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Obama Admin to Retroactively Subject Secure Rural School Payments to Sequestration Cuts

Chairman Hastings questions legal authority of Forest Service to demand refunds of teacher and police salaries

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) released the following statement after the U.S. Forest Service announced that Secure Rural School (SRS) payments, which went out to counties in January, will be subjected to sequestration cuts:

“Several months before President Obama’s sequester was scheduled to go into effect, Congress approved - and President Obama signed into law - another extension of payments under the Secure Rural Schools Program to provide rural counties with funds for teachers, schools, police officers, emergency services and infrastructure. These payments are necessary because the federal government has failed to live up to its promise to actively manage our forests and provide a stable revenue stream for rural counties containing National Forest land. The Forest Service distributed the majority of those funds in January of this year. To decide three months later, and 20 days after the sequester took effect, that funds authorized by Congress nearly a year ago and paid out three months ago are subject to sequester is not only legally-questionable, but another obvious example of the Obama Administration going out of its way to make spending cuts as ‘painful as promised.’ The President should be working with Congress on making smart and responsible cuts and reforms – not using the sequester as a tool to score political points on the backs of rural schools and communities by demanding refunds of dollars used to pay teacher and police salaries.”

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