



June 13, 2013

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman, Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
1305 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear House Agriculture Committee Leadership:

Creating the conditions for job growth in rural America and ensuring the success of the next generation of farmers are national priorities. The Farm Bill's Rural Development title, which authorizes essential grants and loan programs targeted at leveraging local initiatives to spur growth and opportunity in rural areas, is critical to advancing both of these priorities. We applaud Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson for their tireless leadership in moving ahead with H.R. 1947, the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management (FARRM) Act of 2013. While the FARRM Act makes some positive policy changes, it dramatically reduces critical investments in rural economic development and could do more to improve these programs for rural people, places and businesses.

Since 1996, Congress has provided an average of \$413 million per farm bill in mandatory funding for the Rural Development title. The FARRM Act includes only \$50 million in mandatory funding and cuts authorization levels by \$1.5 billion over five years, which represents a 66 percent cut in mandatory funding and 50 percent cut in authorization levels.

We urge you to correct this deficiency by supporting amendments on the floor that will reinstate mandatory funding for the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program and the Water/Wastewater Backlog. We also ask that you work to protect, and if possible increase, the \$50 million in the mark for the Value Added Producer Grant program. The Senate passed bill maintains mandatory funding for all three of these successful Rural Development programs.

The FARRM Act provides important policy changes that we support, including simplifying application forms, providing for accountability in RD programs, and enacting a new technical assistance authority for the Essential Community Facilities Program. We urge you to support additional amendments which would allow USDA to focus resources on strategic community and economic development plans on a multijurisdictional basis.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters. We strongly encourage you to reach out and work with other interested colleagues prior to floor consideration. By ensuring policy improvements and continued investments in rural economic development, we can ensure that

the Farm Bill is a jobs bill that underpins and enables economic growth in rural communities throughout America. We look forward to working together on this important matter for American agriculture and America's rural communities.

Sincerely,

AMERICAN PUBLIC WORKS ASSOCIATION
CENTER FOR RURAL AFFAIRS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TOWNS AND TOWNSHIPS
NATIONAL CATHOLIC RURAL LIFE CONFERENCE
NATIONAL GRANGE
NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COALITION
RURAL COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PARTNERSHIP
RURAL COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE CORPORATION