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## **Nearly 70 Local Elected Officials from Western States call on Congress: Add a “Gateway Community Dividend” to the 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.

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.

**Supervisor Liz Archuleta, Chairwoman of the Board of Supervisors in Coconino County which includes Grand Canyon National Park and Flagstaff**, said, “Our beautiful protected public lands are tremendous assets to our communities and support our outdoor recreation economies. However, increased visitation and years of deferred maintenance on our public lands has strained the infrastructure that accommodates our visitors. These legislative changes would mean more consistent and predictable revenues for counties, and more support for more improvements and access to public lands and waters.”

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.”

**Chair County Commissioner Jacob Greenberg, Blaine County, Idaho**, which includes Sun Valley and Hailey, said, “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, our community will need help through this second wave and there are community members we can help if we continue to get support. A Gateway Community Dividend could help.”

**Chair County Commissioner Tim Corrigan, Routt County, Colorado**, which includes the City of Steamboat Springs, said, “PILT 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. A Gateway Community Dividend could really help communities like ours pay for the added infrastructure costs that comes with having well used, beautiful public lands in our county.”

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*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.*