

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

April 8, 2011

8:36 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Cathy Engstrom Munoz, Chair
Representative Neal Foster, Vice Chair
Representative Alan Austerman
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Berta Gardner

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Alan Dick
Representative Sharon Cissna

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 24

Urging the United States Congress to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act of 2000.

- MOVED HJR 24 OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HJR 24

SHORT TITLE: SUPPORT FED. FOREST LAND REVENUE SHARING

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) P.WILSON

03/25/11	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
03/25/11	(H)	CRA
04/08/11	(H)	CRA AT 8:30 AM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY WILSON
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented HJR 24.

SHELIA FINKENBINDER, Staff
Representative Peggy Wilson
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: During hearing on HJR 24, answered questions.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:36:38 AM](#)

CHAIR CATHY ENGSTROM MUNOZ called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:36 a.m. Representatives Foster, Austerman, Saddler, and Munoz were present at the call to order. Representative Gardner arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HJR 24-SUPPORT FED. FOREST LAND REVENUE SHARING

[8:36:47 AM](#)

CHAIR MUNOZ announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 24, Urging the United States Congress to reauthorize the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act of 2000.

[8:36:49 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PEGGY WILSON, Alaska State Legislature, speaking as the sponsor of HJR 24, stated the following:

HJR 24 urges the President of the United States and Congress to honor an agreement made in 1908. That agreement was to support roads and schools in communities that are surrounded by national forests. Historically, the federal government shared 25 percent of the annual income earned from the activities within those national forests with states for distribution to boroughs located within the national forest. The federal government has steadily decreased payment over the years through the Secure Rural Schools [and Community Self-Determination Act] (SRSCA). While those communities still have the same needs as they did in 1908, the funding has continually decreased. Forest communities remain surrounded by government land, lacking the ability to utilize the land to create revenue locally. Thirty-two communities and the State of Alaska receive support through SRSCA. A total of \$16 million was given to the State of Alaska and those communities last year. Forty-two states and

Puerto Rico also receive payments from SRSCA. Reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act is supported by local schools, by the National Forest and School Coalition, by the Western Governors Association, and at least 29 senators and 69 representatives, including Alaska's delegation. Alaska's schools need continuing support from the federal government because of the location of all of our communities that receive it are still with the national forest. Reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act is in the president's 2012 budget, but Alaska needs to send a strong message to the president that he needs to continue this program at a level that will sustain our schools.

[8:39:46 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FOSTER inquired as to whether there is any opposition to HJR 24.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON responded that she didn't know of any opposition to HJR 24.

[8:40:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER related his understanding that [the funds] aren't contingent upon production from national forests.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON explained that years ago the timber industry [flourished] in Southeast Alaska, but over the years that has been cut off. Currently, the funds [from SRSCSA] have been authorized in one-year increments, which makes schools and the communities nervous.

[8:40:53 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if this resolution requests a long-term authorization, say for five years.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON specified that the reauthorization in the president's budget is for just one year. However, the hope is to [reauthorize the funds] for five years.

[8:41:13 AM](#)

CHAIR MUNOZ asked if \$16 million represents 25 percent of the economic activity in the national forests in Southeast Alaska.

[8:41:25 AM](#)

SHELIA FINKENBINDER, Staff, Representative Peggy Wilson, Alaska State Legislature, explained that the original SRSCA enacted in 1908 required 25 percent annual income based on the revenues from the national forest. When timbering declined, the receipts from the national forests were inconsistent and declined sharply. The federal government needed to implement something more secure and consistent that would continue to support these communities since the logging was no longer occurring. This resolution requests a long-term sustainable act. Although the sponsor understands that's not going to happen as the president's budget includes a [one] year program. The payments from the program are declining, which isn't going to work for communities in the future. These communities are still surrounded by national forests that can't be developed and need a consistent revenue stream.

[8:42:50 AM](#)

CHAIR MUNOZ asked if [SRSCA] is similar to the payment in lieu of taxes program.

MS. FINKENBINDER answered that it's a piece of the program.

[8:43:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if there are any conditions with regard to how these funds are used.

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON informed the committee that her school district is fortunate because the community places almost all the funds into the school. However, it's left to each community council to decide how to use the funds.

[8:44:06 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GARDNER stated that she is very comfortable with HJR 24.

[8:44:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE FOSTER moved to report HJR 24 out of committee with individual recommendations [and the accompanying fiscal notes]. There being no objection, it was so ordered.

8:44:44 AM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:44 a.m.