

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Labor-HHS-Education and Related
Agencies Subcommittee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Labor-HHS-Education and Related
Agencies Subcommittee on Appropriations
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Moran:

We urge you to recognize the importance of the Federal Impact Aid Program as you set the Appropriation Subcommittee's funding priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2015. We appreciate the program was made a priority in the FY 2014 omnibus appropriations legislation and received funding to nearly restore the program to its pre-sequestration funding levels. We fully recognize the fiscal restraint that will govern the Subcommittee's actions this year, but we request strong and continued funding for all line items of the Impact Aid Program to ensure all federally connected school districts can provide a quality education.

Impact Aid was created in 1950 because Congress recognized the Federal Government needed to accept responsibility – in areas impacted by a federal presence – by partnering with local taxpayers to help meet the local responsibility of financing public education. Impact Aid provides a payment in lieu of taxes to local school districts for lost revenue that is a result of tax-exempt federal property and actions that have increased expenditures due to the enrollment of federally connected children. The program provides direct, flexible funding to over 1,300 school districts. Impact Aid funds a range of programs, including programs to retain highly qualified teachers, adequate technology, facilities renovation, and maintenance of transportation fleets. For many districts, this funding represents the very life blood that allows their school systems to operate.

For districts enrolling military children, the ability to address both the academic and emotional needs of these students must be maintained. Education is a quality-of-life issue for military families, and it is our firm belief that as military personnel defend our country we must not forget or ignore the children they leave behind.

The needs of districts enrolling Indian Land children – of which over 93 percent are Native American – also must not be overlooked. These districts strive to find creative ways to integrate curriculum and best practices to prepare students for success. Often, these school districts are located in rural areas with few taxpayers and where administrators double as bus drivers, teachers, and coaches. These dollars provide a foundational education program for all students; many schools would close their doors without the support of Impact Aid.

The Administration's FY 2015 budget proposal recommends the elimination of funding for Section 8002 (Federal Properties) for the third year in a row, despite continued support from Congress for the program. Federal Properties school districts depend on Impact Aid due to a limited local tax base caused by the presence of certain federal land in their districts, including national parks and grasslands, national laboratories, Army Corps of Engineering projects, and property that encompasses the military academies. In some of these communities, the Federal Government is the largest landowner, which significantly diminishes a school district's revenue base.

We realize the Subcommittee will be working under significant budget constraints, but we urge you to support continued funding for the entire Impact Aid Program. While the restoration of funding in FY 2014 was welcome relief for these school districts, the potential of long-term funding stagnation is of serious concern given the changing needs of the program and the students these districts serve. Impact Aid is not only the Federal Government's obligation, but also a tax relief program for local communities. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Dir John

James McLaughlin

Jimmy Baldi

John Barrasso

Mark F. B...

Bob B...

Shirley Brown

Maria Cantwell

Sally Chavkin

Tom Cohn

Mike Cropp

Di Dulli

Denner Stein

Seb Tucker

Al Franken

Kirsten Gillibrand

Kay R. Hagan

Math

Mazie Hirono

Heidi Heitkamp

John Hickenlooper

John Hickenlooper

Frank

Amy Klobuchar

Col Linn

Paul Manafort

Rabot Mervyn G.

Jeffrey A. Marder

Jack Reed

James P. Kinch

Jay Byrnes

Bob Sanders

Brian Schatz

Chuck Schumer

Arthur Esterson

Jim Tosta

John Thune

Mark Udall

John E. Walsh

Shirley

Ran Wyden
