

County payments extended for one year in emergency supplemental

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Speeches on floor, bipartisan petitions to House leadership pay off

Congressman Greg Walden (R-Hood River) Thursday joined Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Springfield) and other members of the Oregon House delegation to announce that a one-year extension of funding for the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (county payments) is included in the emergency supplemental bill. Congressman Walden and DeFazio organized a letter signed by 92 of their colleagues that was sent to the House leadership urging that a one-year extension of county payments be included in the supplemental.

Congressman Greg Walden (R-Hood River)

“The good news is that we have made great forward progress in forcing the federal government to keep its promise to rural communities. This development shows that a bipartisan, constant team effort the kind Oregon put together can really pay off,” Walden said. “The bad news is that the President has already threatened to veto the emergency supplemental over other issues, so there is still much work left to be done for this to become law.”

“A year of emergency funding would clear the first of two essential hurdles,” Walden said. “Now, our next challenge is to secure a long-term funding solution. We’ve experienced the very sour taste of what life will be like without these essential payments, and we don’t want that to become permanent.”

Congressman Walden and Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Oregon) introduced H.R. 17 on the first day of the new Congress, a bill that would reauthorize the payments for seven years. They have been urging the leadership of the House Natural Resources Committee and Agriculture Committee to promptly move the bill through the committee structure so it can receive a vote by the full House.

Yesterday morning, Congressman Walden finished his 18-speech series on the floor of the House outlining the effects of the terminated payments to counties. Thursday’s speech focused on the impact on Malheur County.

"Today's news comes as a welcome victory in our fight to continue the successful and critical county payments program," DeFazio said. "For months, my sole focus has been finding a way to ensure these payments continue, to keep rural schools open, roads maintained and law enforcement patrolling.

"Our hard work paid off today, thanks to the Democratic leadership's understanding of the critical need for this program. This is an important first step, and I will continue to fight to keep this funding in the bill. We still have hurdles to overcome before this short-term reauthorization is a reality. Once we get this funding passed, we will begin to work on a longer-term solution, which will need to be initiated on the Senate side," said DeFazio.

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