



News Release from Congressman

RAÚL R. LABRADOR

FIRST DISTRICT, IDAHO

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LABRADOR INTRODUCES SELF-SUFFICIENT COMMUNITY LANDS ACT OF 2012

Legislation is an alternative to the expired Secure Rural Schools program

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho First District Congressman Raúl Labrador today introduced new legislation that if enacted would serve as a model to replace the expired Secure Rural Schools program in certain rural communities. Labrador's legislation would authorize pilot programs, in partnership with states, to encourage local forest management in order to generate revenues required to fund local services. The concept was first brought to Mr. Labrador's attention by a bi-partisan group of county commissioners in Idaho.

Commenting on his proposed legislation, Congressman Labrador said, "Rural communities are suffering in this economy and their greatest assets are being held captive by the federal government. Instead of being given the opportunity to generate jobs and revenue, they must accept millions of taxpayer dollars to make up for lost revenue. My legislation would allow communities to create good-paying jobs and empower counties to generate revenue on their own by locally managing federal forests. The current system provides cash payments to counties, which is fiscally unsustainable, and leaves counties unsure if the money will be there from year-to-year."

The Self-Sufficient Community Lands Act of 2012, if enacted, would establish a program intended to generate economic activity for local governments and counties with National Forest System land through a management-focused approach. The legislation would create 'community forest demonstration areas' to allow the governor of a state to appoint local boards of trustees to assume management of selected federal forest acreage. The governor would then petition the Secretary of Agriculture to cede management of the demonstration acreage to the appointed board.

"This legislation allows pilot projects for states to manage federal forest lands in accordance with state forest statutes such as the Idaho Forestry Act, which will increase jobs and local economic activity and result in healthier, more vibrant forests," continued Labrador.

Hunting and fishing rights, as well as other recreational uses, would be protected. However, no federally designated Wilderness areas could be included in the pilot programs, allowing such areas to remain off limits to multiple use.

The Self-Sufficient Community Lands Act of 2012 would provide a viable successor to the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program, which has exceeded its authorization. SRS was created as a temporary program to help counties make up for lost revenue and fund the services that counties could no longer afford after the mandated decline in timber production during the 1990s.

"It is time the federal government stopped preventing communities from utilizing their own resources to generate tax revenues to pay for schools, roads and other civic programs," concluded Labrador. "Our intent is to allow communities to become more self-sufficient by creating new jobs and a stable funding source to provide necessary services to their residents."

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