

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2019

The Honorable Sanford Bishop Jr.
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
H-307
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
House Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

As your subcommittee considers its fiscal year (FY) 2020 appropriations bill, we write to request that you support full mandatory funding for Farm Bill conservation programs. With the 2018 Farm Bill just signed into law, and USDA now moving forward with implementation, it is essential that we protect the conservation programs and mandatory funding provided in the farm bill.

We are pleased that the final FY 2018 and FY 2019 spending bills did not include any cuts to farm bill conservation programs, and we urge you to again protect this funding in FY 2020. Any cuts to these programs would limit the ability of farmers, ranchers, and foresters to implement commonsense conservation practices. We urge you and your subcommittee to continue to prioritize the conservation and enhancement of our nation's resources as a vital investment in our future.

Funding for these programs is more important now than ever, as ripple effects from the continued downturn in the farm economy are being felt across Rural America. Conservation support for healthy soil, clean water, and overall farm viability is absolutely essential as farmers struggle to stay afloat.

Farm Bill conservation programs like the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) help farmers, foresters and ranchers conserve water, protect water quality, and improve soil health, which in turn helps agricultural production. These programs are increasingly important to the long-term economic viability of family farms as producers face agricultural and environmental challenges including droughts, wildfires, and floods. Protecting the health of the soil, improving water quantity and quality, and providing robust wildlife habitat will be critical as our growing population increases pressure on private agricultural lands.

Less funding for voluntary conservation programs would mean more pollution, more regulation, and less productive and profitable farmlands as soil erodes and nutrients are lost. It also means very significant application backlogs. Demand for EQIP and CSP consistently exceeds available dollars by at least two to one, and in some years, USDA has been forced to turn away as many as three-quarters of eligible applicants.

In summary, the Farm Bill conservation programs help keep working farms and ranches productive while achieving significant conservation goals and environmental benefits. Any cuts to these programs through the appropriations process would severely limit the ability of farmers to protect water quality, build soil health, create and maintain habitat for threatened, endangered, or economically important fish and wildlife, and prepare for and manage drought and flooding. We urge you to reject any cuts to Farm Bill conservation programs to ensure full mandatory funding in your FY 2020 appropriations bill.

Sincerely,



Dave Loebsock
Member of Congress



Glenn 'GT' Thompson
Member of Congress



Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress



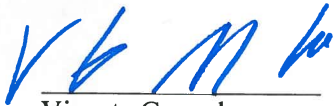
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Member of Congress



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Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress



Vicente Gonzalez
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Raja Krishnamoorthi
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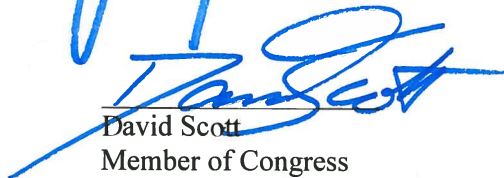
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Roger Marshall, M.D.
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Ruben Gallego
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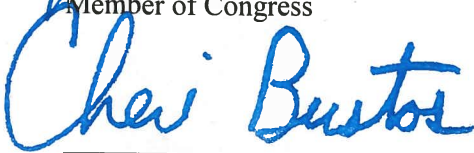
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Jason Crow
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Mike Gallagher
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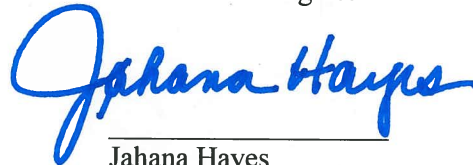
Cheri Bustos
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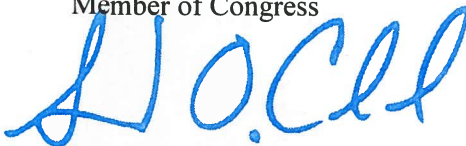
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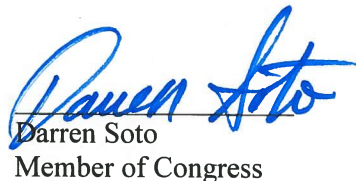
Salud Carbajal
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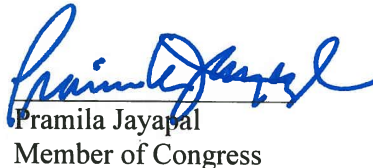
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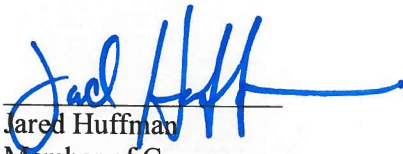
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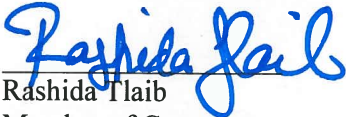
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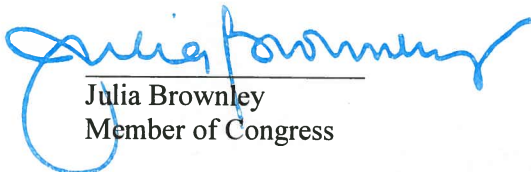
Terri A. Sewell
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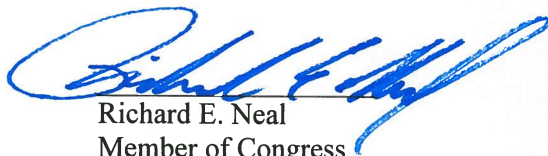
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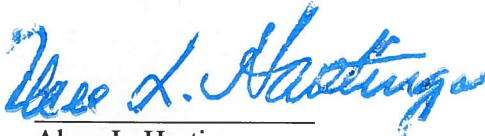
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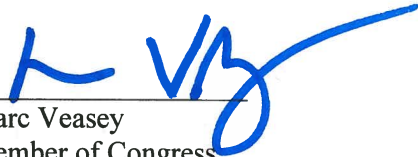
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