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J. Randy Forbes
United States Congress

4th District, Virginia

July 8, 2009

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The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I am writing to encourage you to review the current peanut butter purchases made by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

As you are aware, the U.S. peanut industry has been through a difficult year. In addition to the salmonella issue identified at the Peanut Corporation of America (PCA), peanut producers are faced with a surplus from the 2008 crop. This has resulted in very few 2009 contracts for peanut producers in the marketplace.

USDA peanut butter purchases peaked in the early 1990's with over 80,000,000 pounds used in federal feeding programs in a marketing year. Unfortunately, USDA purchases have diminished to less than half of that amount in the last decade.

Land grant university and USDA research support the nutritional benefits of peanut butter for both children and adults. This product is rich in protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals. I ask that you also take into consideration that peanut butter is one of the most cost efficient products for American consumers. This too applies to USDA as you prepare your purchases for federal feeding programs.

Increasing peanut butter purchases for USDA feeding programs will benefit consumers and peanut producers. I ask that you consider increasing the amount of peanut butter USDA purchases for federal feeding programs. With kind personal regards, I am

Yours truly,

J. Randy Forbes
Member of Congress