



Tom Harkin, U.S. Senator



MEMORANDUM

To: Iowans Interested in Food, Agriculture, and Rural Communities
From: Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA)
Date: February 25, 2011
Re: **Disproportionate and Unwise Budget Cuts in House of Representatives Budget Would Damage Food, Agriculture, and Farm Conservation Initiatives Critical to Iowa**

Late last week the U.S. House of Representatives passed budget legislation covering the remainder of fiscal year 2011 and making severe cuts in funding to address a broad range of our nation's critically important priorities and needs in the areas of food, agriculture, and farm conservation. If enacted, this budgetary onslaught would seriously impair efforts to improve the quality of life in rural communities; to ensure safe food for American consumers; to conserve soil, enhance water quality, restore wildlife habitat; and to spur economic growth and create jobs. The budget proposal passed by the House is thus especially detrimental to Iowa.

Without a doubt, the time has come for making and enacting tough budget decisions **through a balanced, careful, and thoughtful approach encompassing both spending and revenue levels while not shortchanging the essential needs of Americans or our nation's future.** These are some of the more significant and damaging consequences facing Iowa if the House-passed budget bill were to become law.

Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils: The House bill would eliminate funding for the RC&D program, which assists rural communities in boosting economic opportunity and creating and retaining jobs while protecting and conserving natural resources and improving the quality of life in rural communities. Zeroing out \$50.3 million in RC&D funding, as the House proposes, would withdraw support for 375 local RC&D councils across the nation. In Iowa, the 17 RC&D councils spanning the state would lose their entire \$1.9 million in federal assistance, as compared to fiscal 2010. For a map of those locations, please click [here](#).

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): EQIP provides assistance, in the form of cost-share and incentive payments, to help producers of crops, livestock, dairy, and poultry meet their environmental challenges and requirements. The House bill would reduce fiscal 2011 funding for EQIP by \$350 million (22 percent) below the amount dedicated to EQIP in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (2008 farm bill). Based on Iowa's share of national EQIP funding in fiscal 2010, the cut proposed by the House would deprive Iowa farmers some \$7.3 million in EQIP funding that had been committed in the 2008 farm bill.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP): This voluntary program compensates landowners for protecting, restoring, and enhancing wetlands. Under the House budget bill, WRP funding would be cut by \$119 million in fiscal 2011, a reduction of 22 percent from the funds dedicated to WRP in the 2008 farm bill and otherwise available this year. According to Iowa's typical share of total WRP funds, the House action would deny \$3.1 million to Iowa landowners for wetlands conservation.

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP): The House bill, by reducing CSP funds by some \$39 million below the farm bill's level for fiscal 2011, would cut CSP assistance to Iowa farmers by \$2.7 million.

Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations: Funding through this program for preventing flooding, conserving soil, and managing natural resources in watersheds would be eliminated in the House budget bill. In fiscal 2010, Iowa received over \$2 million in such watershed and flood prevention funding, but would receive none if the House bill were enacted.

Food and Agriculture Research: Such research carried out at federal facilities of USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) would be cut in the House bill by nearly 10 percent (\$114 million) compared to fiscal 2010, thereby reducing by some \$5.0 million the amount of ARS funding in Iowa for research covering topics such as crop and animal production, food safety, and natural resources and sustainable agriculture systems. The legislation would also cut by about 16 percent (\$217 million), as compared to fiscal 2010, the funding for grants by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) supporting food and agriculture research, education, and extension at land grant institutions, such as Iowa State University, and similar entities. Iowa would thus receive some \$5.3 million less through NIFA this year as compared to fiscal 2010 if the House budget proposal were enacted.

Department of Agriculture Meat and Poultry Inspection: Despite repeated incidents showing the need to strengthen federal food safety protections, the House bill would carve some 10 percent off the level of funding Congress adopted for last year and had tentatively approved for fiscal 2011. Reducing food safety funding would risk the safety of American consumers as well as the ability of Iowa's meat processing plants to operate at full capacity.

Harkin's full statement on the budget proposals before Congress can be found [here](#).

For a compilation of all outreach pieces on this issue, please click [here](#).