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Dear Rural School Leader,

Your Rural Schools Association uses the same fiscal year as our members and as a result, it's time to once again consider membership in RSA. Several months ago we were facing a 20% reduction in state aid and federal relief was uncertain. Aid was already being withheld and threats of additional cuts were dire. With all state leaders hailing from urban areas, your RSA had the task of educating a new Senate majority, as well as other leaders on the impact of policies and funding on our state's rural schools. With physical access denied, it was quite the challenge, but failure wasn't an option. The very viability of our rural educational system hung in the balance. Your RSA came through.

This past year highlighted the value of RSA, as our advocacy was influential in restoring state funding and in securing significant federal relief aid for our rural schools. RSA helps steer the federal advocacy effort on behalf of America's rural schools, meeting regularly with the administration to provide this historic level of support. Future increases in regular sources of federal funding are also in the works. Working with legislative leaders, the proposed 20% cut in aid, as well as untoward proposals included in the Executive Budget proposal went by the wayside in favor of a three year commitment to full state funding of Foundation Aid. The problem of course is that many of our districts are already on Save Harmless and receive only the 3% inflationary increase. There is further work to do prior to next year's budget season, but the funding crisis was averted. We didn't do it alone, but neither would it have happened without RSA. As an example, rural schools would not have received the extra 1% increase for sparsity without significant advocacy.

Of course, RSA's value didn't stop there. Information through advocacy alerts from both Albany and Washington kept you informed (often daily) on fast paced developments. Regular webinars provided you with the latest information, as well as the opportunity to inform RSA's advocacy and research with your practical implications of proposed policy. Programs and services made the transition on line, research and collaboration on your behalf continued unabated. We made the leap to a better website and more efficient communication. Now, RSA is the first statewide association to hold in person professional development at our 2021 Summer Conference (where we'll showcase national and state leaders, as well as the most easily replicable and successful programs for improving rural education coming out of the pandemic.)

Please don't allow your sister districts to subsidize the advocacy and information you need to come out of the crisis better than you entered it. We are one rural family and we are challenged like never before. Your RSA is your vehicle for supporting your students at the state and federal levels, for easily obtaining crucial information and help with your district's individual needs. We are passionate, we're highly effective and our only purpose is to serve you. It's the best \$850 you can spend on your students and the best association value in the state. Please let our veteran advocates and our Cornell researchers help you. Be part of the family, because we truly need each other. It has always been my great honor to represent leaders so committed, so creative and so resourceful. Help us make you proud!

All the best,

Dave  
David A. Little, Esq.  
Executive Director



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