

March 30, 2012

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-131, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Vice Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-131, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Herb Kohl
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Senate Dirksen Building, 184
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and
Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Senate Dirksen Building, 184
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye, Vice Chairman Cochran, Chairman Kohl, and Ranking Member Blunt:

As the Committee begins its consideration of the Agriculture Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2013, I request support for the following programs:

Program Title: Geographically Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers

President's Budget Request: \$0

Amount Requested: +\$5,000,000 above the President's request

Agency, Account: Farm Service Agency, Other funding

Description: Authorized in the Farm Bill to assist farmers and ranchers who are at a competitive disadvantage due to high transportation costs and geography. The program reimburses producers for a portion of the transportation cost of their agricultural commodity, or transporting inputs used to produce an agricultural commodity during a fiscal year.

Program Title: High Energy Cost Grants

President's Budget Request: \$0

Amount Requested: +\$18,000,000 above the President's request

Agency, Account: Rural Development, Rural Utilities Service (RUS)

Description: To provide funding for energy and other rural development purposes in areas that have high energy costs. The President's budget cut the High Energy Cost

Grant Program which improves and provides energy generation, transmission and distribution facilities for communities with average home energy costs exceeding 275 percent of the national average. Grant funds may be used for on-grid and off-grid renewable energy projects, energy efficiency and energy conservation projects. The program should continue to be funded at the FY 11 level of \$18 million.

Program Title: Water and Waste Disposal Programs

President's Budget Request: \$496,000,000

Amount Requested: +\$54,000,000 above the President's request

Report Language Request: The Committee expects the Secretary of Agriculture to continue allocating Water and Waste Disposal Program Account funds between its programs as it has in the past, including the Water and Waste Technical Assistance and Training Grants program, the Solid Waste Management Grants Program, the Rural Alaska Villages Grants program, and the Water and Waste Disposal Grants Program for Native Americans, including Alaska Natives.

Agency, Account: Rural Development, Rural Utilities Service (RUS), Water and Waste Disposal Programs

Description: The Water and Waste Disposal Program provides financing for rural communities to establish, expand or modernize water treatment and waste disposal facilities. These facilities provide safe drinking water and sanitary waste disposal for residential users, and help communities thrive by attracting new business. Projects are designed to improve the energy efficiency of the water and waste facilities and to improve water conservation efforts. Eligibility is limited to communities of 10,000 or less in population that are unable to obtain credit elsewhere. In addition, financing is available only to those communities with low median household income levels. Priority is given to public entities serving areas with less than 5,500 in population and applying for loans to restore a deteriorating water system or improve, enlarge or modify an inadequate waste facility. Grants are limited to a maximum of 75 percent of project costs. Program regulations stipulate that the grant amount should only be as much as necessary to bring the user rates down to a reasonable level for the area. Water and Waste Disposal grant and loan funds are usually combined based on the income levels and user costs. Grants are also provided for solid waste disposal and technical assistance and training.

Program Title: Smith-Lever 3(b)-3(c)

President's Budget Request: \$292,400,000

Amount Requested: +\$1,600,000 above the President's request

Agency, Account: USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Description: I request to maintain FY 2012 funding for Smith-Lever, which supports the Cooperative Extension System. Cooperative Extension are matched at least dollar-for-

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dollar and leverage public and private funds to ensure help communities across the state benefit from the research at our land-grant universities.

Program Title: Hatch Act

President's Budget Request: \$234,800,000

Amount Requested: +\$1,200,000 above the President's request

Agency, Account: USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Description: To maintain FY 2012 funding for the Hatch Act, which supports federally funded food and agriculture research laboratories. Funds are distributed to all 50 states and require 1-to-1 match.

Program Title: McIntire-Stennis

President's Budget Request: \$32,900,000

Amount Requested: Support President's Budget, \$32,900,000

Agency, Account: USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Description: To maintain FY 2012 funding to provide financial support for university-based forestry research and graduate education in all 50 states, with a dollar-for-dollar match required from the states. McIntire-Stennis helps keep forests healthy and productive, provides clean water, and fish and wildlife habitat.

Program Title: Agricultural Research Service

Report Language Requested: The Committee supports the work of the Agricultural Research Service in its national research mission. Because the different states manifest vastly different climates, economies, growing conditions and research needs, the Committee requests that the Agricultural Research Service maintain at least one Unit in every state.

Amount Requested: Support President's Budget, \$1,130,000,000

Agency, Account: Agricultural Research Service

Description: It is important for the Agricultural Research Service to maintain at least one Unit in every state because the different states manifest vastly different climates, economies, growing conditions and research needs.

If you have any questions, please contact Cory Turner of my staff at (202) 224-7309.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator