



## **NADO Action Alert: Urge Strong Rural Development Title in Final Farm Bill**

Please contact your Member of Congress that serves on the Conference Committee for the 2013 Farm Bill negotiations (conferees are listed below) and urge them to support key USDA Rural Development Programs in a final bill. **The Conference Committee is slated to begin work on a Farm Bill the week of October 27.** Additional resources and a sample support letter can be found below. Please keep NADO legislative staff informed of your outreach efforts and responses from your respective Members of Congress. Please contact me ([tstiger@nado.org](mailto:tstiger@nado.org) or 202.624.8467) with any questions you may have.

### **Urge Support of Key NADO Priorities in a Final Farm Bill**

- 1.) Support yearly mandatory funding for USDA Rural Development Programs. This includes \$150 million for the Water/Wastewater Backlog Program, \$62.5 million for the Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG), and \$15 million for the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP). **This funding was included in Senate bill but not the House bill.**
- 2.) Support reauthorization of all regional commissions (Delta Regional Authority, Northern Border Regional Commission, Northern Great Plains Regional Authority, Southeast Crescent Regional Commission) established in 2008 Farm Bill. **Reauthorizations were included in both the House and Senate bills.**
- 3.) Support provisions that endorse Strategic Economic and Community Development plans and direct USDA Rural Development to prioritize funding for regional projects. **This language was included in the Senate bill but not the House bill.**

**Background:** Since 1996, Congress has provided an average of \$413 million per farm bill in mandatory funding for USDA Rural Development programs. The current House Farm Bill includes only \$50 million in mandatory funding and cuts authorization levels by \$1.5 billion over five years, which would represent a 66 percent cut in mandatory funding and a 50 percent cut in authorization levels for Rural Development programs if enacted.

On October 12, the House voted to move its version of the Farm Bill to a Conference Committee with the Senate. On October 1, the Senate renamed their conferees to the committee. In doing so, Congress is taking steps to finish a five-year Farm Bill reauthorization. The Conference Committee is charged with merging the two Farm Bills into one bill that both bodies will have to pass before sending the final bill to the President for his signature. Major hurdles to a final Farm Bill still existence due to vast differences between the nutrition titles of both bills. Please contact your Farm Bill Conference Committee members listed below.

**Senate Conferees:** Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Thad Cochran (R-MS), Max Baucus (D-MT), Michael Bennet (D-CO), John Boozman (R-AR), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), Tom Harkin (D-IA), John Hoeven (R-ND), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), and Pat Roberts (R-KS).

**House Conferees:** Frank Lucas (R-OK), Dave Camp (R-MI), Michael Conaway (R-TX), Rick Crawford (R-AR), Rodney Davis (R-IL), Jeff Denham (R-CA), Sam Johnson (R-TX), Steve King (R-IA), Tom Marino (R-PA), Randy Neugebauer (R-TX), Kristi Noem (R-SD), Martha Roby (R-AL), Mike Rogers (R-AL), Ed Royce (R-CA), Austin Scott (R-GA), Steve Southerland (R-FL), and Glenn Thompson (R-PA).

Collin Peterson (D-MN), Jim Costa (D-CA), Suzan DelBene (D-WA), Eliot Engel (D-NY), Marcia Fudge (D-OH), Sandy Levin (D-MI), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Mike McIntyre (D-NC), Gloria Negrete McLeod (D-CA), Kurt Schrader (D-OR), Filemon Vela (D-TX), and Tim Walz (D-MN).

**NADO Resources:**

[Farm Bill Legislative Fact Sheet](#)

[Rural Development Quick Facts for 2012](#)

[NADO News: House Approves Farm Bill](#) (7.10.13)

[NADO News: Senate Approves Farm Bill](#) (6.10.13)

[Senate Agriculture Committee Resources](#)

[House Agriculture Committee Resources](#)

**Sample Letter**

October \_\_, 2013

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ House/Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative or Senator \_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of **(insert organization)**, thank you for your work and continued leadership to move a comprehensive Farm Bill through Congress this year.

As the conference committee process moves forward, **(insert organization)** respectfully urges you to provide a robust Rural Development title that promotes economic growth and stability in rural areas by creating jobs and ensuring the success of the next generation of rural Americans.

Since 1996, the Rural Development title has averaged \$413 million in mandatory funding per Farm Bill. While the bills from both chambers are well below this average, the House bill authorizes only \$50 million in mandatory funding as opposed to the \$227 million authorized by the Senate. We respectfully request that the conference agrees to no less than the Senate funding levels, but would urge you to look for ways to further boost those levels in the final bill.

Additionally, within the Rural Development title, we would ask that you support the Senate bill's mandatory funding levels for the Water/Wastewater Backlog, the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program, and the Value Added Producer Grants. These programs are vital to the stability and success of **(insert your region/community)**

We also urge you to support the Senate's approach to streamlining the authorizing language for rural development programs which is designed to assist the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in administering programs and improving accessibility for rural constituents. **(Insert organization)**

continues to support provisions in the Senate bill which would allow USDA to focus resources on strategic community and economic development plans on a regional and multijurisdictional basis.

***(Insert organization)*** commends your support for the reauthorization of all regional economic development commissions established in the 2008 Farm Bill. These commissions are designed to promote efficiency, maximize resources, and ensure strategic investment in rural areas.

Thank you again and we stand ready to work with you to complete passage of a new five-year Farm Bill this year.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director

***(Insert organization name and address)***