

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-2600**

April 28, 2015

The Honorable Thomas L. Tidwell  
Chief  
U.S. Forest Service  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250-1111

Dear Chief Tidwell:

As member of the Montana delegation and a strong advocate for the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program, I was pleased to support H.R. 2, the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015, which was signed into law by President Obama on April 16, 2015. This bipartisan bill includes a vital two-year extension of SRS, which will restore funding to Montana counties in desperate financial need. As you are aware, Section 524 of the legislation requires payments for Fiscal Year 2014 be distributed within 45 days of ratification. I write to urge you to distribute funds prior to that deadline as swiftly as possible.

Because Congress did not reauthorize SRS last Congress, rural counties like Beaverhead County received a measly \$17,985.33 for its FY 2014-2015 total. Such a diminutive amount of money was expected to be used collectively to fund schools, transportation, and infrastructure projects. With all schools combined across the state, the total budget for county-wide transportation hit a mere \$197,432.82. I firmly believe rural counties in Montana and across the nation deserve certainty from their government, not political games that devastate the local community.

I am proud to support this issue alongside my Senate colleagues. We remain firmly aware that while H.R. 2 provides a necessary short term fix, Montana needs a long-term solution to ensure our schools, roads, and local governments will no longer be subjected hardship and reduced services due to government inaction.

I sincerely appreciate for your support for SRS. I look forward to continuing to work on additional issues that impact my beloved state.

Sincerely,



RYAN ZINKE  
Member of Congress