

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 30, 2013

Dear Conferees,

We write to express our strong support for maintaining the separate reauthorization timelines that were included in the House-passed Farm Bill, H.R. 2642, the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013 and the House-passed food stamp reauthorization bill, H.R. 3102, the Nutrition Reform and Work Opportunity Act of 2013.

As you know, for decades reauthorization bills for farm policy and food stamp policy have been combined together. Because of this union, mutually-assured and dramatic growth has occurred with respect to both policies. As a combined piece of legislation, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projected the Senate Farm Bill to cost nearly one trillion dollars over ten years – with an astonishing 80 percent of this spending going towards the food stamp program. This kind of “Farm Bill” can hardly be called a Farm Bill at all.

The American people are tired of this type of out-of-control spending and irresponsible “sausage-making.” Our constituents deserve a Congress that thoughtfully and separately considers the legislation that it passes. It’s just common sense. And in a historic move this summer, the House of Representatives did just that. For the first time in nearly 40 years, the House voted on and passed separate and substantive reform bills governing farm and food stamp policy.

The House-passed Farm Bill, H.R. 2642 enacted major changes to the farm safety-net by eliminating direct payments, repealing or consolidating more than 100 programs administered by the USDA and saving taxpayers \$12.8 billion over ten years, in addition to the \$6 billion in sequestration cuts already made to Farm Bill programs. The separate House-passed food stamp reauthorization bill, H.R. 3102 also pursued dramatic reform, saving taxpayers nearly \$40 billion over ten years. This was done by scaling back automatic qualifications for the food stamp program known as categorical eligibility, eliminating the ability for states to waive work requirements for able-bodied adults without children, by giving states the opportunity to establish similar successful TANF-style work provisions on parents with dependents, clarifying states’ ability to require drug-testing for applicants and preventing certain convicted felons from receiving benefits.

Transparency is the surest way to guarantee good public policy and that our constituents’ voices are heard in the halls of Congress. Now that substantial reforms have been made, we request the Conference Committee adopt the separate reauthorization timelines, three years for food stamps and five years for farm policy, in order to ensure that these policies are debated and voted on apart from each other in the future. It’s time to do this right.

We strongly urge you to adopt these historic changes and thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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