The C-17 Globemaster III, designed to replace the aging C-141 Starlifter fleet as the nation’s core airlift aircraft, combines the best features of older airlifters within a single airframe. The C-17 is about the size of the C-141, but can carry twice the Starlifter’s payload. It can also carry outsized equipment strategic distances like the C-5 Galaxy, yet land on airstrips normally accessible only to the C-130 Hercules.

Built by McDonnell Douglas at Long Beach, Calif., the C-17 can carry 160,000 pounds of cargo, unrefueled, 2,400 nautical miles at a cruise speed of 450 knots. With a maximum payload of 169,000 pounds, the aircraft is designed to carry every air transportable piece of equipment in the U.S. Army inventory, from Patriot air defense missile batteries and Bradley fighting vehicles to M1A1 Abrams main battle tanks.

The C-17 can be aerial refueled, land on airstrips as short as 3,000 feet, back up, rapidly offload cargo, and is designed to airdrop equipment, cargo or paratroopers. The aircraft completed developmental testing of these capabilities. During those tests the C-17 set 22 world performance records in three weight classes of the heavy aircraft category.

The Air Force has contracted to buy 40 C-17s from McDonnell Douglas. A Defense Acquisition Board decision on extending the buy beyond 40 aircraft is scheduled for November. [Air Mobility Command Media Release] First C-17 Squadron Declared Operational Scott Air Force Base, IL.—The commander of Air Mobility Command declared the Initial Operational Capability (IOC) declaration is a major milestone in modernizing the nation’s strategic airlift fleet.

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Specifically, my bill will limit the application of FACA with regard to meetings held Federal officials and representatives of State, county, local governments, and Indian tribes. This will enable Federal representatives to proceed with legitimate contact with local governmental officials and tribes for purposes of implementing cooperative programs such as the President’s forest plan. In the Pacific Northwest, we have been moving forward diligently in an effort to implement the President’s forest plan, particularly with regard to economic assistance to dislocated workers, businesses, and timber-dependent communities. The Northwest was hit very hard by the listing of the northern spotted owl as a threatened species. The owl’s listing and subsequent injunctive relief ordered by the courts reduced harvest levels in the region on Federal lands by over 80 percent. The $1.2 billion promised through the forest plan is a key means to mitigate for job losses, mill closures, and associated impacts from reductions in timber harvest. However, in order to carry out President’s forest plan’s economic assistance reaches those individuals and communities. It is intended to reach, there must be involvement by local and county officials in the planning process for these funds.

Currently, an unintended consequence of FACA is that it makes it difficult for Federal officials to meet with local officials and tribes to plan for the dissemination of economic assistance. However, the FACA problem isn’t simply limited to the use of the economic assistance, it also creates problems for elements of the plan such as adaptive management areas, which hinge on local and community involvement. The bill will help ensure the smooth implementation of the President’s forest plan, particularly with regard to economic assistance to dislocated workers, businesses, and timber-dependent communities. The Northwest will be hit very hard by the listing of the northern spotted owl as a threatened species. The owl’s listing and subsequent injunctive relief ordered by the courts reduced harvest levels in the region on Federal lands by over 80 percent. The $1.2 billion promised through the forest plan is a key means to mitigate for job losses, mill closures, and associated impacts from reductions in timber harvest. However, in order to carry out President’s forest plan’s economic assistance reaches those individuals and communities. It is intended to reach, there must be involvement by local and county officials in the planning process for these funds.

Numerous States and counties in the West have expressed concern with the current FACA law, and its unintended prohibition of official contact between Federal officials and legitimate representatives of tribes and local governments. Concern never intended FACA to prohibit legitimate and appropriate contact between Federal officials and tribes for purposes of implementing the President’s forest plan, particularly with regard to economic assistance to dislocated workers, businesses, and timber-dependent communities. The Northwest will be hit very hard by the listing of the northern spotted owl as a threatened species. The owl’s listing and subsequent injunctive relief ordered by the courts reduced harvest levels in the region on Federal lands by over 80 percent. The $1.2 billion promised through the forest plan is a key means to mitigate for job losses, mill closures, and associated impacts from reductions in timber harvest. However, in order to carry out President’s forest plan’s economic assistance reaches those individuals and communities. It is intended to reach, there must be involvement by local and county officials in the planning process for these funds.

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I urge my colleagues support for this important legislation.