

April 4, 2014

The Hon. Mark Pryor, Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Roy Blunt, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Pryor and Ranking Member Blunt:

Since the attacks on our soil of September 11, 2001, US Armed Forces have fought two of the longest wars in American history. An all-volunteer military, disproportionately from our rural communities, has borne the weight of the casualties, repeated deployments and visible and invisible wounds on behalf of their country.

As good Americans rally to help these men and women transition back into civilian life, our agricultural community is in a unique position: we need them as much as they need us. We are in critical need of new farmers, a trained workforce and young families moving home to the small towns they came from.

A number of new programs are addressing, for the first time, military veterans transitioning into agriculture. The 2014 Farm Bill establishes a Military Veterans Agricultural Liaison, gives veterans much deserved consideration for a number of beneficial programs, and directs funding for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers to include groups helping our "veteran farmers." The President's Fiscal Year 2015 budget includes "FARM-vets," funding for critical research to help better serve this important group of new farmers and ranchers.

As leaders of America's agricultural industry, we urge Congress to fully fund these programs when it reviews the Fiscal Year 2015 Agriculture Appropriations bill. Our veterans served their country once by protecting it. Now they are eager to serve it again by helping to feed it. Let us do everything possible to help them do that.

Sincerely,

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas
American Beekeeping Federation
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Farmland Trust
American Federation of Gov't Employees Local 3354
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
Community Food and Justice Coalition
EcoHermanas Collective
Farm Aid
Farm Credit Council
Farmer Veteran Coalition
Farmworker Association of Florida
Federation of Southern Cooperatives
Hmong National Development, Inc.
Intertribal Agriculture Council
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Land Loss Prevention Project
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association

National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farmers Organization
National Farmers Union
National Hmong American Farmers
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
National Young Farmers Coalition
North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers
Oklahoma Black Historical Research Project
Rural Development Leadership Network
Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA
Rural Advancement Fund
Rural Coalition
San Diego Hunger Coalition
Slow Food USA
Southern Peanut Farmers Federation

Taos County Economic Development Corporation
United Dairymen of Arizona
United Fresh Produce Association

USA Rice Federation
Western Growers Association

cc: Hon. Tom Harkin
Hon. Dianne Feinstein
Hon. Tim Johnson
Hon. Jon Tester
Hon. Tom Udall
Hon. Jeff Merkley

Hon. Thad Cochran
Hon. Mitch McConnell
Hon. Susan Collins
Hon. Jerry Moran
Hon. John Hoeven