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LARRY CRAIG

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CRAIG CALLS FOR REAUTHORIZATION OF CRAIG-WYDEN BILL

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Larry Craig took to the floor of the United States Senate today to call for the reauthorization of the Craig-Wyden bill, more formally known as the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act.

Enacted in 2000, the Act was designed to offer transitional assistance to timber dependent schools and communities who had seen a dramatic decline in Twenty-Five Percent Fund receipts. The Fund was created as a revenue sharing mechanism to offset for forest counties the effects of removing these lands from economic development.

The law expired in 2006 because it was designed to be transitional. Craig clarified, **“What I want to avoid is a situation here where the counties’ ties to the forests are severed and they just count on a check from Uncle Sam. Gifford Pinchot was right to tie the forests to the communities when he created them 100 years ago. We can’t undo that tie.”**

Recognizing the significantly different budget atmosphere today as opposed to 2000, when Congress had a surplus, Craig is proposing reauthorization that shifts the formula to one more acceptable to a wider range of Senators and recognizes the transitional, not permanent, nature of these payments. Craig said, **“I’m working in a bipartisan way with my colleagues from Montana, Oregon, California, New Mexico and, of course, Idaho. We all see the importance of continuing this funding to some extent. I am committed, as is Senator Wyden, to ensuring the success of the bill that bears our names.”**

Craig also expressed frustration that the debate today has focused so much on the payments, **“Folks seem to forget the more important aspect of this legislation, and that is the creation of the Resource Advisory Committees. They are mandated collaborative groups, and the only groups with a checkbook. Participants know how well they work and how much work they have been able to direct on our public lands. We can’t see these fade away – what they do is too important to our Western way of life.”**

Craig expects to have formal legislation ready by March 1st, when a hearing is scheduled before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on this issue.