

By: Representative Reynolds

To: Rules

## HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 69

1 A RESOLUTION URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO FULLY FUND  
2 THE SECURE RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY SELF-DETERMINATION  
3 REAUTHORIZATION ACT.

4 WHEREAS, in 1908, in response to the mounting opposition to  
5 the creation of the National Forest System in the West, Congress  
6 passed a bill which created a revenue sharing mechanism to offset  
7 the effects of removing these lands from economic development,  
8 specifying that 25% of all revenues generated from the  
9 multiple-use management of the National Forests would be shared  
10 with the counties to support public roads and public schools; and

11 WHEREAS, from 1908 until 1986, the revenue sharing mechanism  
12 worked extremely well, before a decline in multiple-use management  
13 of National Forests occurred, constituting an 85% decrease among  
14 counties in actual revenues generated; and

15 WHEREAS, this revenue crisis led county and school officials  
16 to form the National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition in  
17 1998, in partnership with the National Association of Counties and  
18 other organizations, which in 2000 received congressional support  
19 with the passage of the Secure Rural Schools and Community  
20 Self-Determination Act (P.L. 106-393), addressing the needs of  
21 forest counties and focusing on the creation of a new cooperative  
22 partnership between citizens in forest counties and our federal  
23 land management agencies; and

24 WHEREAS, counties in Mississippi received a total of  
25 \$8,457,066.00 last year under the act, \$7,266,845.00 of which was  
26 expended under Title I for roads and schools, while \$251,893.00

27 was expended on Title II projects and \$938,328.00 was used for  
28 Title III projects; and

29 WHEREAS, in 2007, actual U.S. Forest Service receipts for the  
30 State of Mississippi are estimated to be only \$2,264,004.00, a  
31 drastic reduction in funding for counties already reeling from the  
32 effects of the 2005 hurricane season, promising a devastating  
33 effect on the state's ability to provide road and bridge  
34 maintenance and new road construction; and

35 WHEREAS, the Secure Rural Schools and Community  
36 Self-Determination Act has:

37 Restored program funds for students in rural schools and  
38 prevented the closure of numerous insolated rural schools.

39 Allowed rural county road districts and county road  
40 departments to address the severe maintenance backlog resulting  
41 from decimated road budgets from 1986 to 1999.

42 Over 70 Resources Advisory Committees (RACs) have been formed  
43 under Title II, which have studied and approved over 2,500  
44 projects on federal forestlands and adjacent public and private  
45 lands using funds that are approved by Forest County Boards of  
46 Commissioners, including projects related to: fuel reduction,  
47 habitat improvement, watershed restoration, road maintenance and  
48 rehabilitation, reforestation, campground and trail improvement  
49 and noxious weed eradication.

50 Title III projects on forest county lands are also authorized  
51 by the act and many counties have effectively invested in projects  
52 and programs such as: search and rescue, conservation easements,  
53 community wildfire protection planning and forest-related  
54 educational programs; and

55 WHEREAS, the loss of these critical funds could mean the end  
56 of meaningful and important subsidies and benefits that have  
57 helped sustain rural community programs throughout Mississippi:

58 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
59 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, That we do hereby

60 urge the United States Congress to fund a one-year extension of  
61 the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act as  
62 an emergency appropriation, either finding appropriate offsets or  
63 protecting it from a budget point of order, and to develop a  
64 long-term solution before the end of fiscal year 2007.

65 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be  
66 furnished to the President of the United States Senate, the  
67 Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the members  
68 of the Mississippi congressional delegation and to the members of  
69 the Capitol Press Corps.