

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2012

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner:



The House will soon take up a Congressional response to the drought conditions affecting the central and western U.S. as well as a year-long extension of farm bill programs that have already expired or are set to expire at the end of September. This approach, at a minimum, raises two issues.

A potential extension of farm bill programs raises the specter of the recent transportation reauthorization debate, which ended in the House passing a short-term "shell" extension as a vehicle to expedite a conference with the Senate on longer-term legislation. Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Peterson was recently quoted as saying flatly, "If we can pass an extension and use it to get to conference, that might be something I could support." While apparently considering it unlikely, Agriculture Committee Chairman Lucas was recently quoted on the issue as saying, "I suppose anything is possible." During debate on the Senate proposal, more than seventy amendments were considered as that chamber worked its will. Given the various concerns regarding policy provisions included in the House proposal, should the House farm bill proposal move forward Members deserve the opportunity for a full debate and similarly extensive amendment process. With a cost of nearly a trillion dollars over the next decade, we respectfully request that the House avoid any scenario that would include legislative gambits to expedite a conference or otherwise bypass regular order on this costly farm bill reauthorization.

While farm bill programs raise any number of issues, there is now a widespread and bipartisan consensus that direct payments are an appropriate target for elimination. These fixed payments, a roughly \$5 billion a year giveaway, go to owners of land that historically produced select commodities regardless of current production or prices. Recognizing that the program is increasingly difficult to defend, both the Senate and House 2012 farm bill proposals call for direct payments to end. There is no reason taxpayers should foot the bill for direct payments for another year. Any extension of farm bill programs should explicitly exclude any extension of the wasteful direct payment program.

Proponents of a yearlong extension cite the agriculture sector's need for surety in the coming months. We are confident that you would agree that taxpayers are entitled to the same surety that bills with trillion dollar price tags will be considered under regular order and that admittedly wasteful programs will not be extended.

Sincerely,



Joseph R. Pitts

F. A. C. S.

Carol Brown

Jeffrey M. Schuman

Scott Garrett

Paul Blumenauer

Jack R. Davis
Erin Loop

Adam Smith

Tim Peters

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Signers:

Rep. Jeff Flake (AZ-06)
Rep. Joseph Pitts (PA-16)
Rep. Tom McClintock (CA-04)
Rep. Paul Broun (GA-10)
Rep. Mick Mulvaney (SC-05)
Rep. Scott Garrett (NJ-05)

Rep. Ron Kind (WI-03)
Rep. Earl Blumenauer (OR-03)
Rep. Jared Polis (CO-02)
Rep. Jim Cooper (TN-05)
Rep. Adam Smith (WA-09)
Rep. Tom Petri (WI-06)