

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 5, 2021

Dear Chairman Scott,

When you were named Chairman of this Committee, you committed to strengthen its reputation of bipartisanship and promised to work together to find commonsense solutions to help farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. Unfortunately, that commitment was cast aside at the start of the 117th Congress. Republicans were left out of a reconciliation process laced with partisan priorities that included increasing the deficit by \$16 billion, under the guise of COVID relief. Then, when our Republican Members proposed amendments to include policies with bipartisan support, you lamented we were letting good ideas derail the process. That process stood in stark contrast to your earlier pledge.

We hoped the first reconciliation process would be the low water mark for bipartisanship on this Committee. Since then, you have demonstrated leadership in building bipartisan consensus to advance important policies on broadband and disaster programs. It is, therefore, incredibly disheartening we find ourselves here yet again. The Committee is now scheduled to conduct another exercise in raising our nation's deficit through policies and provisions that have been drafted in secret, without so much as a public hearing. The consequences of moving another partisan, unvetted piece of legislation could not be clearer as the debt relief to socially disadvantaged farmers lingers in legal limbo under nationwide injunction—the result of a hastily drafted, constitutionally questionable provision.

In the nearly three years since the 2018 Farm Bill became law, the Democrat leadership of this Committee has failed to conduct meaningful oversight over the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) implementation. Moreover, Congress has provided more than \$141 billion to USDA for COVID relief without a single oversight or legislative hearing being held by our Committee on the matter. More concerning is the Committee has failed to host any USDA officials for the purpose of oversight and implementation despite multiple requests to do so from Republicans.

Leading up to the drafting of the 2018 House-passed Farm Bill, Republican leadership held more than 100 public-facing events, including hearings, audits, and nationwide listening sessions, all of which included Members on both sides of the aisle. It is unconscionable Democrats would provide additional funding in excess of the five-year baseline for farm programs of the 2018 Farm Bill without engaging Republican Members and stakeholders, conducting departmental oversight, or understanding USDA's current needs versus its existing resources.

This is why Secretary Vilsack has been invited to appear before our Republican Members, to provide appropriate context and data. The public deserves a thorough and transparent process for any legislation of this size and scale being contemplated by House and Senate Democrat Leadership. Sadly, it appears as though our farmers, ranchers, foresters, and rural communities will get an unvetted and potentially harmful wish list of partisan priorities accompanied by an astronomical price tag. Furthermore, the rumored offsets—including harmful tax policies that many Democrats even staunchly oppose—will add an additional layer of irresponsible policymaking with dangerous implications for the individuals and communities we represent.

We fear the reputation of this Committee has been tarnished by the actions of Speaker Pelosi and others in the Democrat leadership. It seems as though the days we come together for the common good of rural America are now few and far between. Instead, this Committee is being held hostage by party leaders who have zero interest in protecting the farmers, ranchers, and foresters that feed, clothe, and fuel this great nation.

When our Committee is working together in a collaborative and bipartisan manner, things get done for rural America. We call on you to acknowledge the unjust stranglehold your Leadership has on this Committee, allow for an open and transparent business meeting, report the bill unfavorably, and return the Committee's focus to the important work of protecting and promoting rural America and our nation's agricultural sector.

Sincerely,



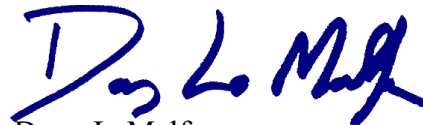
Glenn "GT" Thompson
Republican Leader
House Committee on Agriculture



Rick Crawford
Vice Republican Leader
House Committee on Agriculture



Austin Scott
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities
and Risk Management



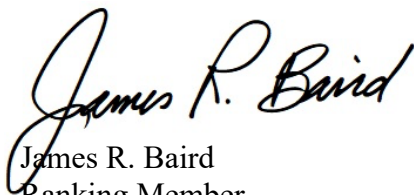
Doug LaMalfa
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry



Don Bacon
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and
Department Operations



Dusty Johnson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign
Agriculture



James R. Baird
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture,
and Research



Michelle Fischbach
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commodity Exchanges,
Energy, and Credit