

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 27, 2018

Senator Pat Roberts
Chairman, Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative K. Michael Conaway
Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Collin C. Peterson
Ranking Member, House Committee on Agriculture
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen Roberts and Conaway and Ranking Members Stabenow and Peterson:

As you endeavor to conference the House and Senate-passed legislation to reauthorize our nation's farm and nutrition programs, we write to share our concerns regarding any final agreement between House and Senate conferees. Simply stated, we cannot support any conference report that undermines investments in critical conservation programs or our nation's bedrock environmental laws.

We strongly support efforts to strengthen conservation programs in any final conference agreement. H.R. 2 cut conservation programs by \$800 million, completely eliminated the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and rolled it into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). CSP is one of our nation's most important conservation programs. Through voluntary agreements with working farms, CSP improves soil, water and air quality; provides increased biodiversity and supports wildlife and pollinator habitat; sequesters carbon in the soil; and conserves water and energy use. Given the many challenges facing our American farmers, we should be working to expand our nation's conservation programs, not cut them.

We are also deeply concerned about several anti-environment provisions in H.R. 2 that threaten public health, including:

- Sec. 7605, which would allow USDA to transfer the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center – a Superfund National Priority List (NPL) site – to the Department of the Treasury without finishing the cleanup.
- Sec. 8506, which would mandate a sale of public land in New Mexico without a clearly identified public purpose.
- Sec. 9101, which preempts local governments from pesticides regulation.
- Secs. 9111, 9112, 9114, 9115, and 9116, which undermine the Endangered Species Act (ESA), making it easier to spray harmful pesticides at the expense of pollinators, threatened and endangered species, and public health.
- Secs. 9113, 9115, 9117, and 9118, which weaken the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA), making it easier to spray harmful pesticides that threaten drinking water and public health.

- Sec. 9119, which reauthorizes the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA) without protections for farmworkers.
- Sec. 9121, which creates an “emergency event” loophole that would increase the use of the pesticide methyl bromide – a powerful ozone-depleting chemical banned for most uses since 2005.
- Sec. 11614, which weakens the ESA and makes it more difficult for the services to make a jeopardy determination.
- Sec. 11615, which exempts producers from the Migratory Bird Treaty Act to kill black vultures.
- Sec. 11617, which repeals the 2015 Clean Water Rule and eliminates Federal Clean Water Act protections for the drinking water of one in three American families.

In addition, we oppose any additional changes to our forestry management and wildfire programs as included in Title VIII of H.R. 2. As you know, the recently enacted FY 2018 Omnibus spending bill (P.L. 115 – 141) included a budget fix for addressing the rising costs of fighting catastrophic wildfires. It also included several carefully-negotiated provisions to address forest management. H.R. 2 seeks a legislative “do over” of those provisions not included in the final Omnibus agreement. For these reasons, we oppose inclusion in any conference agreement of those provisions in Title VIII that weaken protections for federal lands and bedrock environmental laws, such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Specifically, objectionable provisions include, but are not limited to: 8102, 8107, 8109, 8303, 8311, 8312, 8313, 8314, 8315, 8316, 8317, 8318, 8319, 8320, 8321, 8334, 8335, 8336, 8337, 8338, 8339, 8402, 8502, 8503, and 8508. Other sections of concern include: 8201, 8202, 8203, 8302(2), and 8333.

Finally, we oppose inclusion of H.R. 4879, the Protect Interstate Commerce Act, in any final agreement. While the House bill includes the “King Amendment,” the consequences of this provision are far in reach and scope, both known and unknown. The King Amendment does more than prohibit any new regulations and preempt hundreds of existing state and local laws that oversee agriculture products imported state to state. This provision would virtually wipe out critical protections for communities and farmers that govern food safety, and air and water safety, workers’ rights, community health, food labeling, fishing, animal welfare, permitting, record keeping, invasive species, and procurement. Instead of trampling critical consumer and farmer protections, we urge the conference to resoundingly reject this provision again as it did in the 2014 Farm Bill.

