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Committee Passes Secure Rural Schools, PILT Legislation to Create Jobs, Stimulate Rural Economies & Restore Forest Health

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The House Natural Resources Committee today passed [H.R. 4019](#), the *Federal Forest County Revenue, Schools and Jobs Act of 2012*, by a vote of 26 to 17.

The bill aims to restore economic stability in forested counties that lost valuable revenue used to support schools, infrastructure and emergency services when the timber industry sharply declined in the 1990s due to federal regulations and lawsuits. The bill will create jobs, foster forest health and provide a steady revenue stream to rural communities through restoration of active, healthy forest management. The bill also authorizes a five year extension of the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program and modifies the cabin fee formula to make it more predictable and affordable for families who own cabins in our National Forests.

“Today we acted to take the first step in helping rural communities get back on their feet. Congress needs to act on Secure Rural Schools in a way that creates jobs and provides long-term economic and revenue certainty. This plan will revitalize rural economies and create much-needed jobs by allowing communities to actively manage their forests through safe, responsible timber production,” **said Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings.**

Specifically, the *Federal Forest County Revenue, Schools and Jobs Act of 2012*:

- Creates a County, Schools and Revenue Trust to provide a dependable source of revenue for rural counties that currently depend on SRS.
- Establishes an Annual Revenue Requirement (ARR) for each National Forest System unit, based on an average of gross receipts from 1980-2000. Of the ARR, 65% is shared with the counties through the County Revenue and Schools Trust and 35% is directed to the federal Treasury.
- Provides the Forest Service authority to carry out County Revenue and Schools Trust Projects in order to meet the required Annual Revenue Requirement (ARR). Trust Projects may include timber sales; issuance of grazing permits; issuance of special permits involving land use, minerals, power, or recreation; and projects implementing a community wildfire protection plan.

- Requires that each federally approved Trust Project be subjected to a public comment period and administrative appeal, and required to undergo an “environmental report” that identifies and mitigates potential environmental impacts.
- Authorizes a transition period to continue making payments to counties and schools while the Forest Service begins the process of identifying and implementing Trust Projects.
- Authorizes a five year extension for mandatory full funding of the Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program to compensate local governments for lost property tax revenues on non-taxable federally owned land.
- Includes cabin fee fairness language from [H.R. 3397](#), the *Cabin Fee Act of 2011* – which passed out of Committee in November 2011 – modifying the current cabin fee formula to make it more predictable and fair for families who own cabins in our National Forests.

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