

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 2, 2008

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman
House Agriculture Committee
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Ranking Member
House Agriculture Committee
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Goodlatte:

As the Conference Committee begins its work on the farm bill, we urge you to include robust funding and improvements for the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)

The House-passed farm bill provides \$500 million for REAP over five years, while the Senate bill provides less than half that amount. During the conference process, we urge you to retain the House-passed level of funding, to include energy technical assistance in REAP, and to adopt several other improvements included in both the House and Senate farm bill.

As you know, REAP was created in the 2002 farm bill as the Section 9006 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program. This important program helps farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses produce clean energy, cut energy costs, and boost economic development. In five years, REAP has provided nearly \$215 million in grants and loan guarantees for more than 1,265 clean energy projects in virtually every state in the country.

The combined economic value of these projects—which include wind and solar power, biofuels, anaerobic methane digesters, and energy efficiency—is in the billions of dollars. Moreover, these projects strengthen our national energy security, improve the environment, and boost rural economies.

In addition to providing robust funding for REAP, we support efforts to incorporate stronger farm-based energy technical assistance into the program as proposed in the Senate bill. Farmers face extremely high input costs and energy technical assistance will help to cut producers' costs and improve their efficiency. Mandatory funding as proposed in the Senate bill will make this aspect of REAP a success.

REAP is the only program in the farm bill's Energy Title that addresses every major clean energy technology. REAP has a strong track record of success, as demonstrated by the consistently high interest among rural communities to participate in the program. With sufficient funding and the improvements proposed in the House and Senate legislation, we believe that REAP will help to spur a rural renaissance and meet our nation's pressing energy, environmental and rural economic development needs.

The greatest strength of American agriculture has always been the entrepreneurial spirit of its farmers and ranchers. We encourage you to ensure that REAP continues to be a high priority within the farm bill

Sincerely,

Kim J. Walz Rob Meier Stephanie Haseoth Sandlin
Marcy Kaptur Jim Oberstar Mike Roy
Census Hertz Tom Latham Harold
Maureen Dinley Jeff Phil Hare
Mark Udall Mike Lamm Margie K. Hoover
Bruce Braley Randy Kuhl Dave Lubeck
Frank Sam Tom Carnahan