

No county payments, no budget; Smith readies for filibuster

by Bend Weekly News Sources

Oregon Senator Gordon H. Smith is ready to filibuster a must-pass spending bill if Congress does not extend the county payments safety net, he informed Senate leaders yesterday. A filibuster would essentially halt funding for the federal government.

Senator Gordon Smith threatens to filibuster, halting federal budget funding if Congress doesn't extend the county payments safety net. "The Senate can fund county payments or I am going to put the brakes on this bill," Smith said, referring to the continuing resolution to fund the government expected to be considered soon by the U.S. Senate. "The federal government has an obligation to rural Oregon and it's time to meet that obligation. We are talking about people's jobs, children's schools, and general public safety in seven hundred timber counties in thirty-nine states across the country. Let's get this done."

Senator Smith is working with his Oregon colleague Senator Ron Wyden and Senators from Washington State, Alaska, and Montana as well as members of the U.S. House of Representatives to extend the county payments safety net. On January 24, 2007, Senator Smith told his fellow Senators, "My colleague from Oregon and I have left no stone unturned to find money for an extension." Since 2005, Senator Smith has:

- Cosponsored two bills to fully reauthorize or pay for county payments
- Authored or cosponsored nine separate amendments to extend or pay for county payments
- Coordinated eleven meetings with Senators and Administration officials seeking funding sources. These meetings led to a commitment from the Administration to find funding for a one-year extension.
- Penned dozens of letters to federal officials advocating for county payments
 - In a letter sent yesterday to Senate leaders Harry Reid (D-NV) and Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Senator

Smith stated, "I cannot allow the continuing resolution to proceed from the Senate if a full, one-year extension of the county payments safety net is not included in it. If necessary, I will employ my right to filibuster the continuing resolution."

Congress must pass a continuing resolution before February 15, 2007, to sustain federally funded programs and agencies through the current fiscal year. Once approved by the U.S. House of Representatives, the Senate will take up consideration of the spending legislation.

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