



PROGRESS *for* **RURAL AMERICA**

A Roadmap for Stronger Communities

MIKE McGUIRE ★ CONGRESS

A ROADMAP FOR STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Rural America needs leaders who understand that small towns and rural counties have unique challenges and that one-size-fits-all approaches simply don't work.

The truth is, rural America doesn't need more talk from Washington, D.C. It needs action. Our communities deserve a fair shake and leaders who do their job and fight for progress no matter what.

In rural and remote regions across this nation, including in Tribal communities, rising costs, struggling hospitals and schools, unreliable internet, and catastrophic wildfires are making it harder for families to stay and young people to see a bright future.

These challenges feed on one another. When a hospital cuts services, families travel farther for care, and employers struggle to recruit workers. When housing is scarce and career opportunities are limited, young people leave. Breaking that cycle will require innovative solutions to our toughest challenges, a commitment to set aside politics and put people first, and sustained investment in the places we love to call home.

We need a leader who understands our communities, listens to our concerns, and fights like hell to deliver for all.

I've spent my life delivering for the rural communities, small towns, and Tribal Nations of Northern California - helping secure desperately needed funding for health care, schools, housing, broadband, critical infrastructure, and wildfire protection. We've expanded career-training programs that connect neighbors to good-paying jobs, fought to protect essential services, and put more firefighters on the ground. In Congress, I'll bring that same grit and determination to making sure rural America gets the investment and attention it deserves.

This roadmap is built on six pillars: quality health care close to home; reliable high-speed internet and cell service; strong schools; career and workforce training; good-paying rural jobs; and wildfire protection and healthy federal forests. The goal is straightforward: stronger communities where working families can put down roots, small businesses can thrive, and the next generation can build a future.

This is a living document, and we want your feedback. That's why we're hitting the road for 12 additional town halls across the great North State over the next 60 days.

We hope you can join us as we make the Progress for Rural America plan stronger at every stop and with every voice.

Thanks for your partnership —

Mike

SIX PILLARS

01	Quality health care close to home	3	04	Career and workforce training	6
02	High-speed internet and cell service	4	05	Rural jobs and secure housing	7
03	Our kids and schools	5	06	Wildfire protection and healthy forests	8

01 Protecting Quality Health Care Close to Home

In much of the North State, our local hospital is an emergency lifeline and one of the biggest employers in town. When it cuts services, families can face an hour or more drive for care, and the whole community feels the loss. Massive federal health care cuts threaten that lifeline while families and seniors struggle with the cost of coverage and prescriptions.

I've fought to keep quality health care close to home. We helped establish California's Distressed Hospital Relief Fund, supported rural birthing centers, and helped keep all 100 Planned Parenthood health centers in California open. We also invested in expanding nursing and behavioral health facilities and we're building Northern California's largest health care workforce training hub. In the Senate, I helped lead the charge to cap insulin costs and take on Big Pharma. In Congress, I'll bring that same fight to affordable care and a stronger rural health workforce.

In Congress, I will fight for:

Affordable coverage and reproductive health

- Reverse Donald Trump's \$1 trillion in Medicaid cuts that threaten rural hospitals, community clinics, nursing homes, behavioral health facilities, and coverage for more than 3 million Californians.
- Pass Medicare for All to provide every American with health care and mental health care, with a financing plan that ensures billionaires pay their fair share.
- Restore and make permanent the enhanced Affordable Care Act (ACA) subsidies eliminated by Trump and congressional Republicans so working families, farmers, and small business owners can afford coverage. In January 2026, Covered California warned that higher premiums could cause 400,000 Californians to drop marketplace coverage.
- Reverse Republican cuts to Medicare that threaten to send seniors' Medicare Part D premiums soaring. Protect the annual out-of-pocket cap, insulin protections, and no-cost vaccines, and defend and expand Medicare's power to negotiate lower drug prices.
- Stop all efforts to privatize Medicare.
- Protect federal funding for reproductive health care and reverse the Trump administration's massive cuts to Planned Parenthood funding.

Affordable coverage and reproductive health (continued)

- Enshrine permanent federal protections for reproductive health care, contraception, and safe, confidential abortion care in all 50 states.

