

Senate Impact Aid Letter

Help Federally Impacted Schools: Support Funding for Impact Aid

Dear Colleague,

We invite you to sign the following letter encouraging the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education to support strong funding for Impact Aid. The deadline to sign on is Friday, March 11.

Impact Aid was created in 1950 because Congress recognized the Federal Government needed to accept responsibility – in areas impacted by a federal presence – by partnering with local taxpayers to help meet the local responsibility of financing public education. Impact Aid provides direct, flexible funding to over 1,200 school districts, and supports school needs including facilities renovation, programs to retain highly qualified teachers, and transportation for students. Impact Aid is critical for schools with high numbers of children from military families or children who reside on Indian lands, and schools where federal activity has reduced the available tax base. We urge you to support this important bipartisan effort to support our schools and provide tax relief for local communities. The letter supports funding for all line items of Impact Aid, including Federal Properties which was zeroed out in the President's budget.

If you have further questions or would like to sign on, please contact Jennifer Bowman with Senator Inhofe (jennifer_bowman@inhofe.senate.gov) or Veronica Duron with Senate Schumer (veronica_duron@schumer.senate.gov) by Friday, March 11.

Sincerely,

James Inhofe
United States Senator

Charles Schumer
United States Senator

March XX, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Subcommittee on L-HHS-ED
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on L-HHS-ED
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Blunt and Ranking Member Murray:

We urge you to recognize the importance of the Federal Impact Aid Program as you set the Appropriation Subcommittee's funding priorities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017. Thank you for prioritizing the program in the FY 2016 appropriations bill. We fully recognize the fiscal restraint that will govern the Subcommittee's actions this year, but we request strong and continued funding for all line items of the Impact Aid Program, including Basic Support and Federal Properties, to ensure all federally connected school districts can provide a quality education.

Impact Aid was created in 1950 because Congress recognized the Federal Government needed to accept responsibility – in areas impacted by a federal presence – by partnering with local taxpayers to help meet the local responsibility of financing public education. Impact Aid provides a payment to local school districts for lost revenue that is a result of tax-exempt federal property and actions that have increased expenditures due to the enrollment of federally connected children. The program provides direct, flexible funding to over 1,200 school districts. Impact Aid funds a range of programs, including programs to retain highly qualified teachers, adequate technology, facilities renovation, and maintenance of transportation fleets. For many districts, this funding represents the very lifeblood that allows their school systems to operate.

For districts enrolling military children, the ability to address both the academic and emotional needs of these students must be maintained. Education is a quality-of-life issue for military families, and it is our firm belief that as military personnel defend our country we must not forget or ignore the children they leave behind.

The needs of districts enrolling Indian Land children – of which over 93 percent are Native American – also must not be overlooked. These districts strive to find creative ways to integrate curriculum and best practices to prepare students for success. Often, these school districts are located in rural areas with few taxpayers and where administrators double as bus drivers, teachers, and coaches. These dollars provide a foundational education program for all students; many schools would close their doors without the support of Impact Aid.

The Administration's FY 2017 budget proposal level-funds Impact Aid Basic Support. Congress should prioritize this funding stream and ensure appropriate funding is maintained.

The Administration's FY 2017 budget proposal recommends the elimination of funding for Federal Properties for the fifth year in a row, despite continued support from Congress for the program. Federal Properties school districts depend on Impact Aid due to a limited local tax base

caused by the presence of certain federal land in their districts, including national parks and grasslands, national laboratories, Army Corps of Engineering projects, and property that encompasses the military academies. In some of these communities, the Federal Government is the largest landowner, which significantly diminishes a school district's revenue base. Congress should prioritize this funding stream to reflect the addition of eligible Federal Properties school districts.

We realize the Subcommittee will be working under significant budget constraints, but we urge you to support continued funding for the entire Impact Aid Program. While the funding increase for FY 2016 was welcome relief for these school districts, the potential of long-term funding stagnation is of serious concern given the changing needs of the program and the students these districts serve. Impact Aid is not only the Federal Government's obligation, but also a tax relief program for local communities. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

James Inhofe
United States Senator

Charles Schumer
United States Senator