



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

April 6, 2015

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Member, U.S. Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: H.R. 2 – Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 - SUPPORT

Dear Senator Boxer:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am writing to express our support for H.R. 2, which, among others, would provide a two-year extension of the Secure Rural Schools & Community Self Determination Act (SRS).

RCRC is an association of thirty-four rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties. A large number of our member counties have vast acres of federal forest land within their county and timber-related activities have been an integral part of these communities for decades.

In 2000, Congress enacted SRS to provide funding for rural counties and school districts to replace revenue from dwindling forest receipts due to a national decline in timber harvesting. In its initial years, SRS provided nearly \$70 million annually to California's forest counties, with half of the funding allocated to school districts, and half of the funding allocated to counties for county roads.

Since 2007, there have been several SRS reauthorization efforts enacted by Congress, with the last being in 2013, when a one-year extension of SRS was included in the Helium Stewardship Act. Unfortunately, SRS was not reauthorized in the closing days of the 113th Congress. The two-year extension of SRS within the "Doc Fix" legislation (H.R. 2) - which recently secured passage in the House of Representatives - is vital to the economic welfare of forested counties in California. Without an extension, a healthy road network and a quality education in forested counties will be seriously compromised.

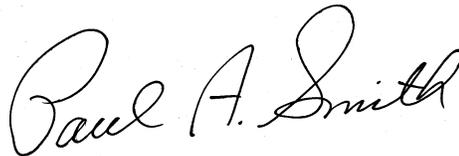
1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, CA 95814 | www.rcrcnet.org | 916.447.4806 | FAX: 916.448.3154

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
H.R. 2
April 6, 2015
Page 2

On a related note, H.R. 2 also extends the current payment rate scheme for ambulance services in rural areas when transporting Medicare recipients. The need for these increases is a result of higher per-trip costs due to longer travel distances and fewer transports of patients than their urban counterparts. The current authorization of these increased payments expired on March 31, 2015. If an extension is not provided by Congress, service providers will be reimbursed well-below the actual cost to deliver these services. Ambulance services are a critical part of a rural local health care system. In many rural and remote areas, emergency response systems are often the sole provider of emergency services. Thus it is vital to maintain these increased payments to ensure a viable ambulatory/health care network. We hope that Congress will eventually make these increases permanent with passage of the Medicare Ambulance Access, Fraud Prevention and Reform Act (H.R. 745, S. 377).

We appreciate your consideration of our views and urge the Senate to move expeditiously to pass H.R. 2. It is an important bill for many in California's rural communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul A. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

PAUL A. SMITH
Senior Legislative Advocate



RURAL COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES
OF CALIFORNIA

April 6, 2015

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Member, U.S. Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: H.R. 2 – Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 - SUPPORT

Dear Senator Feinstein:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am writing to express our support for H.R. 2, which, among others, would provide a two-year extension of the Secure Rural Schools & Community Self Determination Act (SRS).

RCRC is an association of thirty-four rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from those member counties. A large number of our member counties have vast acres of federal forest land within their county and timber-related activities have been an integral part of these communities for decades.

In 2000, Congress enacted SRS to provide funding for rural counties and school districts to replace revenue from dwindling forest receipts due to a national decline in timber harvesting. In its initial years, SRS provided nearly \$70 million annually to California's forest counties, with half of the funding allocated to school districts, and half of the funding allocated to counties for county roads.

Since 2007, there have been several SRS reauthorization efforts enacted by Congress, with the last being in 2013, when a one-year extension of SRS was included in the Helium Stewardship Act. Unfortunately, SRS was not reauthorized in the closing days of the 113th Congress. The two-year extension of SRS within the "Doc Fix" legislation (H.R. 2) - which recently secured passage in the House of Representatives - is vital to the economic welfare of forested counties in California. Without an extension, a healthy road network and a quality education in forested counties will be seriously compromised.

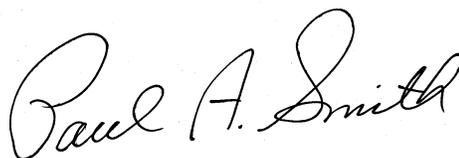
1215 K Street, Suite 1650, Sacramento, CA 95814 | www.rcrcnet.org | 916.447.4806 | FAX: 916.448.3154

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
H.R. 2
April 6, 2015
Page 2

On a related note, H.R. 2 also extends the current payment rate scheme for ambulance services in rural areas when transporting Medicare recipients. The need for these increases is a result of higher per-trip costs due to longer travel distances and fewer transports of patients than their urban counterparts. The current authorization of these increased payments expired on March 31, 2015. If an extension is not provided by Congress, service providers will be reimbursed well-below the actual cost to deliver these services. Ambulance services are a critical part of a rural local health care system. In many rural and remote areas, emergency response systems are often the sole provider of emergency services. Thus it is vital to maintain these increased payments to ensure a viable ambulatory/health care network. We hope that Congress will eventually make these increases permanent with passage of the Medicare Ambulance Access, Fraud Prevention and Reform Act (H.R. 745, S. 377).

We appreciate your consideration of our views and urge the Senate to move expeditiously to pass H.R. 2. It is an important bill for many in California's rural communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul A. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

PAUL A. SMITH
Senior Legislative Advocate