

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 20, 2015

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairwoman  
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Murkowski and Ranking Member Cantwell:

Later this fall, on September 30, 2015, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) will expire, unless Congress takes action to reauthorize it. As longtime supporters of this successful program, which celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, we are working hard to ensure that this effective program continues to deliver successful conservation projects that protect natural areas, water resources, and historic landmarks and provides outdoor recreation opportunities in countless communities in our states and across the country. Similarly, Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) delivers needed assistance to rural communities that host federal land, but these communities face great uncertainty pending reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act (SRS).

We believe the best solution is to fund and reauthorize the LWCF program and the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program together, as both programs are critical to communities across the country. As such, we strongly support action on both PILT and LWCF, together and simultaneously.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund is in urgent need of a legislative solution that renews the program in its current form and reverses the annual diversion of the program's authorized funding from its intended conservation purposes. The LWCF is one of several important public lands related programs – including PILT – in search of stable, long-term funding solutions. These programs work in tandem to support our local communities, by securing the permanent protection of critical lands and access to outdoor recreation while ensuring that the conservation and management of America's public lands is coordinated with community needs.

Over the past several years, substantial attention has been paid to PILT through such legislative measures as mandatory funding included in MAP-21 and the restoration of appropriations in the FY15 omnibus bill. Similarly, Congress took action to provide mandatory funding to the Secure Rural Schools program in 2014 and again in the recent legislative remedy for the Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR). We urge similar high-level attention to LWCF in the coming months so that the Senate acts on reauthorization in a timely manner.

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We recognize the priority many Members of Congress place on county-payment programs like PILT. Just as many of their communities are dependent on those funds, many communities and businesses rely heavily on the LWCF to invest in the conservation, recreation and historic preservation legacy that is central to economic well-being and quality of life in our states.

We believe the most successful solution is to reauthorize the LWCF and PILT programs at the same time. Given the importance of these programs, we would oppose efforts to extend funding and reauthorization of PILT without taking similar action to reauthorize and fully fund LWCF. We look forward to working with you to reauthorize both of these critical programs.

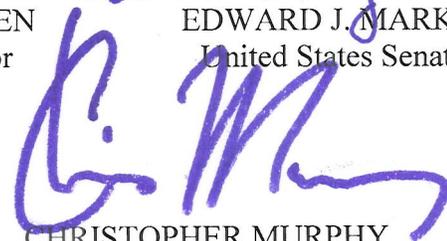
Sincerely,

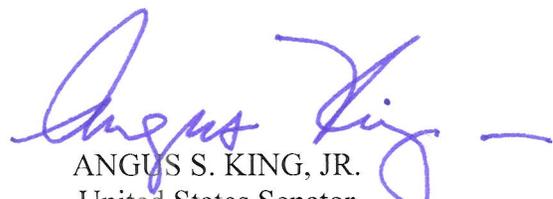
  
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CHRISTOPHER MURPHY  
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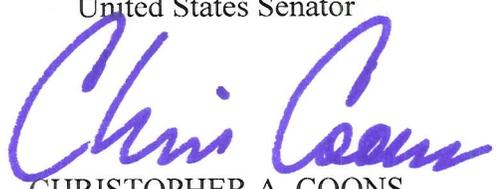
  
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BRIAN SCHATZ  
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KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND  
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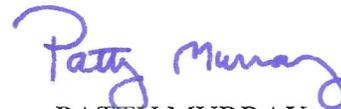
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senator



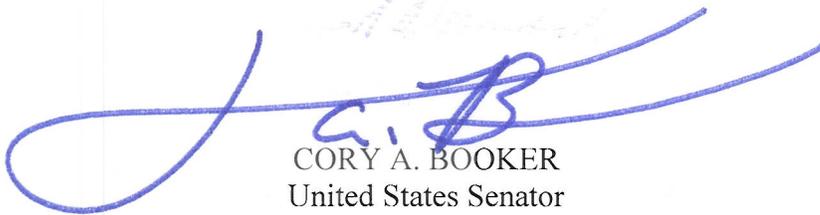
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United States Senator



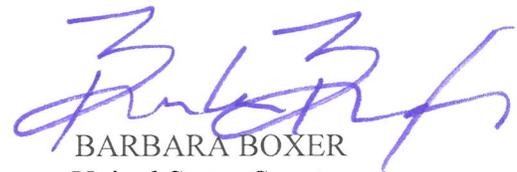
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BARBARA BOXER  
United States Senator



ROBERT MENENDEZ  
United States Senator



DIANNE FEINSTEIN  
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader  
The Honorable Harry Reid, Minority Leader  
The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chairman, Senate Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Vice-Chairwoman, Senate Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chairwoman, Interior Appropriations Subcommittee  
The Honorable Tom Udall, Ranking Member, Interior Appropriations Subcommittee