Hospitals and essential services close to home

- Create a federal Distressed Hospital Relief Fund to prevent service cuts and closures, and restore and protect support for rural hospitals, Critical Access Hospitals, community health centers, and other safety-net providers.
- Strengthen Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement so hospitals serving smaller, more rural populations can sustain care.
- Protect emergency rooms, maternity care, ambulance services, trauma stabilization, behavioral health treatment, and essential specialty care. Invest in the hospital infrastructure, medical equipment, and telehealth systems needed to deliver them.
- Expand funding and partnerships so rural hospitals that have closed their maternity units can work with nonprofit health care organizations to open licensed, hospital-affiliated birthing centers.
- Expand federal funding for Tribal health programs to recruit and retain health care staff, including physicians and specialists, and modernize facilities.
- Treat rural hospitals as essential emergency infrastructure and speed up FEMA, Medicare, Medicaid, and other federal reimbursements after wildfires, floods, evacuations, and power shutoffs.

Career training and retention of rural health professionals

- Double the number of rural medical residency programs and expand federal Graduate Medical Education funding for underserved rural communities so more doctors train and build their careers in rural regions.
- Expand nursing, medical, and behavioral health workforce training through partnerships with rural community colleges, universities, and health care providers.
- Expand loan forgiveness and other incentives for doctors, dentists, behavioral health professionals, and other providers who train and commit to practicing in rural communities.

02 Connecting Our Communities with High-Speed Internet and Cell Service Everywhere

Reliable internet and cell service are essential for school, work, health care, and public safety. Rural families should be able to get online from home, businesses need dependable connections, and a lost signal on an evacuation route can put lives at risk.

We helped secure historic investment in rural broadband and fought to keep telecommunications companies from abandoning our communities. Now we have to get the work finished.

In Congress, I'll fight to protect and expand funding, move projects through permitting faster, and hold companies accountable for delivering reliable, affordable service. That means clear construction deadlines, public reporting on homes and businesses connected, and priority for the communities still waiting. Families deserve connections they can count on for school, work, health care, and emergencies.

In Congress, I will fight for:

Projects built and communities connected

- Protect committed federal broadband funding, including rural communities' share of the \$42.45 billion broadband program, and require clear construction milestones and public reporting on connections to rural homes, businesses, health care and public safety facilities, and schools.
- Deliver universal high-speed internet to unserved and underserved rural communities across America, giving the hardest-to-reach places a fair share of investment.
- Expand open-access middle-mile infrastructure so local providers can connect homes and businesses at lower cost.

Projects built and communities connected (continued)

- Streamline federal permitting and coordination for broadband and cell infrastructure while ensuring public input and Tribal consultation.

Reliable communications in emergencies

- Expand reliable cell coverage along rural highways and evacuation routes, across agricultural areas and Tribal lands, and in communities at high risk of wildfire.
- Mandate stronger federal standards for emergency backup power at cell sites and cable systems, and establish national outage-notification standards so customers, local governments, and first responders know when communication networks fail and when service will be restored.

Affordable service and strong local providers

- Defend Carrier of Last Resort protections that require providers to maintain telephone service where rural communities depend on landlines, and prevent major telecommunications providers from abandoning those customers.
- Expand financial assistance for local governments, Tribes, cooperatives, and nonprofit providers delivering rural landline, internet, and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone service. Expand technical assistance for small counties, towns, Tribes, and special districts seeking federal infrastructure funding.
- Protect programs that help low-income families afford internet service.

03 Investing in Our Kids and Schools

The best investment we can make as a nation is in our kids and public schools. Rural schools are the heart of our communities. They teach our kids, grow their potential, employ our neighbors, and bring people together. Low enrollment, long bus routes, and teacher shortages make that work more expensive, while limited access to child care and high college costs can put opportunity out of reach before a student ever enters the workforce.

I've worked to make sure rural schools get a fair deal. We secured record funding for public schools, implemented universal free school meals, ensuring no kid goes hungry, and launched Transitional Kindergarten in every school, focused on improving reading, writing, and social-emotional development. We also expanded child care, tuition-free community college, and investments in school transportation. In Congress, I'll fight for stable funding that reflects rural realities, support for the people who teach our kids, and an affordable path from early childhood through college. Every student deserves the chance to learn, succeed, and build a future.

In Congress, I will fight for:

Stable funding and safe schools

- Make funding for the Secure Rural Schools program a permanent federal entitlement to support schools, roads, and essential services in eligible forest counties, with stable support for small and geographically isolated school districts.
- Increase federal support for long rural school bus routes and replacement of aging buses. Build on California's nation-leading school transportation investments.
- Modernize school facilities and classrooms, improve access to broadband and safe drinking water, and strengthen emergency preparedness.

