

## Senate passes memorial urging congress to fund rural schools

by Bend\_Weekly\_News\_Sources

Memorial asks Congress to extend crucial funding for schools through 2016

The Oregon Senate this week unanimously passed House Joint Memorial 5, urging Congress to extend mandatory and continuous funding of rural schools in Oregon through 2016.

The federal government has traditionally shared federal timber revenue with counties in recognition that federal ownership denies revenue to counties they would receive if the land was privately owned. Counties also expend resources to help with upkeep of the land.

“This is essential funding that is badly needed by under-funded rural school districts,” said Senator Vicki Walker (D-Eugene), carrier of the bill. “We are simply urging Congress to continue the deal they agreed to in 2000.”

“The funding for these schools is extremely important and I believe Congress should live up to their end of

the deal," said Senator Ben Westlund (D-Tumalo). "Loss of revenue from federally owned timber has a huge impact on the county."

Congress enacted the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 to stabilize payments for schools. As compensation for the land being exempt from taxation and for local services, Congress shares a portion of the revenue from its forestland.

"Schools in my district are constantly fighting for funding and the federal revenues are essential for their survival," said Senator Joanne Verger (D-District 5).

"Counties rely on these funds for a wide range of services," added Senator Betsy Johnson (D-Scappoose).

“We need to make sure these revenues continue without interruption so there are not profound cuts in the vital services counties provide.”

House Joint Memorial 5 will now be sent to the President and Congress for consideration.

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