

November 16, 2021

The Honorable
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the Farm Bureau's nearly 6-million member families, I write to urge you to oppose the Build Back Better Act, a piece of legislation that raises taxes and spends more taxpayer money at a time our country can afford to do neither.

Inflation is driving up costs across the economy, and greatly increased federal spending is a contributing factor. Federal policy choices have raised energy prices, leading to higher costs for everything from food to used cars. And yet this legislation will further exasperate that pain through a methane tax on oil and gas.

The Consumer Price Index is at a 31-year high, and unlikely to reach historical norms any time soon, having risen 6.2% since this time last year. Inflation is a hefty tax on every American's paycheck.

While certain funding increases or newly created programs may, by themselves, be commendable, the totality of the increased federal spending in this bill coupled with the enormously burdensome tax increases leveled on businesses and individuals to pay for it will stifle economic growth and destroy jobs. Ultimately, the result could be the consolidation or sale of family farms and ranches.

The legislation also seeks to raise revenue by increasing fines and penalties as much as ten times their current amount for violations of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, and Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act. The missteps of farmers and ranchers when navigating complex, oftentimes onerous regulations and laws should not serve as a funding mechanism. While Farm Bureau does not condone bad actors when it comes to appropriately managing safety, the seasonal workforce, and employee pay on the farm, fines associated with OSHA, FLSA, or MSPA violations should not be determined based on their ability to serve as a pay-for in a partisan legislative process. If enacted, these provisions could put well-meaning farmers and ranchers out of business.

While some elements of the reconciliation package would benefit agriculture, the massive amount of spending and tax increases required to pay for the plan outweigh the gains we would see in rural America. Also, the manner in which they were crafted is concerning. The agriculture industry and the committees of jurisdiction have held to a long tradition of bipartisanship that we

have seen erode over this past year. We hope this does not negatively impact future farm policy discussions.

In addition, the best policy is that which is discussed in an open and transparent manner with input from a variety of stakeholders. Reconciliation has been anything but transparent with billions of dollars not even discussed by the committees of jurisdiction. This should concern all advocates of good and responsible government.

The economy is still recovering from the pandemic, supply chains are stressed, and inflation is putting pressure on America's pocketbooks. Now is not the time to put an additional burden on families struggling to make ends meet. After watching months of contentious, partisan debate surrounding the Build Back Better Act, Farm Bureau can only stand in opposition to the legislation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Zippy Duvall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "Z" and "D".

Zippy Duvall
President