



Karen Douglass, Superintendent | PO Box 850 | Stevenson, WA 98648 | PH 509.427.5674 | Fax 509.427.4028 | www.scsd.k12.wa.us

April 28, 2017

Senator Murkowski Chair, Senator Cantwell, Ranking Member
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Madame Chair, Madame Ranking Member and Members of the Committee:

Stevenson-Carson School District in Stevenson, WA, a forest county community surrounded by federal land, relies on the critical support the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act provides for its operations.

SRS funding is crucial to be able to provide a well-rounded education for our students. The Stevenson-Carson schools also serve as centers of the community. Without the continuation of the SRS funding, the school district's budget will be reduced by 12 percent. This spending cut is on top a 33% reduction in the budget over the last six years.

For the Stevenson-Carson School District, the next round of cuts began last Wednesday. The night before, our community failed the school district's request for a levy to replace the SRS funding. The community understands that it is the federal government's duty to make up for the loss of timber revenues to replace local tax revenues-- a pledge dating back to 1908 -- not the community's duty. The community, at the ballot box, showed that it is not their responsibility to make up this difference if the federal government is not keeping its commitment through the Secure Rural Schools program and through its original 1908 commitments when local lands were first taken to create the national forests.

The recent trend of reduced federal funding through SRS has resulted in the closing of the middle school, placing middle school students in the high school with older students. The district has also closed our alternative learning school -- for students who didn't find success in the traditional school and needed something different. Those students are now back in the brick and mortar schools without the resources and attention to assist their success. Some sports teams which build student confidence and bind the community together have been eliminated. In the fall, all sports teams will be gone.

Since 2010 administrators, teachers and other staff positions have been reduced. There has been a reduction in art exploration opportunities and the entire family and consumer sciences program completely eliminated. There has been an increased adult: student ratios, along with the elimination of counselor and certified librarians.

Today the teachers don't even have all the basic materials needed to teach -- they bring in materials purchased personally over the weekend out of their own pocket book.

Without SRS dedicated funding for FY16 and FY17, the district is facing even deeper reductions.

As a superintendent, I'm doing work that no one should have to endure. After already reducing the budget by over 33% in the last six years – I am forced to trim again. The fat has been trimmed, yet the lack of SRS funding is causing me to go deeper. ***I am forced to eliminate the culture of the schools:*** sports, music, band, business, clubs and more. For the first time, my Educational Service District is assisting in preparing RIF notices -- reduction in force notices – they have never had to do this work before this week. The loss of SRS will cause school employees, community members, to become unemployed. Next week, I will be scheduling meetings with my middle school and high school ASB clubs to let them know that they won't have many, if any, clubs or extracurricular opportunities beginning in September.

This morning, I e-mailed my athletic director and said, “We need to talk.” I will be laying off our athletic director and all coaches -- all sports eliminated. This year we had more than half of our student body participate in one or more sports. Even though we all know that the extra-curricular activities are crucial in providing a well-rounded education. The district is now forced to cut sports programs which is another negative blow to community identity. Several teachers, several paraeducators, and other staff from across all departments, all residents and members of the local community, will be cut.

The entire business program which is connected to the local business community will be eliminated. Classes like ceramics, beginning band and theatre which contribute to the community may end. These notices are to be delivered on May 15th, based on Washington State laws.

I wish that I could deliver this story to you and the Committee myself and I'd explain that it isn't just my 930 students suffering. My district is just one example of a district suffering from the loss of SRS funding. Similar experiences will be happening in over 4400 school districts across the country including districts in Alaska, Washington, Utah, California, Idaho, Montana, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas, Maine and in 41 states.

Come to my community and walk around the school grounds with me. You can look into the eyes of students and said, "Seriously, without the SRS funding this spring, you will not get to play football in September." "I know you were hoping for a music scholarship. Yes, it will be hard to get without music being offered." To a staff member, you could help me explain, "I'm sorry that you just purchased a house in our school district, we will not have a position for you in the 17-18 school year. Yes, I realize you are one of our superstars, but we simply can't keep you." I'm emotionally frustrated, I'm angry and I cannot believe that you won't keep your promise to my students.

These were promises made by Congress through the Secure Rural School Program and previous commitments to forest communities such as Skamania County. We need to keep those promises.



Karen Douglass
Superintendent