



City of Clearlake
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October 15, 2026

The Honorable Mike Thompson
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Gallagher
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Support for the Revitalize Rural America Act and Recommendations for Final Legislation

Dear Congressman Thompson and Congressman Gallagher:

On behalf of the City of Clearlake, I am pleased to express our support for the Revitalize Rural America Act and commend your bipartisan leadership in advancing legislation that recognizes the unique challenges and opportunities facing rural communities throughout California and across the nation.

As one of Lake County's largest population centers, Clearlake provides essential municipal services to a community facing significant economic challenges while operating with limited financial and administrative resources. Like many rural jurisdictions, we face persistent difficulties recruiting qualified employees, securing competitive federal funding, maintaining aging infrastructure, expanding affordable housing, and ensuring access to essential health care services.

We particularly appreciate the legislation's recognition that rural communities require targeted federal assistance and greater flexibility to address these challenges. The proposed investments in public workforce recruitment and retention, grant assistance, housing, health care, and disaster resilience would provide important opportunities to strengthen communities like Clearlake.

As the legislation advances, we respectfully offer several recommendations that we believe would further strengthen its effectiveness for smaller rural municipalities:

1. Ensure Broad and Consistent Rural Eligibility. Federal programs frequently employ different definitions of rural communities, which can unintentionally exclude smaller incorporated cities serving economically disadvantaged populations. We encourage language that ensures communities such as Clearlake are eligible for assistance based on population, economic conditions, and demonstrated need, rather than restrictive geographic classifications.

2. Expand Workforce Recruitment and Retention Incentives. We strongly support the proposed tax incentives and student loan forgiveness provisions for rural public employees. We encourage broad eligibility across municipal occupations, including public safety, engineering, planning, building inspection, public works, finance, and administrative positions. Smaller cities often experience recruitment challenges across nearly every department, and these incentives should recognize the full range of professionals necessary to deliver essential public services.

3. Reduce Financial Barriers to Federal Grant Participation. Expanded technical assistance for federal grant applications would be particularly valuable to rural governments with limited staffing. However, local matching requirements and complex administrative obligations can be equally significant barriers. We encourage provisions that reduce or waive matching requirements for qualifying economically disadvantaged rural communities and simplify grant administration wherever practical.

4. Strengthen Direct Assistance for Rural Infrastructure and Disaster Resilience. Clearlake has experienced the devastating impacts of major wildfires and continues to face substantial infrastructure and disaster recovery challenges. We encourage the legislation to ensure that assistance extends beyond individual property owners to include local governments responsible for public infrastructure, emergency preparedness, hazard mitigation, and long-term community recovery.

5. Preserve Flexibility and Minimize Administrative Burdens. Rural local governments frequently operate with small staffs responsible for multiple functions. New federal assistance programs should be designed to maximize accessibility while minimizing unnecessary reporting, compliance costs, and administrative requirements that could discourage participation by the communities most in need.

These recommendations are offered in the spirit of strengthening an important legislative initiative. We recognize that rural communities are not simply smaller versions of urban jurisdictions. They face fundamentally different fiscal, geographic, and operational circumstances that warrant thoughtful federal policy.

The Revitalize Rural America Act represents an important acknowledgment of these differences and the need to ensure rural communities have meaningful opportunities to prosper. We appreciate your leadership and willingness to advance bipartisan solutions that recognize the importance of rural America.

The City of Clearlake is pleased to support the Revitalize Rural America Act and respectfully encourages consideration of these recommendations as the legislation moves forward. We look forward to continuing to work with you to strengthen rural communities and improve opportunities for the residents we serve.

Sincerely,

Dirk Slooten
Mayor