In addition to these concerns about conservation and environmental protection, we share other concerns with the House version of the bill, including its treatment of rural development, energy, and nutrition programs. We appreciate your attention to these matters and sincerely hope a final conference agreement will reject the House bill’s cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), support our nation’s farmers and consumers, and strengthen our nation’s commitment to a clean and healthy environment for our children and grandchildren.

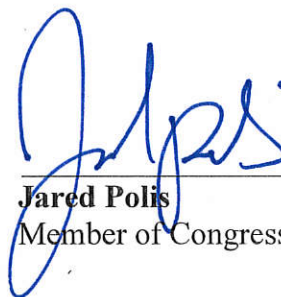
Sincerely,



A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Jared Polis
Member of Congress



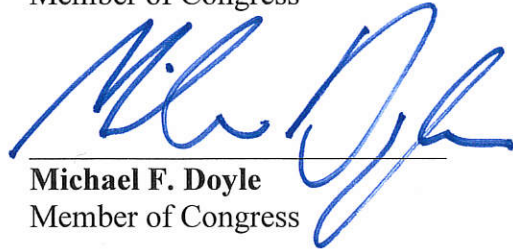
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Val Butler Demings
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Debbie Dingell
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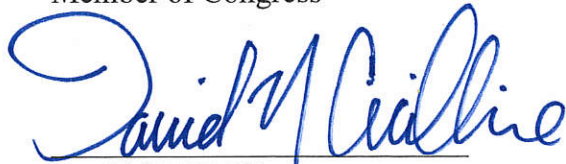
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Alan Lowenthal
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Anna G. Eshoo
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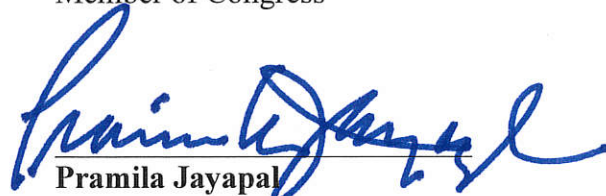
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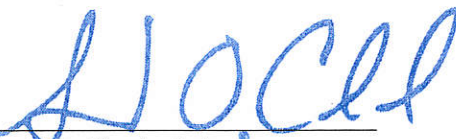
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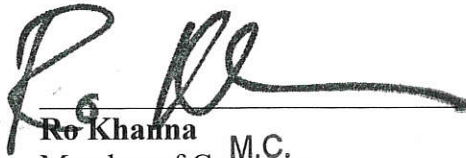
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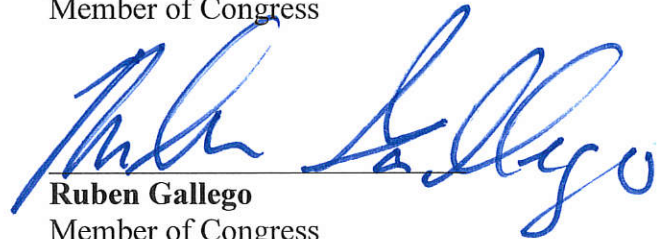
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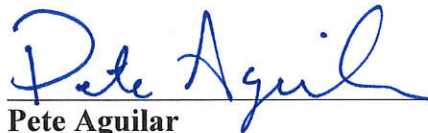
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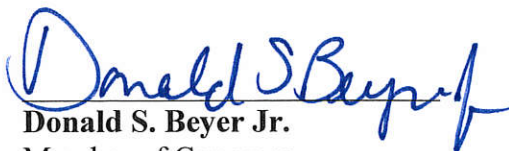
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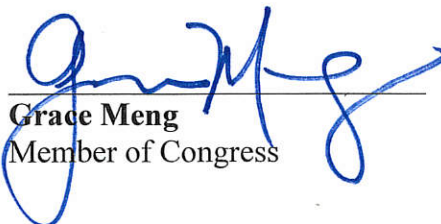
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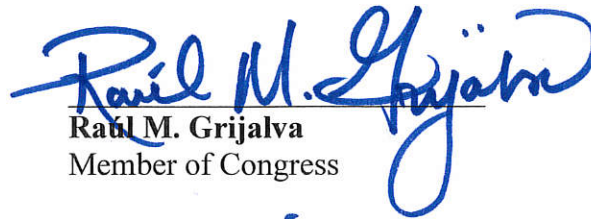

