

The Mountain Pact logo features a stylized mountain peak icon to the left of the text. The word "The" is in a smaller font above "Mountain", and "Pact" is in a larger font to the right of "Mountain".

# The Mountain Pact

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.

The Gateway Community Dividend would also incentivize the protection of public lands in counties across the West. We know the tremendous benefits protected public lands have for our community and especially our wildlife. Recent studies have shown that up to [1 million species of wildlife are at risk of extinction](#) due to habitat loss, climate change, and other factors. One of the most important ways we can prevent the loss of more species is to protect their habitat, and providing local communities an added incentive would increase support for those protections.

Congress generally funds PILT for only one year at a time, which makes budget planning difficult for counties because we don't know how much our payments will be from year to year. Fully funding the PILT program and adding a Gateway Community Dividend would mean more consistent revenues to counties, and support for more locally driven protections of public lands and waters. 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 us maintain critical infrastructure and provide essential services for both our residents and visitors. We urge Congress to take a close look at incorporating this idea into the PILT program.

Sincerely,

County Supervisor Matt Ryan, Coconino County, Arizona  
Chairwoman Coconino County Board of Supervisors Liz Archuleta, Coconino County, Arizona  
Vice Mayor Adam Shimoni, City of Flagstaff, Arizona  
County Supervisor Jeff Griffiths, Inyo County, California  
County Supervisor Jennifer Kreitz, Mono County, California  
Council Member Devin Middle Brook, City of South Lake Tahoe, California  
Mayor David Polivy, Town of Truckee, California  
Mayor Dean Brookie, City of Durango, Colorado  
County Commissioner, Chair Kathy Chandler-Henry, Eagle County, Colorado  
County Commissioner Matt Scherr, Eagle County, Colorado  
County Commissioner Jeanne McQueeney, Eagle County, Colorado  
Council Member Melissa Sherburne, Town of Frisco, Colorado  
County Commissioner Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County, Colorado  
Council Member Marcia Martin, City of Longmont, Colorado  
Council Member Martinique Prohaska, Town of Mountain Village, Colorado  
Council Member Natalie Binder, Town of Mountain Village, Colorado  
Mayor John Clark, Town of Ridgway, Colorado  
County Commissioner Beth Melton, Routt County, Colorado  
County Commissioner Doug Monger, Routt County, Colorado  
County Commissioner Tim Corrigan, Routt County, Colorado  
County Commissioner Lance Waring, San Miguel County, Colorado  
County Commissioner Hilary Cooper, San Miguel County, Colorado  
Council Member Heather Sloop, City of Steamboat Springs, Colorado  
Council Member Sonja Macys, City of Steamboat Springs, Colorado  
County Commissioner Karn Stiegelmeier, Summit County, Colorado  
County Commissioner Elisabeth Lawrence, Summit County, Colorado  
Mayor Pro Tem Todd Brown, Town of Telluride, Colorado  
County Commissioner Jacob Greenberg, Blaine County, Idaho  
County Commissioner Angenie McCleary, Blaine County, Idaho  
County Commissioner Dick Fosbury, Blaine County, Idaho  
County Commission Chair Alan Ward, Boise County, Idaho  
County Commissioner Roger Jackson, Boise County, Idaho  
County Commissioner Ryan Stirm, Boise County, Idaho  
Mayor Hyrum Johnson, City of Driggs, Idaho  
Mayor Shelby Rognstad, City of Sandpoint, Idaho  
County Commissioner, Chair, Cindy Riegel, Teton County, Idaho  
City Commissioner Andres Haladay, Helena City Commission, Montana  
County Commissioner Juanita Vero, Missoula County, Montana  
Mayor William Larson, Town of Red Lodge, Montana  
Vice Mayor Devon Reese, City of Reno, Nevada  
County Commissioner Lynn Ellins, Dona Ana County, New Mexico  
Council Member Gabriel Vasquez, City of Las Cruces, New Mexico  
Mayor Pro Tem Emeritus Gill M Sorg, City of Las Cruces, New Mexico  
Council Member Yvonne Flores, City of Las Cruces, New Mexico  
Mayor Linda Calhoun, Town of Red River, New Mexico  
Council Member Renee Villarreal, City of Santa Fe, New Mexico  
County Commissioner Anna Hansen, Santa Fe County, New Mexico  
Council Member Darien Fernandez, Town of Taos, New Mexico  
Council Member Nathaniel Evans, Town of Taos, New Mexico  
Council Member Gena Goodman-Campbell, City of Bend, Oregon

Mayor Kate McBride, City of Hood River, Oregon  
Council Member Sheridan Davis, Town of Alta, Utah  
Council Member Margaret Bourke, Town of Alta, Utah  
County Commission Chair Mary McGann, Grand County, Utah  
County Commission Vice Chair Jaylyn Hawks, Grand County, Utah  
County Commission Member Gabriel Woytek, Grand County, Utah  
County Commission Member Greg Halliday, Grand County, Utah  
County Commission Member Curtis Wells, Grand County, Utah  
County Commission Member Evan Clapper, Grand County, Utah  
Mayor Emily Niehaus, City of Moab, Utah  
Council Member Rani Derasary, City of Moab, Utah  
Mayor Andy Beerman, Park City, Utah  
County Council Member Aimee Winder Newton, Salt Lake County, Utah  
County Council Vice Chair Glenn Wright, Summit County, Utah  
Council Member Ben Nelson, Town of Winthrop, Washington  
Mayor Pete Muldoon, Town of Jackson, Wyoming  
County Commissioner Greg Epstein, Teton County, Wyoming