

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 24, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to bring your attention to a critical issue in rural areas nationwide, the inability to receive Title II funds under the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act (SRS). Projects made possible by Title II funds have a significant impact on rural communities. These projects provide jobs and improvements on non-taxable federal land that otherwise provides no revenue to counties.

It is important to highlight, therefore, a significant number of vacancies on Resource Advisory Committees (RAC) pursuant to Section 205 of SRS. To begin work on new Title II projects, each RAC must have a quorum. Sixty percent of RACs nationwide currently lack a quorum and, consequently, the ability to distribute funds for projects. This equates to approximately \$55 million for Title II projects that is allocated for, but not being invested in, rural communities.

We understand there are over twenty nomination packages at some point in the review process, some of which have reached your desk for final approval. Additionally, given the Federal Register notice calling for RAC nominations (84 FR 30084), many more could be forthcoming.

We urge you use all possible avenues to accelerate the disbursement of these funds. That includes, namely, processing and approving these nominations as soon as possible and ensuring future nominations are approved in an expeditious manner. Furthermore, a provision was included in the 2018 Farm Bill that allows composition waivers to lower the threshold needed for a quorum from fifteen members to nine. We encourage these composition waivers be utilized where possible and request to be informed if these waivers are being used, and if so, the frequency and process length of waiver approval.

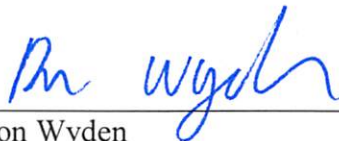
Eligible RACs have until September 30, 2020 to initiate projects and funds must be obligated no later than September 30, 2021. Time is running out for this crucial investment in rural communities. It is essential that quorums be restored as soon as possible.

We appreciate your consideration of this important matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



James E. Risch
U.S. Senator



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Mike Crapo
U.S. Senator



Cory Gardner
U.S. Senator



Lindsey O. Graham
U.S. Senator



Martha McSally
U.S. Senator



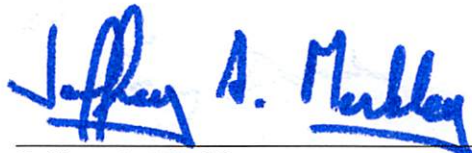
Tim Scott
U.S. Senator



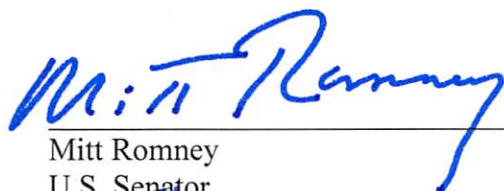
Steve Daines
U.S. Senator



Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senator



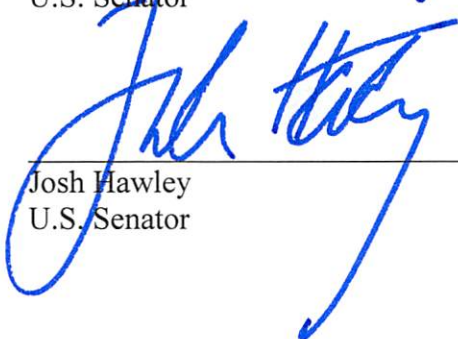
Jeffrey A. Merkley
U.S. Senator



Mitt Romney
U.S. Senator



Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator



Josh Hawley
U.S. Senator



Mike Lee
U.S. Senator