



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

THE VOICE OF THE NATION'S REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

2008 FARM BILL REAUTHORIZATION:

URGE SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL COLLABORATIVE INVESTMENT PROGRAM

CALL TO ACTION: The House and Senate Agriculture Committees, along with the administration, are currently negotiating the final conference agreement for the 2008 Farm Bill. The Senate approved a \$288 billion five-year reauthorization measure (HR 2419) in December 2007, while the House passed its \$286 billion version in July 2007. USDA programs authorized within the Farm Bill have been operating under a short-term extension since October 2007. The two primary hurdles to completing the bill are the overall spending level for the package and major disagreements on the specific funding levels for commodity, conservation and nutrition programs.

NADO members with lawmakers on the House and Senate Agriculture Committees are asked to contact their congressional offices today via phone or fax and express your support for maintaining the Senate level of \$400 million in mandatory spending for Rural Development Programs as part of the final Farm Bill compromise. In addition, encourage your House and Senate members to support the inclusion of \$135 million in new mandatory spending for the Regional Collaborative Investment Program (RCIP) as part of the final agreement. (See attached list of key committee members.)

KEY TALKING POINTS ON RURAL COLLABORATIVE INVESTMENT PROGRAM (RCIP):

- **RCIP is an innovative program within USDA Rural Development** that would provide much needed seed capital and matching funds for local officials, business, non-profit and educational leaders to work together on a regional basis to craft and implement strategic plans and projects. It provides up to \$150,000 for self-defining, sub-state regions to develop regional collaborative investment strategies and awards up to \$6 million for regions to implement specific projects identified in their strategies.
- **RCIP is designed to help make rural regions more competitive in today's rapidly changing global economy.** It provides new incentives and resources for communities to work regionally to leverage and coordinate their limited resources. In addition, it builds upon existing comprehensive strategic planning processes to prioritize and shape project investments, with the goal of attracting and leveraging additional public, private and philanthropic resources.
- **Project implementation grants under RCIP are flexible and focused on addressing the broad range of rural community and economic development needs,** such as alternative/renewable energy, broadband deployment, value-added agricultural development, entrepreneurship, business development finance, infrastructure upgrades and community facility improvements. Resources could also be used for technical assistance, strategic planning and responses to sudden and severe economic dislocations. Rather than be a stove-piped, one-size-fits-all program, projects would be locally-driven and crafted to address the specific needs of a rural region.
- **RCIP recognizes emerging global trends of regional cooperation and strategic development.** It provides essential seed funding that will allow rural communities to tap into these trends and come together on a regional basis. In addition, RCIP encourages the use of existing multi-county regional development organizations as fiscal managers to provide technical, administrative and financial support to implement the program locally.

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OTHER KEY SENATE MANDATORY SPENDING PROGRAMS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT:

- **\$135 million** for RCIP
- **\$40 million** for a new entrepreneurship grant, loan and technical assistance program, similar to USDA's Intermediary Relending Program (IRP) but focused on entrepreneurship and microlending
- **\$40 million** for new child daycare facility loans, loan guarantees and grants
- **\$50 million** for rural hospital facility improvement loan and loan guarantees
- **\$135 million** to fund the backlog of pending water and sewer grant and loan applications

By comparison, mandatory spending under the House-passed measure is limited to \$20 million annually for Value-Added Market Development grants.

Other important House and Senate Rural Development provisions include:

- Modify eligibility criteria for rural broadband program
- Amend definition(s) of rural for program eligibility
- Reauthorization a number of existing programs, including Water and Waste Disposal Grants, Rural Business Opportunity Grants, the Delta Regional Authority, the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority, the Emergency Water Assistance Program, Firefighters and Emergency Personnel Grants and Rural Cooperative Development Grants

Finally, the Senate version authorizes \$40 million annually through 2012 for the Northern Border Economic Development Commission (NBEDC). The new federal-state regional commission would cover selected counties in Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont. Under the proposal, economic development districts are established as the local delivery mechanism.

For more details, contact NADO Legislative Representative Amy Linehan at 202.624.8177 or alinehan@nado.org

****POSSIBLE FARM BILL CONFEREES****

U.S. SENATE

Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chair, Agriculture Committee
Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT)
Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND)
Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT)
Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR)
Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)

Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), Ranking Member, Agriculture Committee
Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN)
Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS)
Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS)
Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA)

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

(list not yet final)

Colin Peterson (D-MN), Chair, Agriculture Committee
Rep. Tim Holden (D-PA)
Rep. Mike McIntyre (D-NC)
Rep. Bob Etheridge (D-NC)
Rep. Leonard Boswell (D-IA)
Rep. Joe Baca (D-CA)
Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA)
Rep. David Scott (D-GA)
Rep. Jim Marshall (D-GA)
Rep. Stephanie Herseth-Sandlin (D-SD)
Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX)

Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), Ranking Member, Agriculture Committee
Rep. Terry Everett (R-AL)
Rep. Frank Lucas (R-OK)
Rep. Jerry Moran (R-KS)
Rep. Robin Hayes (R-NC)
Rep. Tim Johnson (R-IL)
Rep. Sam Graves (R-MO)
Rep. Joe Bonner (R-AL)
Rep. Michael Rogers (R-AL)
Rep. Marilyn Musgrave (R-CO)

(Members listed according to committee ranking)