

Senator Manchin's Work to Improve Federal Classifications for Rural Appalachia:

[May 23, 2024](#): Senator Manchin wrote a letter to Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Administrator Carole Johnson, urging HRSA to adequately include terrain factors in their definition of rural.

[April 26, 2024](#): Senator Manchin applauded the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) proposed rule to update its rural definition to better capture the mountainous and rugged terrain of Appalachia.

[April 16, 2024](#): Senator Manchin questioned Xavier Becerra, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), on better classifying rural Appalachia for federal healthcare resources.

[March 23, 2024](#): Senator Manchin secured a number of West Virginia priorities in the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriations package, including language requiring the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy to implement a new rural definition that would better capture the mountainous and rugged terrain of Appalachia.

[March 12, 2024](#): Senator Manchin sent a letter to Peggy Carr, Commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), urging her to consider ruggedness scales in NCES's measurements to ensure areas like Appalachia are not left behind.

[March 29, 2023](#): Senator Manchin questioned USDA leadership on accurately classifying rural America to include mountainous regions and ensuring proportionate federal funding levels for rural areas.

[December 22, 2022](#): Senator Manchin secured a number of West Virginia priorities in the Fiscal Year 2023 Omnibus, including language to direct the Economic Research Service (ERS) to identify census tracts with difficult and mountainous terrains and continue ERS research and expedite the report's completion.

[October 25, 2022](#): Senator Manchin sent a letter to Dr. Spiro Stefanou, Administrator of the Economic Research Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) urging him to finalize a new rural area classification to include mountainous regions.

[March 11, 2022](#): Senator Manchin secured language secured a number of West Virginia priorities in the Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations bill, including language to direct the Economic Research Service (ERS) to continue to coordinate with Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) to conduct research on the feasibility of identifying tracts with difficult and mountainous terrain.

[January 13, 2021](#): Senator Manchin announced that six West Virginia counties are now eligible for funding through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) which determines a large percentage of grants and awards for rural health providers. Following Senator Manchin's efforts, HRSA revised the Rural-Urban Commuting Areas (RUCA) codes, which

changed Boone, Clay, Hampshire, Lincoln, Preston and Wirt counties from “urban” to “rural.” In October 2020, Senator Manchin submitted comments supporting the HRSA policy change.

[December 21, 2020:](#) Senator Manchin secured language in the Fiscal Year 2021 Omnibus encouraging the Economic Research Service to coordinate their research with the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) to ensure a clear definition of rural areas. As a result of the state’s mountainous terrain, some federal agencies misclassify West Virginia counties as “urban” instead of “rural”, denying rural communities, hospitals, & health care centers eligibility for rural grants.

[October 16, 2020:](#) Senator Manchin submitted comments to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) questioning their rural classification accuracy, advocating for inclusion of mountainous regions like Fayette County and to ensure federal funding for rural areas. In September 2020, HRSA released a proposed rule updating their methodology for determining what is “rural”. The methodology is based on economic and geographic measures known as the Rural-Urban Commuting Areas (RUCA) Codes.

[December 20, 2019:](#) Senator Manchin successfully included language in Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations bill, directing the Economic Research Services and Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP) to conduct a study and work on developing an update to their rural classification methodology.