

Chairman Hal Rogers
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Agriculture
Department of Agriculture FY 2013 Budget Request
February 17, 2012

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Vilsack, thank you for being with us today.

This bill is near to my heart and the heart of my district. As you know, the Ag Appropriations bill contains several programs that are aimed at rural Americans. I know from traveling around southern and eastern Kentucky that rural America is struggling. Yet, as I interact with my constituents, I do not get the sense that they want more government handouts or more federal mandates. They want jobs and investment, and they want Washington to get out of the way of creating those jobs. Unfortunately, our country's rising \$16 trillion debt – including a record \$5 trillion added under this Administration – is contributing to insecurity and uncertainty in the marketplace, and that is costing us jobs. Add to that a regulatory mess created by this Administration and it is no wonder small businesses, the lifeblood and job creators of rural areas, are petrified.

This Committee has been on the front lines in the battle against out-of-control Washington spending and stopping the regulatory onslaught. We have worked to ensure that the programs we fund are effective and sustainable and that they support rural Americans and farm families. Last year, we succeeded in reducing discretionary spending by \$95 billion compared to the FY10 levels. But mandatory spending costs, which are the largest driver of our debt and are largely not under the purview of this committee, continue to skyrocket and put the future solvency of many programs in jeopardy. Some of these programs are run by USDA, and although that spending is on autopilot, it is our duty to this nation to see that these programs do not escape tough scrutiny and oversight.

This Committee has also fought the steady stream of regulations, mandates, and fees that have been forced upon our farmers, small businesses, and rural communities by this Administration. While the goals of some regulations may be well-intentioned, they seem to be implemented without regard to the burden they are placing on rural communities and small towns. Our communities are instead expected to march in lock step, spending precious resources to meet Washington's ivory tower ideals. This has to stop. These regulations have the combined effect of dampening economic prospects and preventing businesses from hiring, while also raising the ire of many Americans who feel that Washington is out of touch and is not looking out for them.

These past three years we've seen a disturbing trend, Mr. Secretary.

This morning, I look forward to hearing from you on both the Administration's plans for the USDA's 2013 budget as well as how we can work to combat this overregulation of rural communities. Thank you.

####