

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 15, 2008

Senator Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate

Senator Richard Durbin
Majority Whip
United States Senate

Senator Tom Harkin
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
and Forestry
United States Senate

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Majority Whip Durbin, and Chairman Harkin:

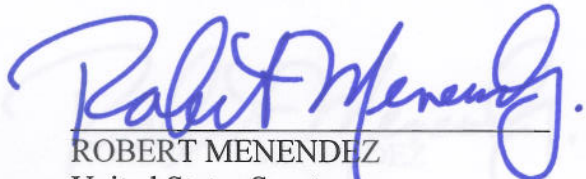
As you start conferencing the Food and Energy Security Act of 2007, we urge you to ensure that the final version of the bill includes a significant new investment in funding for USDA's voluntary conservation incentives programs. We appreciate the strong support of conservation programs in recent years past, and we hope you will continue your support by including a minimum of \$5.1 billion as passed by the Senate.

Conservation programs continue to be of the utmost importance across the country, particularly as the growing demand for ethanol gives producers an incentive to plant more land to crops. These programs help farmers prevent erosion and maintain the quality of the soil, and improve water quality and reduce water use. Voluntary conservation incentives programs also help maintain biodiversity by protecting vital species and their habitats, and protect farmland from development. However, currently two out of three farmers are turned away when they apply to participate in conservation programs due to insufficient funding.


For these reasons, we encourage you to include a minimum of \$5.1 billion in funds for these valuable conservation programs. While \$5.1 billion in new spending for conservation programs is still not sufficient to meet farmer demand for conservation assistance, it represents a critical step in the right direction. If some of the House- or Senate-approved tax provisions do not endure through conference, it is critical that other offsets be found to ensure that the farm bill provides the conservation funding our country needs.

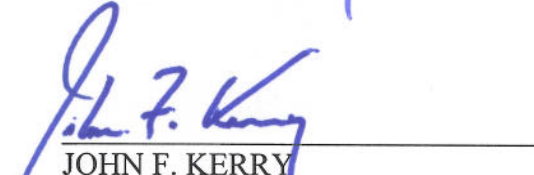
Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

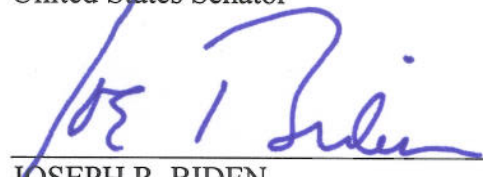

ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator



BARBARA BOXER
United States Senator

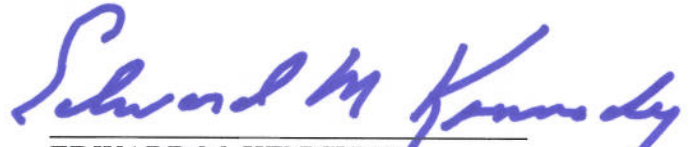

FRANK R. LAUTENBERG
United States Senator



JOHN F. KERRY
United States Senator

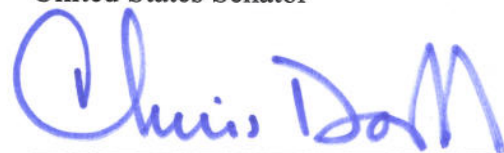

JEFF BINGAMAN
United States Senator


JOSEPH R. BIDEN
United States Senator


CARL LEVIN
United States Senator

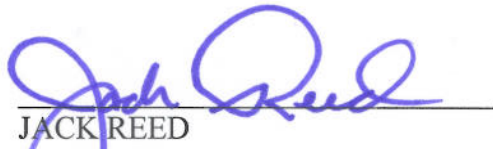

EDWARD M. KENNEDY
United States Senator


CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senator


CHRISTOPHER J. DODD
United States Senator



BILL NELSON
United States Senator


RUSSELL D. FEINGOLD
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