

Walden highlights impact on Jackson County of losing "county payments"

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Congressman Greg Walden (R-Ore.) addressed the House of Representatives yesterday to explain the dire consequences facing Jackson County should funding for the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act be discontinued. Walden and Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) introduced H.R. 17 on January 4, the first day of the 110th Congress, a bill which would reauthorize the Act for seven years. The Act expired in September 2006, and without prompt reauthorization and funding, approximately 4,400 school districts in 615 counties in 39 states will have essential federal funding severed.

Congressman Greg Walden (R-Ore.) The speech before the House, the first in a series of 18 that will each day focus on a specific county in Oregon's Second Congressional District that receives funds from the essential program, follows:

Mr. Speaker. This Congress and the last have failed to keep the federal government's commitment to the people who live near our national forests.

This breach of faith means 100 hard working county employees in Jackson County, Oregon will lose their jobs in June. That's 10 percent of the county's workforce.

Within three months, Jackson County will close all 15 county libraries and slash their road budget.

Remember the heart-wrenching search for the Kim Family, lost in the national forest in southern Oregon? Jackson County used their equipment to help in that search; equipment and personnel paid for in part by the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act.

As Jackson County Commissioner C.W. Smith said, loss of this program is a "national domestic federal funding crisis."

I call on the new Democratic leadership to put H.R. 17 on the 100-hour agenda. Keep faith with rural schools and counties. Keep the word of the federal government to timbered communities.

Congressman Walden represents 20 counties in central, southern and eastern Oregon. He is a Deputy Whip in the House Leadership Structure and a member of the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

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