

May 6, 2010

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We urge you to utilize the National Summit of Rural America to be held June 3, 2010 as a turning point for this Administration. For too long, the agenda has been dominated by policies that burden rural communities with higher energy costs, greater federal intrusion, and decreased access to the lands we cherish. This summit offers an opportunity to replace restrictive Washington mandates with policies that create jobs and promote economic growth.

The Administration has repeatedly placed bureaucratic hurdles in rural communities. In January 2010, the Department of the Interior announced onshore oil and gas leasing reforms that will increase bureaucracy, stifle job creation, and hurt states' budgets. The Department is also considering locking up at least 13 million acres of land in 11 western states. Moving forward with plans to deny access to public lands for economic and recreational use will have severe consequences for rural America's way of life and its economic future.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to reach even further into the lives of rural Americans. Its Endangerment Finding will allow EPA to regulate carbon dioxide emissions from schools, hospitals, farms, and many other small businesses. EPA's command-and-control regulatory approach will impose massive new energy costs on all aspects of the rural way of life. The EPA also advocates complete federal regulation of all waters in every state, from prairie potholes to puddles and playas. This allows the federal government to inject itself into rural life like never before. Furthermore, EPA's new regulation of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and fertilizers will have wide spread negative effects on food production and rural income. EPA's regulations will hurt job growth and stifle economic recovery in rural areas.

The Administration's policies for production agriculture increase risk on family farms. The U.S. Department of Agriculture proposed cuts to critical programs that benefit farmers, ranchers and rural communities. The Department increasingly directs funds and policy away from conventional agricultural production that feeds the vast majority of Americans and the growing global population. Instead, the Administration focuses on urban niche markets and hobby

farmers. Finally, the Administration's refusal to promote existing trade agreements or reform the death tax harms rural America. Our farmers and ranchers supply the safest, most abundant, most affordable and high quality food system in the world. The Administration should abandon policies that erode agriculture production and threaten rural communities.

As Senators from states with strong rural communities, we encourage you to take a hard look at the effect of Administration policies. We also request that you meet with us to discuss the many issues facing rural America. Folks in our rural communities know that federal regulations will not create jobs or get the economy back on track. Instead, Washington should get out of the way so that rural Americans can grow their businesses, create new jobs, and provide for their families and communities.

Sincerely,

John Barrasso ~~Steve Bennett~~
Pat Roberts John Erisman
John McCain John Thune
Mike Enzi Jan E. Riehl
Mike Johanns Chris G. Hatch