



July 16, 2020

The Honorable Paul Gosar, D.D.S.
United States House of Representatives
2057 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Gosar,

On behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the 3,069 counties, boroughs and parishes we represent, we write in strong support of your proposed amendment to H.R. 1957, *the Great American Outdoors Act*, which would **fully and permanently fund the Payments In-Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program and make critical changes to PILT to better support counties under 5,000 in population**. Counties appreciate your efforts to ensure stable payments to compensate local governments with large tracts of federal land within their jurisdictions.

Over 1,900 counties and other local governments in 49 states rely on PILT to make up for lost property tax revenue from untaxable federal public lands. In FY 2020, Congress fully funded PILT, which counties greatly appreciated. However, until Congress mandates long-term, full funding for PILT, counties will have difficulty providing public services such as emergency management, law enforcement, education, healthcare, and road maintenance to residents and federal lands visitors. With the U.S. House soon set to consider H.R. 1957, which would make land acquisition funding under LWCF mandatory, Congress should meet its obligation to local governments by also making PILT a mandatory, fully funded program to ensure stability for impacted counties. Your amendment achieves this goal.

Additionally, counties under 5,000 in population are not on an equal footing with larger counties due to monetary and population caps under the PILT formula. Both the U.S. House and Senate have companion bills, *Small County PILT Parity Act*, which would fix the PILT formula to benefit smaller population counties without impacting the PILT payment for any counties above 5,000 in population. The *Small County PILT Parity Act* was reported favorably in December by the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Counties support your amendment to H.R. 1957 because it also makes this important change for small, rural counties.

County governments appreciate your efforts to support public lands counties. Local governments are required to provide essential services to residents and visitors alike, and PILT helps us to meet this governing mission. **We therefore urge Congress to adopt your amendment to H.R. 1957 to establish mandatory PILT funding and create new population caps to level the playing field for rural counties.**

Sincerely,

Matthew D. Chase
Executive Director and CEO
National Association of Counties