

COUNCIL FOR



THE HEARTLAND INSTITUTE

IDEAS THAT EMPOWER PEOPLE



November 3, 2011

The Honorable Patty Murray
Co-Chair, Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
Co-Chair, Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction
129 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Murray and Chairman Hensarling:

We are writing to express our concerns about any effort to hijack the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction legislative package to lock in wasteful, market-distorting agriculture subsidies.

In their October 14, 2011 letter to you, the bi-partisan leadership of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees promised to submit legislation for you to include in the deficit reduction package that would result in \$23 billion in deficit reduction – a far smaller number than was proposed by the Administration or the House Budget Committee. We urge you to cut deeper.

In addition, we strongly oppose using the Joint Select Committee process to renew the expiring Farm Bill and lock in wasteful subsidies. This would effectively end-run Congress and the American public. By law, the proposal that comes out of the Committee will receive little debate and cannot be amended. The Farm Bill is too important and touches on too many facets of the American economy to rush through a quick process without a fully engaged public. Those advocating that the Committee write the Farm Bill show contempt for both the 523 members not on the Joint Select Committee and the American public.

We respectfully urge the Joint Select Committee to stay focused on its job—reducing the deficit. Laying the groundwork for the next five or ten years of agriculture policy, by creating new complicated programs, or modifying existing ones, is better left to the committee process and open floor debate.

Setting agriculture policy under regular order in no way limits the Joint Select Committee from finding significant savings for deficit reduction by weeding out wasteful, outdated, or unnecessary spending. Billions of dollars of deficit reduction can be achieved through major reform of agricultural commodity supports, including complete elimination of direct payments. There are also billions of dollars to be saved through major reform of the wasteful revenue guarantees in the highly subsidized federal crop insurance program.

Please ensure that the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction does not rewrite the Farm Bill behind closed doors, leaving American taxpayers with the tab for another five years of subsidies for agribusiness. For more information or to discuss further please contact Steve Ellis of Taxpayers for Common Sense at 202-546-8500 or steve@taxpayer.net.

Sincerely,

Americans for Prosperity
Americans for Tax Reform
Council for Citizens Against Government Waste
Heartland Institute
National Taxpayers Union
Taxpayers for Common Sense