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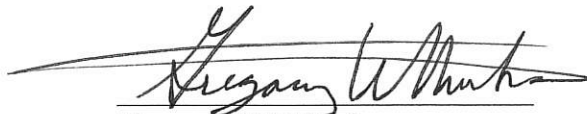

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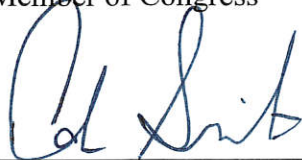

Karen Bass
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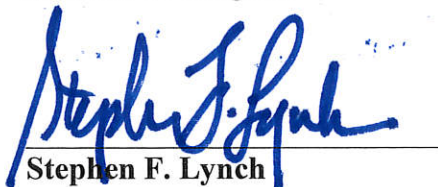
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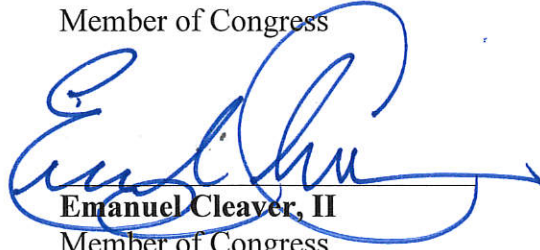
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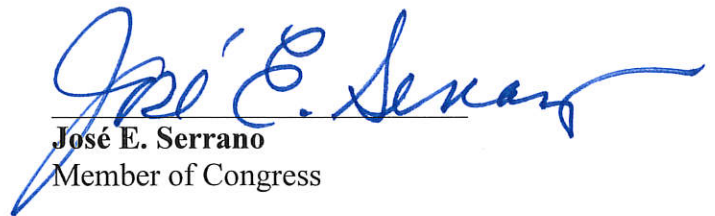
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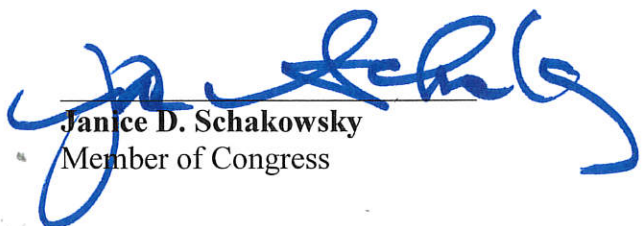
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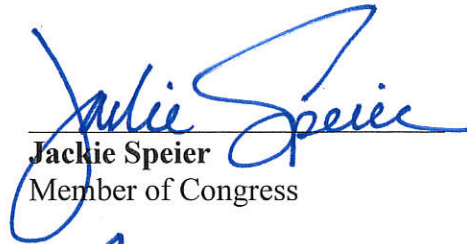
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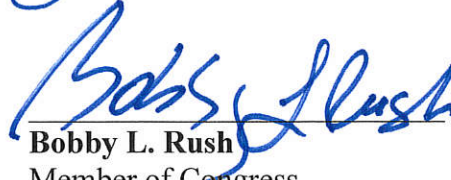
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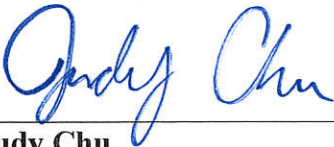
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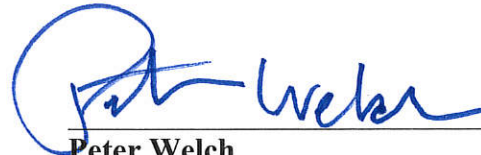
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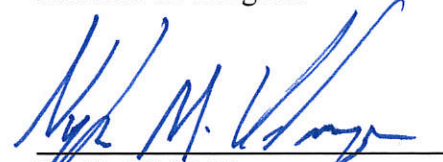

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