Support for students and educators

- Increase the number of school counselors and nurses and expand behavioral health care, special education, and after-school programs while protecting funding for low-income students, English learners, students with disabilities, foster youth, and others who need additional support.
- Expand teacher recruitment, training, housing assistance, and loan forgiveness for educators who commit to rural and underserved schools.
- Protect federal funding for universal school meal programs so every student can come to class ready to learn.
- Restore full funding and operations to the U.S. Department of Education and its Office for Civil Rights to protect equal access and enforce civil rights laws within America's public schools.

Affordable child care and college

- Increase federal investment in affordable child care slots, building on California's expansion and prioritizing rural communities where providers and openings are scarce.
- Expand federal support for tuition-free community college so students can earn degrees, certificates, apprenticeship qualifications, and workforce credentials without crushing debt.
- Expand federal grant programs focused on college achievement or career training for Indigenous students.

04 Expanding Career and Workforce Training

A good-paying career should be within reach whether someone chooses a four-year degree, an apprenticeship, or hands-on technical training. Rural Northern California needs nurses, firefighters, builders, mechanics, and skilled workers across the industries that keep our communities running. Career training close to home gives people a chance to earn a good living and employers a workforce they can count on.

We've built that model with hundreds of millions of dollars in career-training investments. We're building the largest healthcare career training hub in Northern California, doubling nursing programs, expanding construction, healthcare tech, and fire academies, and ensuring public high schools have an ongoing \$1 billion for career training programs.

In Congress, I'll work to expand these pathways so more people can earn a paycheck while learning the skills for a lasting career.

In Congress, I will fight for:

Training built around good local jobs

- Dramatically expand federal Career Technical Education investment and ensure rural high schools and community colleges receive their fair share.
- Create dedicated rural workforce grants and flexible community college funding that respond to local workforce shortages. Build partnerships among schools, colleges, unions, employers, hospitals, agriculture, fire departments, and public agencies.

Careers our communities need

- Expand fire academies and training for firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and other first responders.
- Expand training programs for health care lab technicians, nurses, vocational nurses, allied health professionals, and health technology workers to address rural health care workforce shortages.
- Build training pipelines for forestry, agriculture, transportation, energy, manufacturing, mechanics, and public safety.

Earning while learning and opening new doors

- Expand construction academies and pre-apprenticeships that connect high school students to building-trades apprenticeships and careers.
- Support union apprenticeships and other earn-while-you-learn programs in rural communities.
- Expand training, credentialing, apprenticeships, and employer partnerships for veterans, displaced workers, and young adults who want to build careers in the region.

05 Creating Good-Paying Rural Jobs, Secure Housing, and Growing an Economy That Works for All

Rural Northern California's economy grows from the strengths of its people and places: agriculture, forest products, health care, construction, manufacturing, public service, clean energy, tourism, and small business. Our farmers and ranchers need reliable water and markets. Main Street businesses need infrastructure and workers. And the farmworkers whose skill and hard work put food on our tables deserve fair wages, safe working conditions, and dignity and respect.

We've secured major investments in local infrastructure, housing, and road projects, and helped launch the Great Redwood Trail to turn a former rail corridor of more than 300 miles into an economic engine for our communities. In Congress, I'll fight to lower costs, grow local businesses, and make federal investment create lasting, good-paying jobs. The goal is an economy where families can afford to stay, buy a home, and raise their kids, and where the people doing the work share in the gains.

In Congress, I will fight for:

Local businesses and good-paying jobs

- Launch a federal Rural Jobs Initiative for distressed and underserved communities, and expand USDA Rural Development, Economic Development Administration, and Small Business Administration investment in rural Northern California.
- Make federal loans, grants, and technical assistance easier for small and family-owned businesses to access.
- Support rural manufacturing and clean energy projects that create permanent good-paying jobs.
- Prioritize local hiring, prevailing wages, apprenticeships, and strong labor standards on federally funded projects so their benefits reach the communities doing the work.

Affordable housing

- Expand federal assistance and loan programs for first-time homebuyers, and pass a federal renter's tax credit modeled on state programs, including California's.

Agriculture, water, and access to markets

- Eliminate Trump's tariff taxes that raise costs for North State working families. A September 2025 Yale Budget Lab estimate put the short-run impact of that year's tariffs at the equivalent of about \$2,400 in lost income per U.S. household on average. Trump's tariffs have had a devastating impact on seniors, farmers, ranchers, manufacturers, and small businesses and expose rural industries to retaliatory trade measures.
- Strengthen agriculture through reliable water storage and conveyance, local processing, agricultural technology, and expanded access to domestic and international markets.
- Modernize water release rules with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the State of California to retain more water in Lake Shasta and Lake Oroville, while strengthening local levees and flood protection.

