

Enrolled
House Joint Memorial 1

Sponsored by Representative SMITH DB; Representatives EVANS, WALLAN, ZIKA (Pre-session filed.)

To the President of the United States and the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled:

We, your memorialists, the Eightieth Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon, in legislative session assembled, respectfully represent as follows:

Whereas national forests, re-vested Oregon and California Railroad grant lands (O&C lands) and other lands owned by the United States make up nearly 53 percent of the land base in the State of Oregon, yet those federal lands pay no property taxes to support local government services or schools; and

Whereas national forests and O&C lands were made subject to federal legislation in 1908, 1911 and 1937 that required the federal government to share proceeds from timber sales to help support counties and schools, and for many decades shared federal timber receipts were a substantial contributor to the economic well-being of communities, local governments and schools; and

Whereas environmental concerns and changing national priorities in the 1990s resulted in drastic reductions in timber harvests from national forests and O&C lands, with correspondingly drastic reductions in payments to counties and schools in Oregon and more than 40 other states, creating severe funding shortages for many counties and schools; and

Whereas United States Senator Ron Wyden from Oregon coauthored and was an original cosponsor of the bipartisan Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (SRS), which honored the federal government's historic commitment to rural communities where the federal government holds land, establishing a payment formula for counties and schools that had previously received revenue-sharing payments from national forests and O&C lands; and

Whereas SRS has brought more than \$3.1 billion to Oregon counties and schools-to keep teachers in classrooms, sheriffs on the job and roads in good repair-but the annual payments under SRS have declined in recent years, and the law has expired and been extended several times; and

Whereas each reauthorization of SRS has been increasingly difficult due to the political environment in Congress, resulting in great uncertainty and instability in the budgeting processes of counties and schools; and

Whereas SRS is currently expired, and no payment will be made for fiscal year 2019 or thereafter unless there is a reauthorization, again creating uncertainty and chaos in the budgeting processes of dependent local governments; and

Whereas Senator Wyden has recognized the need for a long-term solution that provides certainty and stability in payments to counties and schools and makes a dependable contribution to the support of local communities; and

Whereas Senator Wyden coauthored and was an original cosponsor of the bipartisan Forest Management for Rural Stability Act (FMRSA), which was introduced in the Senate in 2018 and which Senator Wyden has stated he will reintroduce in 2019 and seek action on by Congress; and

Whereas FMRSA would greatly benefit counties and schools in more than 40 states, none more so than Oregon, providing guaranteed annual payments that are no less than the SRS payments for 2017, which totaled more than \$96 million in Oregon, and the minimum would be adjusted upward each year in the future by the rate of inflation; and

Whereas FMRSA would employ a bold and creative mechanism to ensure permanent payments to counties and schools by initially funding an endowment that would be invested and managed for

the benefit of counties and schools and into which any shared timber receipts also would be deposited over time, from which annual payments would be made to counties and schools based on endowment fund deposits and earnings; and

Whereas FMRSA is supported by the Association of Oregon Counties, the Association of O&C Counties, the National Association of Counties, the National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition and many other entities, each of which recognizes the need for a modern and permanent version of SRS that would create certainty and predictability and would satisfy that need without severing the links between communities and their nearby federal forest lands; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:

That we, the members of the Eightieth Legislative Assembly, respectfully urge the Congress of the United States to pass, and the President to sign, the Forest Management for Rural Stability Act before the close of federal fiscal year 2019; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this memorial shall be sent to the President of the United States, to the Senate Majority Leader, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and to each member of the Oregon Congressional Delegation.

Adopted by House May 13, 2019

Timothy G. Sekerak, Chief Clerk of House

Tina Kotek, Speaker of House

Adopted by Senate June 6, 2019

Peter Courtney, President of Senate