

Chairman Grijalva, Ranking member Bishop and members of the Committee, good Morning. My name is Shirlene E. Groseclose. I reside in Beautiful Pocahontas County, West Virginia, 62% of which is federally or state- owned land. I personally do not mind since this is what we wanted to live in, a peaceful rural setting where we can breathe fresh air and climb the rolling hills of the farm lands, fish the wooded creeks and hike the pristine trails. This is where we wish to raise our children someday. I live on a farm with my husband of ten years, our pets and our beef cattle. I've been asked here today to give you insight into my life as a teacher in my county, a county that depends of the forestry money to employ about 10 teaching positions and which would suffer immensely without that support. I can't say I am an expert on the matter. I am just a teacher who knows what half a million dollars means to me, my colleagues and our students. It means ten of us have a job and that a little over 1300 students can enjoy a more consistent and effective education. One teacher position salary is equivalent to two service personnel positions. They are also why I am here today. Our school system is the second largest employer in our county after Snowshoe Mountain Ski Resort.

I teach Spanish exploratory to 5th and 6th grade and Spanish for a high school credit to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Marlinton Middle School and Green Bank Elementary Middle School. I travel 45 minutes between schools every day. I hold one of the most hectic schedules of any teacher in the county. I once taught up to ten different classes in a term and have been known to fill in and teach careers, keyboarding and anything else that is needed, thus sacrificing the length of time I teach my own classes. When I began my position, at one school I taught 8<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish for ½ an hour, at the students lunch time, which they didn't care for, and taught all these other fillers for 1 ½ hour periods. I explained to my principal how detrimental this schedule was to my students. It is already a great challenge to convince the students of why they need a foreign language and to change their stereotyping inclinations predominant in the county. After much hassle, he did everything within his power to ensure I taught what I should be teaching, Spanish. Why is this important, because it demonstrates how stretched out we already are and how SRS funding allows for better scheduling. Having enough staff to cover other needs, I can enjoy a better schedule that allows for me to teach only Spanish for at least 45 minutes every day in both schools.

The high school Spanish teacher depends on me to send at least 30 students to the high school with one credit under their belt. This lowers the demand for Spanish 1 at the high school and allows her to focus more on levels 2 and up. She is still greatly overloaded in class size as she is the only foreign language teacher at the high school. French was cut from our program a few years back to lack of funds. Students are also being offered a minimum of Advanced Placement courses. These courses allow students to graduate with a college credit. We, of course, need AP Spanish but thank goodness for SRS so we are able to teach Spanish at all. We do not want our students at a disadvantage when competing for college and one student I personally know was asked by an elite college she desired to enter why she only taken two credits in foreign language. She answered that that is what she was able to take since the French program had been eliminated from her school. Without Spanish our students would be in a real hurt when applying for college.

The Technology Integration Specialist (TIS) system at Green Bank Elementary school is a vital part of the education program and without proper funding 280 students would be without it. Because of the close

proximity of the National Radio and Astronomy Observatory to Green Bank Elementary the school cannot have wireless and other multimedia technologies. The hands-on TIS system allows students to have search aids in the computer labs and without funding the students would be at a large disadvantage.

The SRS dollars provided to Green Bank Elementary was extremely important in keeping many programs and staff that are vital to our children's education. While many schools are having to cut their music programs the dollars provided by Secure Rural Schools saved this program and the teacher who helps children in all grade levels. Small class sizes is another important aspect of providing a good education and the SRS dollars allowed us to keep two first, second and third grade teachers thus allowing our teachers to be more attentive to the students needs.

When people move to our town, they do so because they love the environment we offer and they believe they can raise their children here. They should also believe that we can offer them a complete education where their children can successfully compete in the world even if we are a low income county. It doesn't take making a lot of money to live here but it still takes a lot of funds to offer a complete education comparable to the rest of our nation. Our nation can overcome our challenges if we start with the children and educating them for the competitive world our nation is a part. The Secure Rural Schools dollars ensures part of this demand is met.

20% of our revenue for our schools comes from federal funding. 312,000 acres in Pocahontas County are Federal land. This means they provide no property tax revenue and the harvest has decreased substantially. It is likely this scenario will never change. Our county also ranks 51 out of 55 in total expenditures and salaries and benefits for teachers are near the bottom compared to other counties in WV. The Secure Rural Schools dollars is vital and part of great contract first established in 1908 that helps our county and educational system give more to its people.

Secure Rural schools dollars supports my teaching about 75 students level 1 Spanish and approximately 130 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade exploratory Spanish () throughout the school year. Teaching exploratory better prepares the students for success in Spanish 1 as they are more confident in their abilities and more willing to learn the younger they are reached.

SRS funding also allows the schools to offer a few educational community based learning experiences to our students. The Board of Education can provide transportation for these events. Events, such as the archeology dig in Science class, take the students to a real dig site in which they enjoy a hands-on experience. I am also excited that the BOE can provide transportation to the airport and back so I can take my students on an immersion trip to Costa Rica. This trip is very meaningful to the students and helps integrate global awareness into our curriculum.

Nine other teaching positions reach approximately 1000 students in the county across all disciplines. Most teachers at middle school level teach 7 classes daily in which there are 20-30 students on average. Elementary teachers have classes of 20 to 28 students and high school teachers on block schedule teach 30 plus students per 3 blocks. Our music teacher at Marlinton Middle school is stretched between two schools as well but he was able to begin a choir class which boasts about 50 members and has been an

absolute hit with the students, staff and parents. Ten positions in our county also allows for ten families who live, own land or housing, work and play here and thus bring their income into our county.

Personnel are coveted members of our staff. Green Bank School is able to have 4 aids positions, one of which works directly with a mentally handicapped student giving him the hands-on help he needs. Another wonderful aid divides her time in the elementary wing. She sees and personally intervenes or supplements the instruction of at least 30 students daily while still helping the overall flow of the classes. She helps teachers create flashcards or resources they would normally not have time to create. She is a great help since Green Bank lost their half time Special Education teacher and struggles to meet all the Individualized Education Plans of some students. While this may sound a little grim, I can assure you that Secure Rural School's dollars are at the heart of keeping our education to students consistent.

My husband was raised on this land. He loves it and I love it here. We have created a home. We own land and cattle and we farm. So, yes, Secure Rural Schools funding is very important to me personally but more importantly, it really matters to the great young minds that call Pocahontas County home.