

[US Senate Passes Amendment to Support Washington's Rural Schools, Roads](#)

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : March 15, 2012 at 4:21 am

Washington D.C. - U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) hailed the Senate's bipartisan passage of an amendment ([S.Amdt.1825](#)), introduced by Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), was approved as part of the surface transportation bill ([S. 1 Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act](#)). The Senate passed the surface transportation bill on Wednesday,

Today, the Senate came together for America's rural counties, many communities in Washington state rely on this program to keep schools running and roads from falling into disrepair. These are critical investments that support jobs in Washington state. We are now one step closer to preserving this crucial lifeline for Washington's rural communities. - U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Washington state is typically the fourth highest beneficiary of SRS payments in the nation. During fiscal year 2011, [27 counties](#) in Washington state received about \$24 million in SRS program funding to help fund schools, roads, search and rescue, and other important county programs. These are the last payments counties will receive unless the program is reauthorized. SRS program funding helps compensate for revenue lost from declining U.S. Forest Service timber harvests on federal lands near forest communities. PILT compensates counties for federal land that cannot be a source of property taxes. During fiscal year 2011, [38 counties](#) in Washington state received roughly \$13.8 million in PILT payments. The last PILT payments will go out in March 2012. With these funds, rural counties are able to invest in construction projects, roads, education, and forest conservation to make up for their inability to collect taxes on large swaths of public lands.

Cantwell is a cosponsor of the bipartisan County Payments Reauthorization Act of 2011 ([S. 1692](#)), which would extend SRS for five years as well as fully fund PILT for five additional years. The Secure Rural Schools program expired September 30th. Cantwell and Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) [announced](#) last October that this bipartisan deal had been struck. The legislation was introduced one week later.

Cantwell is urging Congress to enact the County Payments Reauthorization Act of 2011 so counties will continue to receive the support. Washington state would receive as much as \$103 million over the next five years under the plan.

Under federal law, national forest land cannot be taxed by counties or other state and local jurisdictions. In place of tax

Senator Cantwell has long been a supporter of the SRS and PILT programs. In 2007, she worked with her Senate colleagues

The 2008 law provided full funding for PILT for the first time and funded the program through fiscal year 2011, which ended

In 2008, Cantwell helped negotiate the final legislation that prevented steeper cuts to the program for Washington state