

March 20, 2009

Chairman John Spratt
House Committee on the Budget
207 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6065

Ranking Member Paul Ryan
House Committee on the Budget
B71 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-606

Dear Chairman Spratt and Ranking Member Ryan:

As you begin to develop the fiscal year 2010 budget resolution, we write to express our strong opposition to any further cuts to the farm safety net provided by the 2008 Farm Bill and crop insurance.

While we share your commitment to deficit reduction, we believe that any additional cuts to the farm safety net would threaten the livelihoods of hundreds of farm and ranch families, weaken our food security, further undermine a U.S. economy already in crisis, and cost Americans jobs all without making a dent in the deficit.

As you may know, the farm safety net constitutes less than one quarter of one percent of the total federal budget and just 16 percent of total Farm Bill costs so attempts to balance the budget on the back of the American farmer and rancher and rural America would do very little to balance the budget while breaking a lot of backs.

Additional cuts would come on top of the \$7.4 billion in cuts to the safety net that were made in the 2008 Farm Bill despite the fact that the 2002 Farm Bill had already contributed to deficit reduction by coming in \$21.8 billion under budget.

Further cuts to the safety net would also breach the five year commitment made by Congress to our farm and ranch families -- and their lenders -- even before the ink dries despite the fact that long-term financial decisions have already been made reliant on that commitment, threatening to add fuel to the fire to the current credit crisis.

Midstream changes to the safety net resulting from any additional cuts would also come in the midst of dramatic reforms currently being thrust upon farm and ranch families by the Department of Agriculture in a compressed period of time that already far exceed statutory requirements and Congressional intent and make it difficult for producers to understand the new rules much less comply with them.

Additional cuts imposed by Washington would also occur in the context of a deep economic recession from which our farm and ranch families are hardly immune. Net farm income is expected to be down 20 percent this year, with most major commodity prices down anywhere from 36 percent to 52 percent, and producers of some commodities facing economic crisis as

recent declines in record high production costs fail to match the precipitous drop in commodity prices.

Especially troubling is the more than \$16 billion in cuts proposed by the Obama Administration that would cut to the heart of full-time farm and ranch families that feed and clothe this country in a manner unrivaled in history. If history is any guide, these or any further proposed cuts to the farm safety net would prove pennywise and pound foolish. By weakening a safety net already strained by the current economic stress being placed upon it, Washington would exacerbate the hard times and, in some instances the crisis, already affecting farm and ranch families that would ultimately require unbudgeted and costly ad hoc emergency assistance.

U.S. agriculture and our farm and ranch families help underpin what strength remains today in our national economy. And the farm safety net is rural America's economic stimulus. We should take great care not to undermine it.

Respectfully,

Rep. Marion Berry

Rep. Mike Conaway

Rep. Robert Aderholt

Rep. Dave Camp

Rep. Rodney Alexander

Rep. Dennis Cardoza

Rep. John Barrow

Rep. Travis Childers

Rep. John Boozman

Rep. Henry Cuellar

Rep. Bobby Bright

Rep. Brad Ellsworth

Rep. Jo Ann Emerson

Rep. Timothy Johnson

Rep. John Fleming

Rep. Walter Jones

Rep. Bill Foster

Rep. Steve Kagen

Rep. Sam Graves

Rep. Jack Kingston

Rep. Ralph M. Hall

Rep. Frank Lucas

Rep. Debbie Halvorson

Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer

Rep. Phil Hare

Rep. Betsy Markey

Rep. Wally Herger

Rep. Eric Massa

Rep. Lynn Jenkins

Rep. Michael T. McCaul

Rep. Mike McIntyre

Rep. Mike Ross

Rep. Candice Miller

Rep. John Salazar

Rep. Jerry Moran

Rep. Aaron Schock

Rep. Randy Neugebauer

Rep. David Scott

Rep. Solomon Ortiz

Rep. John Shimkus

Rep. Ted Poe

Rep. Mike Simpson

Rep. Ciro Rodriguez

Rep. Adrian Smith

Rep. Phil Roe

Rep. John Tanner

Rep. Mike Rogers

Rep. Mac Thornberry

Rep. Greg Walden

Rep. Tim Walz

Rep. Vic Synder

Rep. Jerry Costello
