitat improvement and watershed restoration. Through the work of citizen-based Resource Advisory Committees, over 2500 projects have been completed on federal lands and not one has been appealed or litigated. Many of these projects leverage the federal dollars to obtain matching private, county and state dollars to conduct a range of essential federal forest management activities, such as necessary fuel reduction to protect our national forests from major fires.

If Congress is unable to adopt a comprehensive reauthorization of the program, we urge at a minimum that funding for the program be extended for at least one year to provide adequate time to build a consensus supporting a longer-term solution.

Sincerely,

Governor Jon Huntsman Jr.
Chair, Natural Resources Committee

Governor Bill Richardson
Vice Chair, Natural Resources Committee

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