



# NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

PROMOTING REGIONAL APPROACHES TO ADVANCING AMERICA'S LOCAL COMMUNITIES

## **2007 FARM BILL REAUTHORIZATION: Contact Your Senators Immediately to Urge Their Support for New Rural Development Resources**

**\*\* ACTION NEEDED IMMEDIATELY: RELEASED AUGUST 25, 2007 \*\***

### **CALL TO ACTION:**

The Senate Agriculture Committee is tentatively scheduled to release and consider its version of the 2007 Farm Bill, including the Rural Development Title, immediately following the Labor Day recess. The House approved its version (HR 2419) on July 28.

NADO members are strongly urged to **CALL** and **MEET** with your Senators *and* **CALL / EMAIL** your Senator's agriculture and rural development staff immediately to express your support for:

1. **Ensuring the Rural Development Title is provided at least \$2 billion in new mandatory money, as proposed by Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Tom Harkin (D-IA)**, to provide rural communities and regions with access to the physical infrastructure, comprehensive strategies, business and entrepreneurial development resources, community facilities and technology assets needed to compete both globally and nationally.
2. **Funding the Rural Collaborative Investment Program (RCIP)** at a minimum of \$500 million over five years, as tentatively proposed by Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) in Section 6030 of the Senate Agriculture Committee's Rural Development Title discussion draft.

Senate Agriculture Committee staff contact information is attached for your use.

**Add Your Organization's Name to the  
National Rural Development Campaign Sign-On Letter Today!  
Chairman Harkin Needs Your Support.**

Go to [www.nado.org](http://www.nado.org); Click "Sign Rural Development Support Letter"  
Under Action Alerts and Add Your Organization's Name and Click Submit!

### **FARM BILL BACKGROUND:**

In recent months Senate Agriculture Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) has reiterated his plans to make conservation, renewable energy and nutrition major components of the committee's 2007 Farm Bill. In addition, Chairman Harkin is working to build bipartisan support on the Senate Agriculture Committee to reserve at least \$2 billion over the next five years in new mandatory funding for USDA Rural Development programs, including:

- \$500 million for the **Rural Collaborative Investment Program (RCIP)**, a program championed by NADO that is designed to support regional strategies, collaborations and project investments
- More than \$700 million to help address the **backlog of pending applications** for water and waste water, community facilities and other related projects within USDA Rural Development
- \$375 million to support separate loan and loan guarantee programs for **childcare center, hospital and assisted living facility upgrades** and improvements in rural America
- \$100 million for a **micro-enterprise and entrepreneurship lending** and technical assistance program
- \$125 million for enhanced **rural broadband** deployment and access

**However, there remains intense competition for new and existing funding within the Farm Bill, including competing priorities for nutrition, conservation, renewable energy and commodity programs.** NADO has been advocating that rural development programs are essential complements to the other Farm Bill titles since USDA Rural Development programs help local communities address the fundamental building blocks for community and economic development.

USDA Rural Development is a vital support player, whether it is providing assistance for value-added agriculture production, renewable energy initiatives, broadband deployment and access, or basic infrastructure for improving the quality of life and economic potential of rural communities. If RCIP is enacted and funded, USDA Rural Development would also offer critically needed incentives, resources and project implementation dollars to encourage local leaders and organizations to work regionally to achieve the economies of scale, workforce capacity and strategies needed to compete in today's global marketplace.

## **THE REALITIES OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE:**

Rural America is a land of great hope, innovation and incredible assets for the nation. Unfortunately, current federal policies and USDA Rural Development assistance fails to reflect the realities facing rural communities while severely disadvantaging rural citizens and entrepreneurs:

- More than 21.6 percent of total personal income in rural America comes in the form of federal transfer payments such as Social Security and Medicaid, compared with only 13.6 percent transfer payment income rate in metropolitan America. While these funds are essential for millions of rural Americans, these federal commitments are not building the capacity of rural regions and communities to pursue new economic and community growth opportunities.
- Rural America continues to endure a marked economic and competitiveness disadvantage in comparison to its urban counterpart. According to statistics released by the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI), in 2005 the metropolitan median household income was \$48,474, but was only \$37,564 in non-metro areas. In addition, when looking at the top 75 percent of nation-wide job growth, three out of every four jobs are added in just 310 high-growth counties, but fewer than ten of these are non-metro counties.
- According to the Center for Rural Affairs, in recent years, the federal government has spent more subsidizing the 20 biggest farms in each of the 13 central U.S. states than it spent on rural development in the 20 counties with the greatest population loss in each of those states. Even more startling is evidence the government invested less in the future of 260 rural counties comprising 3 million people and over 1,400 towns than it spent subsidizing 260 large-scale farm operations.

**The main point being that we need to invest just as much in rural communities and regions, as a whole, that we are committing to individual agricultural corporations and farms.**

If rural America is to deliver on its vast potential and promise, it must have access to the assets needed to thrive, not simply survive. Our nation's rural institutions, local governments and communities must have the resources, incentives and capacity to develop and implement comprehensive strategies, build strategic partnerships and collaborations, support entrepreneurs and businesses, and most importantly, maintain the education, community, healthcare and other facilities required to support a robust and competitive national rural economy.

### **RURAL COLLABORATIVE INVESTMENT PROGRAM (RCIP):**

The Rural Collaborative Investment Program (RCIP) is a unique, forward-thinking program designed to bring a cohesive regional approach to USDA Rural Development assistance. As outlined in Sec. 6030 of Chairman Harkin's discussion draft, RCIP would provide at least \$500 million over the next five years to support the development and implementation of regional and local competitiveness strategies.

