



UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ SERVING THE CITIZENS OF IDAHO

LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
May 22, 2008

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FULL SENATE APPROVES COUNTY PAYMENTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Senate today approved \$400 million for the county payments program advocated by Idaho Senator Larry Craig to compensate public schools in States and counties with significant federal lands.

The funding is part of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill passed by the Senate which will fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“There are several hundred letters about to go out to rural school teachers throughout Idaho, telling them they’re unemployed because Congress has not extended the county payments program,” Craig said. “The county payments program provides one-third of the budget for some rural school districts in Idaho. This was a ‘must’ vote for equal opportunity for our rural schools.”

Craig, with Oregon Senator Ron Wyden, originally authored the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, to establish a six-year payment formula for counties that receive revenue sharing payments for U.S. Forestry Service and Bureau of Land Management lands. The formula, based on timber receipts, provides a dedicated funding stream for rural schools which cannot collect property taxes – the schools’ primary source of funding – from national parks, U.S. forests and other public lands.

“Our rural schools cannot achieve their full potential if they do not know from year-to-year how much money they will have to pay teachers, provide school supplies, and operate and maintain school buildings and properties,” Craig said. “Rural schools must have the same funding certainties as schools in urban areas.”

Craig said the original Craig/Wyden 2000 Act has become a lifeline for 700 timber-dependent counties in 39 States like Idaho. “Not funding this law is not an option for the country,” he said.

In addition to the county payments funding, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill passed by the Senate included:

- \$450 million for national firefighting efforts which Craig said “is clearly vital to Idaho, coming off last year’s fire season”
- \$243 million for the Environmental Management cleanup program to restore funding shortfalls for the Idaho Cleanup Project
- A provision that will continue eliminating Russian weapons-grade uranium, and also protect the domestic uranium enrichment market for nuclear power.

