RESOLUTION - ACTION REQUESTED 2017-228

MEETING: April 25, 2017

TO: The Board of Supervisors

FROM: Dallin Kimble, Interim CAO

RE: Letter of Support for Secure Rural Schools / PILT

RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION:
Approve a Letter of Support for Secure Rural Schools (SRS) and Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Funding; and Authorize the Board of Supervisors Chair to Sign the Letter.

Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funding is currently divided equally between the County and the Mariposa County Unified School District. The County portion is used to support the Mariposa Fire Safe Council, the Southwest Interface Team (SWIFT), and some road maintenance.

Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) provides a payment of approximately $1.18 million in general purpose revenue to offset losses sustained because of the significant amount of federal land in our county. This money is used to provide essential services including law enforcement, road maintenance, public health, and county administrative functions.

SRS has now expired and Congress doesn't currently have a plan to renew these funds. PILT was fully funded in the current fiscal year.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:
The Board has approved letters supporting legislation that will benefit the County.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:
Do not approve the letter. Individual members of the Board may write their own letters of support as desired.

ATTACHMENTS:
2017 Letter SRS PILT Feinstein (PDF)
2017 Letter SRS PILT Harris (PDF)
2017 Letter SRS PILT McClintock (PDF)

CAO RECOMMENDATION
Requested Action Recommended
RESULT: ADOPTED BY CONSENT VOTE [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Merlin Jones, District II Supervisor
SECONDER: Kevin Cann, District IV Supervisor
AYES: Smallcombe, Jones, Long, Cann, Menetrey
April 25, 2017

The Honorable Tom McClintock  
United States House of Representatives  
2312 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for Congress to Fully Fund PILT and SRS

Dear Congressman McClintock:

As Congress works to finalize the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 appropriations process, we write on behalf of Mariposa County to express concern that the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program has yet to be reauthorized for FY 2018 and beyond. Additionally, we urge Congress to fully fund the Payments In lieu of Taxes (PILT) program in FY 2018 and into the future.

Congress plays an important role in setting policies to guide the management of our nation’s 640 million acres of federal public lands. Sixty-two percent of counties nationwide have federal land within our boundaries and federal lands policies have a direct impact on the quality of life and economic wellbeing of our local communities.

This federal funding is critical in Mariposa County, which has nearly 500,000 acres of federal land, making up 53.5 percent of the total land in the County.

Secure Rural Schools

We strongly urge you to enact a long-term legislative solution for continued revenue sharing payments to forest counties through the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program. Forest counties received their last authorized SRS payments in calendar year 2016 and the availability of future SRS payments remains in jeopardy.

Because Congress has failed to renew the long-standing federal obligation to forest counties and to the lands managed by the federal government by not improving forest management and reauthorizing the SRS program, counties across the United States are facing dramatic budgetary shortfalls. When the authorization for SRS lapsed in FY 2014, federal forest payments to counties decreased by over 80 percent on average. Further, Congress should reform forest management practices to improve forest health, increase production and ensure robust revenue sharing to all forest counties.

Mariposa County currently uses SRS program funding to fund the local fire safe council and the Southwest Interface Team (SWIFT). These programs provide invaluable services to prevent
costly wildfire damage. SRS funds also contribute to road maintenance in forested areas and our local school district. The strength and stability of these programs and functions relies on the continued availability of SRS funding.

Payments in Lieu of Taxes

The PILT program provides payments to counties and other local governments to offset losses in tax revenues due to the presence of substantial federal land acreage within our jurisdictions. Because local governments are unable to tax the property values or products derived from federal lands, PILT payments are necessary to support essential local government services (mandated by law) such as education, emergency services, transportation infrastructure, law enforcement and health care in over 1,850 counties across 49 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

We appreciate that Congress appropriated the full $452 million necessary to fund PILT for FY 2016. However, many counties, including Mariposa County, have already begun to execute our FY 2017 budgets. Although the current continuing resolution extends funding for PILT at $452 million dollars, the U.S. Department of the Interior has estimated that $480 million will be necessary to fully fund PILT in FY 2017. Without the certainty of full funding for the PILT program in FY 2017 and beyond, counties across the nation will be unable to provide essential services such as education, law enforcement, search and rescue, road maintenance and public health to residents and millions of federal lands visitors alike.

In Mariposa, where federal lands occupy approximately half of the County area, PILT provides approximately $1.18 million in general purpose revenue. This amount, which is less than a quarter of the property taxes collected in the rest of our sparsely populated County, is critical to our ability to protect the health and welfare of our 18,000 residents and more than 5 million annual visitors to Yosemite National Park.

Rural counties often struggle to fund even some essential services for residents, businesses and visitors. Your support for these important funding sources is appreciated.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Marshall Long, Chair
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
The Honorable Kamala Harris  
United States Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC  20510  

Re: Support for Congress to Fully Fund PILT and SRS  

Dear Senator Harris:

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In Mariposa, where federal lands occupy approximately half of the County area, PILT provides approximately $1.18 million in general purpose revenue. This amount, which is less than a quarter of the property taxes collected in the rest of our sparsely populated County, is critical to our ability to protect the health and welfare of our 18,000 residents and more than 5 million annual visitors to Yosemite National Park.

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Marshall Long, Chair
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
April 25, 2017

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for Congress to Fully Fund PILT and SRS

Dear Senator Feinstein:

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Marshall Long, Chair
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors