

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 19, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We strongly support serious efforts to reduce the federal deficit and to find a more sustainable path for job creation and fiscal responsibility. We understand that doing so will require difficult decisions based on the right priorities in order to move our country forward. Following our recent discussions with you, we respectfully submit our serious concerns that the ongoing budget negotiations impose imprudent cuts at the expense of the real needs of rural America and the 16 million jobs that come from agriculture. Specifically, we strongly oppose the extreme level of budget cuts to agriculture, equal to \$48 billion, proposed by Budget Chairman Ryan and passed by the House of Representatives.

As we begin to write the 2012 Farm Bill, we are committed to significant reforms including reducing program costs and duplication, along with streamlining programs and delivery. We believe that agriculture must do its part to help reduce federal spending. In fact, cuts to crop insurance have already contributed \$4 billion toward deficit reduction. But we also understand that farming is an extraordinarily high-risk undertaking – as clearly demonstrated by the devastating weather events across the nation this spring. America's farmers are struggling with a severe drought in the southwestern plains, historic flooding in the lower Mississippi basin and a cold, wet spring that is delaying spring planting in many places across the United States. America's farmers need tools to manage their risk in case of natural disasters and increasingly volatile prices.

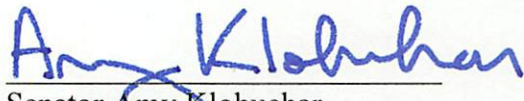
Unreasonable cuts to the budget for farm bill programs would, by reducing available resources, seriously jeopardize our ability to craft a balanced new farm bill meeting critical national priorities. Conservation programs that protect our nation's soil and water, food assistance programs for families who have fallen on hard times, investments in renewable energy, support for local and regional agriculture, incentives for rural job creation and the research necessary to continue the productivity gains needed to feed an ever-growing and hungrier world all may be in jeopardy. Specific changes to Farm Bill programs should be left to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry with enough flexibility to ensure that our agricultural economy and rural America receive the necessary investments and tools to be successful.

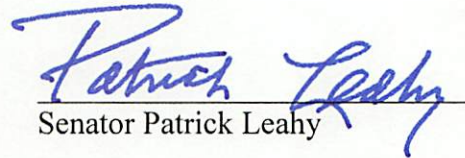
We thank you for your consideration of our serious concerns. We stand ready to work with you to reduce the federal deficit while respecting the critical role agriculture and our rural economies play in leading our nation to economic recovery.

Sincerely,

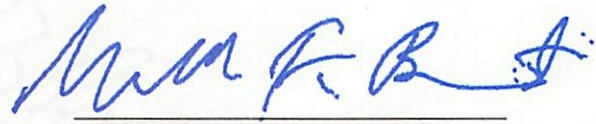

Senator Debbie Stabenow


Senator Kent Conrad

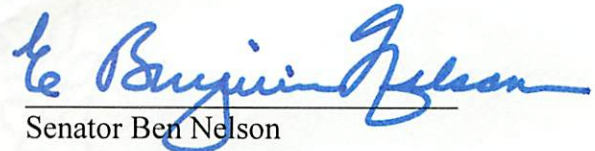

Senator Amy Klobuchar



Senator Patrick Leahy



Senator Kirsten Gillibrand


Senator Michael Bennet


Senator Sherrod Brown


Senator Ben Nelson


Senator Robert Casey


Senator Tom Harkin