

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3704

June 19, 2008

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Reid and Senator McConnell:

I am writing to express my concern for the removal of a county payments extension from the emergency supplemental appropriations bill. This decision goes against the grain of the Senate's sentiment on the matter and I ask that you do what you can to allow its remedy.

On both the FY07 and FY08 emergency supplemental, the Senate passed measures that included extensions of the county payments safety net – a five-year and a one-year extension, respectively. This issue has unsurpassed bipartisan support in this chamber, despite its repeated placement tentative legislative vehicles.

Rural counties across the country, particularly in Oregon, are poised to make drastic budget cuts that will significantly affect public safety and health, education and transportation. The emergency supplemental appropriations bill is the last moving legislative vehicle that can be used to extend the county payments safety net before these difficult decisions will be forced on hundreds of rural counties.

In an effort to resolve this crisis in a bipartisan manner, I ask that you allow the offering and consideration of amendments to the emergency supplemental appropriations bill. Preclusion of amendments would prevent the Senate from having the opportunity to restore the county payments extension to the bill. This would not reflect the bipartisan support the issue maintains, nor the history of the Senate's support of a short-term county payments extension.

Thank you for your consideration of my request, and I thank the both of you for your work on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Gordon H. Smith
United States Senate