RCIP recognizes the necessity for rural communities, leaders and organizations to work regionally to achieve the public and private assets, economies of scale, workforce capacity and other competitiveness indicators necessary to contend nationally and globally. The program is specifically designed to take advantage of local strengths while also analyzing and responding to regional challenges, opportunities and needs:

- RCIP calls for the formation of Regional Collaborative Investment Boards. These self-selecting regional boards must include representatives of local units of government, non-profit community-based development organizations, regional development organizations, private businesses and other rural community and economic development stakeholders within a service area.
- The regional boards will be responsible for developing and implementing a regional collaborative investment strategy. Regional strategies will serve as a comprehensive analysis of a region's economic conditions, challenges and opportunities, an identification of vital projects programs and activities and a plan of action to implement priority projects and programs. Up to \$200,000 would be available to develop, maintain and update these regional strategies.
- Each regional board would be directed to select a non-federal entity to serve as a regional program coordinator. As championed by NADO, the regional program coordinator would be responsible for managing any funds, providing regional support and assistance with implementing the regional strategies outlined by the regional board. The appointed regional coordinator must be an entity that has an expertise in regional planning, federal grant management and fostering multi-jurisdictional cooperation. This language is intended to ensure regional development organizations have the priority and option of serving as the regional program coordinator within their service area.
- Once regional boards have developed an approved regional strategy, they will be eligible for up to \$15 million in UDSA project implementation grants.

Most importantly, RCIP will not replace or drain resources from existing USDA Rural Development programs; instead it will leverage existing public, private and philanthropic resources. RCIP provides the necessary enhancement to the USDA rural development portfolio that will allow rural communities to harness their true potential and overcome current economic and competitiveness disadvantages.

***For more information, contact NADO Legislative Representative  
Amy Linehan at 202.624.8177 or [alinehan@nado.org](mailto:alinehan@nado.org).***

## **SENATE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE STAFF CONTACTS**

**PLEASE ONLY SEND EMAILS TO STAFFERS FROM YOUR STATE, PREFERABLY IF YOU KNOW THEM; OTHERWISE, PLEASE CALL YOUR KEY CONTACT IN THE OFFICE AND FOLLOW UP WITH EMAIL**

**Office of Tom Harkin (D-IA), Chairman**

Richard Bender, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.3254 / [richard\\_bender@harkin.senate.gov](mailto:richard_bender@harkin.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT)**

Brian Baenig, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.4242 / [brian\\_baenig@leahy.senate.gov](mailto:brian_baenig@leahy.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND)**

Jim Miller, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.2043 / [jim\\_miller@conrad.senate.gov](mailto:jim_miller@conrad.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Max Baucus (D-MT)**

Brandon Clark Willis, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.2651 / [brandon\\_willis@baucus.senate.gov](mailto:brandon_willis@baucus.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Blanche Lambert Lincoln (D-AR)**

Hannah Smith, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.4843 / [hannah\\_smith@lincoln.senate.gov](mailto:hannah_smith@lincoln.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)**

Chris, Adamo, Legislative Counsel  
202.224.4822 / [chris\\_adamo@stabenow.senate.gov](mailto:chris_adamo@stabenow.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NE)**

Jonathan Coppess, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.6551 /  
[jonathan\\_coppess@bennelson.senate.gov](mailto:jonathan_coppess@bennelson.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Ken Salazar (D-CO)**

Grant Leslie, Legislative Director  
202.224.5852 / [grant\\_leslie@salazar.senate.gov](mailto:grant_leslie@salazar.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH)**

Joe Shultz, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.2315 / [joe\\_shultz@brown.senate.gov](mailto:joe_shultz@brown.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Robert Casey (D-PA)**

Kasey Gillette, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.6324 / [kasey\\_gillette@casey.senate.gov](mailto:kasey_gillette@casey.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)**

Phil Rudd, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.3244

**Office of Sen. Saxby Chambliss,  
Ranking Minority Member (R-GA)**

Monty Philpot, Legislative Director  
202.224.3521 / [monty\\_philpot@chambliss.senate.gov](mailto:monty_philpot@chambliss.senate.gov)

**Office of Richard Lugar (R-IN)**

Aaron Whitesel, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.4814 / [aaron\\_whitesel@lugar.senate.gov](mailto:aaron_whitesel@lugar.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS)**

West Higginbotham, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.5054 /  
[west\\_higginbotham@cochran.senate.gov](mailto:west_higginbotham@cochran.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY)**

Allison Thompson, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.2541  
[allison\\_thompson@mcconnell.senate.gov](mailto:allison_thompson@mcconnell.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS)**

Mike Seyfert, Legislative Director  
202.224.4774 / [mike\\_seyfert@roberts.senate.gov](mailto:mike_seyfert@roberts.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC)**

Laura Bauld, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.5972 / [laura\\_bauld@graham.senate.gov](mailto:laura_bauld@graham.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Norm Coleman (R-MN)**

Tony Eberhard, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.5641 /  
[tony\\_eberhard@coleman.senate.gov](mailto:tony_eberhard@coleman.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID)**

Staci Lancaster, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.6142 / [staci\\_lancaster@crapo.senate.gov](mailto:staci_lancaster@crapo.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. John Thune (R-SD)**

Brendon Plack, Legislative Assistant  
202.224.2321 / [brendon\\_plack@thune.senate.gov](mailto:brendon_plack@thune.senate.gov)

**Office of Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA)**

Amanda Taylor, Agriculture Counsel  
202.224.3744 /  
[amanda\\_taylor@grassley.senate.gov](mailto:amanda_taylor@grassley.senate.gov)