



Thad Cochran

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CONTACT: Chris Gallegos
(202) 224-6414

COCHRAN AIRS OPPOSITION TO FARM PROGRAM CUTS

White House Proposes \$812 Million in Additional FY2011 Cuts to Farm Safety Net Programs

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Thad Cochran (R-Miss.) today went on record as opposing more than \$800 million in cuts to farm safety net programs, as proposed in the Obama administration's FY2011 budget proposal.

Cochran, a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, was among nine Republican Senators who signed a letter to the President outlining their opposition to reducing U.S. farm safety net funding for assistance programs that provide farmers with protection from things like natural disasters, lost income or limited access to credit.

The administration's FY2011 budget plan for the U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends \$812 million in cuts to farm and crop insurance programs, with a total projected savings of \$10 billion over 10 years. These reductions go beyond the \$7 billion in cuts made in the 2008 Farm Bill to these programs.

"The agriculture community, particularly in Mississippi, faces difficult times as they deal with the ongoing economic downturn, restricted access to credit and the vagaries of the weather," Cochran said. "The farm and livestock industry accepted farm safety net reductions when Congress enacted the 2008 Farm Bill. The impact the safety net has on the federal budget is already diminishing, and I think we should reconsider asking our farmers to make additional sacrifices at this time."

These farm safety net policies are intended to assist farmers and livestock producers when events beyond their control cause their production or income to dramatically fall. Today, mandatory spending on these farm programs represents 0.17 percent of the federal budget and 16 percent of USDA mandatory outlays. By comparison, USDA food and nutrition assistance programs today represent 82 percent of the USDA budget.

"While we agree that fiscal restraint is necessary and spending in the Federal budget should be reduced, doing so in this manner places a disproportionate burden on the backs of farmers, ranchers and rural communities and fails to recognize the recent sacrifices these constituencies made to expand nutrition programs during the reauthorization of the 2008 farm bill," said the letter to Obama, which was authored by Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Saxby Chambliss of Georgia and Senator Pat Roberts of Kansas.

"The farm bill represents a commitment to our rural communities, and we have an obligation to fulfill our obligations to our farmers and ranchers who depend on this legislation to make business decisions. Reducing our level of commitment with the proposed budget cuts to the farm safety net jeopardizes their economic sustainability and would cost jobs in rural America," the correspondence states.

Other Senators who signed the letter include Mike Crapo of Idaho, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas, James Risch of Idaho, John Thune of South Dakota and David Vitter of Louisiana.

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