



## Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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### **Subpoenas Issued for Documents on the Obama Admin's Retroactive Cuts to Secure Rural School Payments**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) today issued [subpoenas](#) to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for documents they have failed to produce as part of the Committee's oversight into the Obama Administration's decision to retroactively subject 2012 Secure Rural School (SRS) payments to the fiscal year 2013 sequester.

Because of the federal government's continued inability to manage National Forest lands and provide local communities with a meaningful share of revenues from timber receipts, Congress has approved SRS payments to provide rural counties with funds for teachers, schools, police officers, emergency services and infrastructure. The SRS program was most recently extended through fiscal year 2012 as part of the highway bill, the "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act," which 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. On March 19, 2013 the Obama Administration announced it was requesting repayment of \$17.9 million in SRS payments that have already been disbursed to states. This sparked bipartisan opposition from Members of Congress, who sent a [letter](#) questioning why the Administration was subjecting SRS payments that were made to counties in January based on fiscal year 2012 revenues, to the fiscal year 2013 sequester.

On May 20, 2013, Chairman Hastings sent oversight letters to the [USDA](#) and [OMB](#) requesting documents and information on how this decision was reached and the legal authority. After receiving no response by the Committee's June 3<sup>rd</sup> deadline, initial follow up [letters](#) were sent to the USDA and OMB on July 18. Second follow up [letters](#) providing a final opportunity to comply voluntarily with the Committee's document requests were sent on July 31. The same day, at a Full Committee [markup](#), Chairman Hastings stated his plans to issue subpoenas if the Administration failed to respond in a timely manner. Three months after the Committee's initial request was sent, not a single internal document about the SRS program has been released.

*"Rural counties depend on these funds for vital services – like putting teachers in the classrooms and police on the street. Retroactively cutting these funds and asking states to pay back the money is outrageous and will cause considerable economic harm to communities*

*that are already struggling to survive. Even worse, the Obama Administration is refusing to provide documents about how and why this troubling decision was made. The USDA and OMB have had ample opportunity to comply with the Committee's request for documents. The issuance of subpoenas is always a last resort, but their refusal to cooperate has left us no other choice,"* **said Chairman Hastings.**

The specific documents and information sought in the subpoenas include:

1. All records concerning any legal analysis or policy alternatives prepared or considered in connection to the application of the Budget Control Act of 2011, as amended, to retroactively sequester money paid to states in FY 2013 pursuant to the Secure Rural Schools program.
2. All records concerning communications to, from, or otherwise involving the U.S. Department of Agriculture or the Office of Management and Budget concerning application of the Budget Control Act of 2011, as amended, to retroactively sequester money paid to states in FY 2013 pursuant to the Secure Rural Schools program.
3. All records, including any drafts containing edits, comments, or revisions thereto, of any press releases, talking points, or communication documents concerning application of the Budget Control Act of 2011, as amended, to retroactively sequester money paid to states in FY 2013 pursuant to the Secure Rural Schools program.
4. All records concerning the imposition of penalties against states for failure to repay money received in FY 2013 pursuant to the Secure Rural Schools program.
5. All records concerning the timing of the decision, announced January 15, 2013 by the U.S. Forest Service, to disburse money to states pursuant to the Secure Rural Schools program.

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