



The Mountain Pact

**Nearly 70 Western Local Elected Officials Urge
Congress:**

***Add a Gateway Community Dividend to
Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Program***



Today [nearly 70 county commissioners, mayors, and council members](#) from public land gateway communities in 11 western states sent a [letter](#) to their congressional offices asking them to add a Gateway Community Dividend to the [Payments in Lieu of Taxes](#) (PILT) program.

In 1976 Congress created the PILT program, which requires the federal government to make annual payments to local governments to compensate them for property taxes not collected on lands owned by the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and some military installations within their jurisdictions.

Congress generally funds PILT for only one year at a time, which makes budget planning difficult for counties because they don't know how much the payments will be from year to year.



October 21, 2020

Dear U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives,

Our mountain communities have been hit hard by the economic downturn brought on by COVID-19. While some federal funding has been made available to state and local governments as part of the large spending package Congress passed earlier in the spring, we continue to wrestle with how we're going to build our county budgets so we can fund essential services for our constituents.

In 1976 Congress created the [Payments in Lieu of Taxes \(PILT\)](#) program, which requires the federal government to make annual payments to local governments to compensate them for property taxes not collected on lands owned by the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service and some military installations within their jurisdictions. These payments are a critical revenue source for local government budgets, funding vital services such as firefighting and police protection, public school and road construction, and search-and-rescue operations.

Our protected public lands are tremendous assets to our communities and support our growing outdoor recreation economies. However, increased visitation to our public lands has strained the infrastructure that accommodates these visitors. To help gateway communities like ours deal with additional costs, Congress should expand the PILT Program to include a 'Gateway Community Dividend,' which would add a 50 percent premium for every acre of permanently protected federal public lands to the current PILT formula. This dividend would be paid to counties with federally protected public lands within their jurisdiction, particularly lands that restrict extractive activity, such as wild & scenic rivers, wilderness areas, and national parks.

[\(Read The Full Letter Here\)](#)

In 2019, counties across the country received more than [\\$514 million in PILT payments](#). Based on estimates, a new Gateway Community Dividend would provide an [additional \\$207 million annually to counties](#) - funds that will help communities maintain critical infrastructure and provide essential services for both residents and visitors.

The letter states: "To help gateway communities deal with additional costs, Congress should expand the PILT Program to include a 'Gateway Community Dividend,' which would add a 50 percent premium for every acre of permanently protected federal public lands to the current PILT formula. This dividend would be paid to counties with federally protected public lands within their jurisdiction, particularly lands that restrict extractive activity, such as wild & scenic rivers, wilderness areas, and national parks."

Thank you to all letter signers!

Founded in 2014, [The Mountain Pact](#) mobilizes local elected officials in over 75 Western mountain communities with outdoor recreation based economies to speak with a collective voice on federal climate, public lands, and outdoor recreation policy.

SUPPORT

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