# Walden highlights impact on Deschutes County if â€˜county paymentsâ€™ program is lost

*by Bend Weekly News Sources*

Before the full House of Representatives, Congressman Walden delivers speech outlining what is at stake for Deschutes County

Congressman Greg Walden (R-Ore.) today addressed the House of Representatives to explain the dire consequences facing Deschutes County should funding for the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act be discontinued.

Congressman Greg Walden (R-Ore.) represents 20 counties in central, southern and eastern Oregon. Walden and Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) introduced H.R. 17 on January 4, the first day of the 110th Congress, a bill that 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.

The speech before the House, the sixth in a series of 18 that will each day focus on a specific county in Oregonâ€™s Second Congressional District that receives funds from the essential program, follows:

â€œMr. Speaker. The failure of Congress to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act amounts to a breach of faith to more than 600 forested counties and 4,400 school districts across America.

â€œSeventy-eight percent of the land in Deschutes County, Oregon, is controlled by the federal government. Itâ€™s a recreational and outdoor paradise. Funds from this program have supported support public safety, emergency medical, search and rescue operations, and much more to protect the more than two million people who come to central Oregon to recreate every year.

â€œCounty Sheriff Les Stiles said, â€˜Search and rescue is a matter of life and death in Central Oregon and supporting these programs are essential given the surge in outdoor recreation.â€™

â€œOur school kids are hurt, too, because this program is not being reauthorized yet. At the Bend-LaPine School District, administrators face the decision of bigger class sizes or fewer teachers, as they struggle to meet state and federal mandates.

â€œSchool Superintendent Doug Nelson said, â€˜These funds help us ensure programs which donâ€™t leave kids behind.â€™

â€œMy colleagues, Congress must keep the Federal Government's word to timbered communities and pass HR 17. Time is running out for them.â€•

For more information on the county payments effort and for video of the speeches, please click here.

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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