



October 25, 2011

U.S. Congress  
Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Member of the Joint Select Committee,

As required by the Budget Control Act of 2011, you have been charged with issuing a formal recommendation on how to reduce the deficit by at least \$1.5 trillion over the next 10 years. While you and your colleagues continue to deliberate on deficit-cutting measures, we urge you to keep farm programs on the table and work to eliminate wasteful and unnecessary agricultural subsidies. We also ask that you offer clear guidance to the House and Senate Agriculture Committees and Appropriations Subcommittees on Agriculture in your final recommendations. The Joint Select Committee has a unique opportunity to set this nation on a course that can reverse years of damaging farm policy.

Farm program proponents have long attempted to justify subsidies and other farm programs by insisting that the agricultural community deserves special advantages. What they fail to mention is that most farmers earn significantly more than the average American family. Foreclosure and bankruptcy rates are also very low compared to nonagricultural sectors. It is unreasonable to dole out more than 5 billion taxpayer dollars through direct payments and other programs each year when the farming industry is thriving and incomes are at a record high.

Reduced federal spending on agriculture programs should not come from illusory cuts that simply transition farmers into other costly programs. Further, the Joint Select Committee is not an appropriate venue to enact agriculture program reforms that fail to move in a free-market direction and continue government's intrusive role in the marketplace, whether the programs purport to save money on paper or not. Our concerns include, but are not limited to, modifications to the ACRE program that will balloon its long-term cost and the inclusion of the Dairy Security Act that is a continuation of failed dairy programs.

The powerful agricultural lobby has held the U.S. Congress hostage for too long. With an enormous \$14.8 trillion national debt that continues to grow each day, there has never been a more critical time to make real, deep and immediate budget cuts. Farm programs must be included on the chopping block.

We would be pleased to meet with you to discuss the extensive academic research behind our recommendations. Please do not hesitate to contact Vince Smith, Visiting Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, at (406) 994-5615 or [vsmith@montana.edu](mailto:vsmith@montana.edu) with any questions.



Sincerely,

Tom Schatz  
President, Council for Citizens Against Government Waste

Duane Parde  
President, National Taxpayers Union

Grover Norquist  
President, Americans for Tax Reform

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