

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2016

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related
Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Sam Farr
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related
Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Aderholt and Ranking Member Farr:

We write to express our support for President Obama's fiscal year FY17 budget request for an increase of \$10 million for the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (OASDVFR) program (also known as the 2501 Program), which would provide \$20 million in total funding for the program. This appropriation would restore total program funding to its historical levels and it would help meet the increased demand for outreach and technical assistance by military veteran farmers and ranchers, and other historically underserved producers.

For nearly three decades, OASDVFR has been USDA's primary tool to help our nation's historically underserved producers gain access to USDA's credit, commodity, conservation and other programs and services. The 2501 Program provides technical assistance to producers through community-based organizations, tribes and educational institutions, which are best prepared to reach and serve these communities.

OASDVFR also serves as the only Farm Bill program dedicated to addressing the needs of minority farmers and ranchers and was recently expanded to also serve military veterans. With additional demand for program resources from returning military veterans, Congress should scale up, not cut back, on support for our nation's most underserved communities.

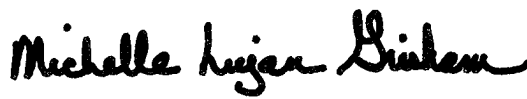
Adequate funding for the OASDVFR program will increase economic development opportunities in rural communities, advance intergenerational land tenure, and promote familial and community wealth for socially disadvantaged and veteran producers. We therefore strongly urge Congress to provide an increase of \$10 million in discretionary funding for OASDVFR in FY17 in order to restore total program funding to previous total funding levels of \$20 million.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to the matter.

Sincerely,





Ben Ray Lujan
Member of Congress



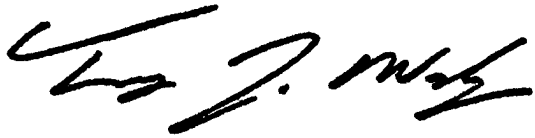
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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

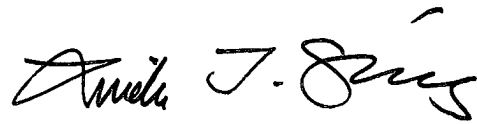

Mike Honda
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Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress

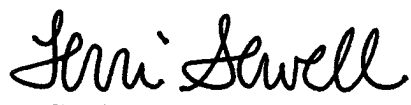

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