RESOLUTION - ACTION REQUESTED 2017-593

MEETING: September 12, 2017

TO: The Board of Supervisors

FROM: Dallin Kimble, County Administrative Officer

RE: Ratify Letter of Support for S. 1027

RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION:
Ratify a Letter Supporting S. 1027, Which Would Extend the Authorization of the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Program for an Additional Two Years.

SRS payments support a number of county responsibilities and projects, including public schools, public roads, forest health projects, search and rescue, and emergency services. Counties that depend on SRS payments cannot fulfill their responsibilities without these funds. Staff recommends ratifying the letter of support for continued SRS funding.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:
The Board has ratified letters supporting or opposing legislation.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:
Do not ratify the letter, and direct staff to draft a letter withdrawing the letter of support.

ATTACHMENTS:
Letter of Support for S. 1027  (PDF)

CAO RECOMMENDATION
Requested Action Recommended

RESULT: ADOPTED BY CONSENT VOTE [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER: Kevin Cann, District IV Supervisor
SECONDER: Rosemarie Smallcombe, District I Supervisor
AYES: Smallcombe, Jones, Long, Cann, Menetrey
August 9, 2017

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

Re: Support for S. 1027, a bill to extend the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000

Dear Senator Feinstein,

On behalf of Mariposa County, California, which depends heavily on the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program, we write in support of S. 1027, which would extend for two years the authorization of the SRS program to ensure that payments continue for rural areas.

As we noted to you in our correspondence on April 25, 2017, we believe that the SRS program should be extended, and PILT and SRS fully funded. SRS payments have helped provide stability for counties and school districts whose areas include public lands. Historically, rural communities and schools have relied on a share of receipts from timber harvests to supplement local funding for education services and roads. When environmental policies were implemented, the resulting decline in timber sales decreased the revenues that rural counties and school districts received from forest management activities. By enacting the SRS program in 2000, Congress stabilized payments to counties and compensated for their lost revenues. When the SRS program lapsed in FY14, forest counties saw a more than 80 percent reduction in forest payments.

SRS provides a critical safety-net for forest counties impacted by declines in forest production and the loss of forestry-related jobs. SRS payments support a huge number of county responsibilities and projects, including public schools, public roads, forest health projects, search and rescue, and emergency services. Counties that depend on SRS payments cannot fulfill their responsibilities without these funds.

If Congress does not reauthorize SRS, counties receiving Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) could see reduced payments because the previous year’s SRS would no longer be deducted.
under the PILT formula. It is imperative that Congress reauthorize SRS now to prevent further decreases in payments to federal lands counties.

Mariposa County would like to offer any assistance we can provide in order to ensure a smooth passage for S.1027 and safeguard this critical funding for forest counties over the next two years. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Marshall Long, Chair
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

CC:
Senator Orrin Hatch
Senator Kamala Harris
Congressman Tom McClintock