

## **Hoosier Ag Today**

### **Farm Bill Debate Starts with Fireworks**

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**By Matt Kaye**

The Obama Administration's approach to production ag and the next farm bill came under fire Wednesday from the top House Ag Republican in the kick-off to work on the 2012 farm bill. Frank Lucas derided USDA for proposing cuts in key farm programs, while stressing broadband, biofuels, regional food system supply chains, forest restoration and ecosystem market incentives.

“Are those really the primary issues, where the administration’s going to go in this next farm bill? Are you talking about turning rural America into a bedroom community?”

Vilsack denied that, arguing more farmer income today is off-farm, rural unemployment and poverty is higher...and that farmers are aging and the rural population, declining.

“The reality is, if we can create better paying opportunities...within rural America...if you can create centers of energy production, for example, biorefineries, people who have to build those biorefineries, and they’re good paying jobs...and you sprinkle and dot the landscape with those biorefineries...if you create broadband opportunities...you’re creating economic activity.”

Vilsack argued, "this is not about bedroom communities...this is about making rural areas vibrant places, where young people are anxious to set up families."

Lucas wasn't buying it...and pointed out, Democrats AND Republicans overrode President Bush's veto of the '08 farm bill--in a fight, also over the direction of US farm policy.

Lucas served notice to Vilsack, that with farm bill budget dollars rapidly dwindling, ag lawmakers will fight for producers. “I just note to you and to the administration you represent, that this committee will, once again, I believe, work in a bi-partisan interest for the best interest of rural America...and personally, turning us into a bedroom community is not in the best interest of rural America, or production agriculture, or our food and fiber supply in this country.”

Lucas insisted Vilsack deliver his message back to the administration.