



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

Chairman Doc Hastings

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## **COMMITTEE REPORT: White House Office of Management and Budget Ordered Sequester of SRS over USDA Opposition**

*USDA then chose to broadly apply sequester to impact all SRS states*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The House Natural Resources Committee released an interim Majority staff [report](#) today detailing information uncovered during the Committee’s ongoing investigation into the Obama Administration’s decision to retroactively apply 2013 sequestration cuts to 2012 Secure Rural School (SRS) funds that had already been distributed. The report, entitled “*A Less Secure Future for Rural Schools: An Investigation into the Obama Administration’s Questionable Application of the Sequester to the Secure Rural Schools Program*,” highlights the Committee’s investigation and preliminary findings based on internal emails and documents that were subpoenaed by the Committee in September 2013.

The oversight investigation to date has found that attorneys in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Office of General Counsel had determined in February that the 2013 sequestration would not apply to 2012 SRS funds already distributed. The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) overruled that interpretation, leaving USDA and the Forest Service scrambling in March 2013 to figure out how to make up the shortfall and to justify the decision to apply the sequester to money already paid to states. Both USDA and OMB continue to withhold an unknown number of subpoenaed documents.

The report concludes:

“There are a number of important questions that remain unanswered about the authority for the sequester decisions affecting the SRS program, whether the Obama Administration will continue to pressure states to return FY 2012 money that was paid to them in FY 2013 and later covered by the sequester, and how sequestration will affect the SRS program in future years.

Given the change in USDA’s legal analysis, pressure by the White House, and the desire for consistency at all costs, it is clear that Congress, states, and rural communities were right to question whether these decisions were correct and made for any reason other than to make sequestration as visible and painful as possible in

rural communities across the country.”

*“It’s taken many months and the issuance of subpoenas to extract some truth and transparency from the Obama Administration about its decision to demand states and rural communities return funds for schools and local law enforcement. Retroactively applying the 2013 sequester to 2012 SRS funds was done at the direction of the White House OMB and then USDA chose to apply the pain to all SRS states. We can’t forget that the impact of these actions falls on schoolchildren, teachers, police officers and small communities that the federal government has already failed by not keeping its promise of responsible timber harvests. It’s important that the questions surrounding this matter are fully answered,”* **said Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04).**

A Full Committee [hearing](#) will be held today at 10:00 AM, featuring testimony from the USDA, to further examine the Administration’s actions and decision.

[Click here](#) for the full report.

[Click here](#) for emails and documents obtained by the Natural Resources Committee.

For additional background on the Committee’s investigation, visit <http://naturalresources.house.gov/oversight/srscuts>

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