Infrastructure, energy, and thriving Main Streets

- Restore and protect federal infrastructure funding and secure Northern California's fair share for roads, bridges, broadband, water systems, and reliable energy.
- Expand federal matching grants for state investments in rebuilding aging electric transmission lines to meet 21st-century electricity demand.
- Reinstatement federal funding for local renewable energy generation and storage projects, including commercial-scale battery storage and solar, offshore and onshore wind, biomass, and geothermal infrastructure.
- Invest in Main Street and downtown revitalization, outdoor recreation, trails, parks, and tourism infrastructure that support local businesses. California's outdoor recreation economy contributed nearly \$88 billion to state GDP in 2024 and is a major driver of rural economies.
- Expand federal gateway-community investment to help communities around national parks and major public lands maintain roads, water systems, emergency services, housing, and tourism infrastructure.

06

Fighting Catastrophic Wildfires on Federal Lands and Investing in Healthy Forests

Climate change is driving hotter, drier conditions and longer wildfire seasons across the North State. Fires that start on federal lands threaten lives and homes, destroy entire communities, disrupt businesses, and drive up insurance costs far beyond forest boundaries. With so much of California's forestland under federal management, our communities need prevention projects that work and firefighters ready for a year-round threat.

I helped lead the fight to double CAL FIRE's firefighting force, put more engines on the road, and expand our state aircraft fleet to the largest in the world, including investments in 16 helicopters and seven C-130 air tankers. We began moving seasonal firefighters toward year-round service and created a fast-tracked process to implement more prescribed fire, defensible space, and fuel breaks while maintaining public input and tribal consultation. In Congress, I'll bring that urgency to federal lands: more capacity to prevent and fight fires, healthier forests, stronger local partnerships, and faster help for families rebuilding.

In Congress, I will fight for:

Year-round firefighting and faster prevention

- Double the size and capacity of the federal wildfire and forest management workforce in high-risk regions, move toward a permanent year-round firefighting force, and improve recruitment, pay, retention, and working conditions throughout the Forest Service.
- Expand Forest Service teams responsible for planning, environmental review, contracting, and implementing prevention projects. Modernize federal review with clear timelines and accountability while maintaining public input and strong environmental protections.
- Expand the federal fleet of helicopters, air tankers, and other firefighting aircraft, and invest in detection cameras, satellites, artificial intelligence, and early-warning systems.
- Strengthen coordination among the Forest Service, CAL FIRE, local governments, Tribal governments, utilities, and emergency managers before, during, and after fires.

Protected homes and communities

- Expand and speed up hazardous-fuels reduction, prescribed fire, forest thinning, removal of dead and dying trees, and vegetation management near at-risk communities. Build and maintain strategic and shaded fuel breaks and defensible space on adjacent federal lands.

Protected homes and communities (continued)

- Expand federal wildfire mitigation grants for local governments, Tribal governments, fire districts, Resource Conservation Districts, and rural communities, including funding for home hardening, defensible space, and Firewise communities. California's funding for wildfire reduction projects far outpaces federal funding, even though the federal government owns and manages 57% of the state's forestland. This must change.
- Support volunteer fire departments, rural fire districts, Tribal fire departments, and volunteer fire companies with expanded funding for replacement fire engines, protective equipment, and communications equipment.
- Expand prescribed and cultural burning partnerships with Tribes and local fire practitioners.

Healthy forests and strong local economies

- Fully fund the federal Payments in Lieu of Taxes program, which compensates local governments for revenue lost because federal land is exempt from property taxes.
- Enable direct Forest Service partnerships with counties, Tribes, Resource Conservation Districts, local governments, and community organizations, and expand contracting opportunities for local businesses, timber operators, and rural workers.
- Support sustainable timber management, local mills, responsible wood products industries, and biomass projects that use material removed from federal forests, reduce wildfire fuels, and create good-paying rural jobs.
- Improve maintenance of Forest Service roads, bridges, campgrounds, trails, recreation facilities, and other public infrastructure.

Recovery and resilience in a changing climate

- Expand federal forest tree nurseries and seed collection so burned landscapes can be replanted sooner.
- Invest in watershed restoration, fisheries and wildlife habitat, reforestation, and forest resilience to help communities adapt to climate change and preserve forests' ability to store carbon.
- Accelerate post-fire recovery through watershed restoration, erosion control, debris cleanup, and resilient rebuilding.
- Speed up federal disaster reimbursements for schools, local governments, fire districts, water systems, and small businesses, and simplify recovery programs so wildfire survivors can get the help they need to rebuild.