

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 28, 2010

Ms. Lisa Jackson
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson,

As you know, Members of the House Rural America Solutions Group held a Forum on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) new regulations, potential missions and related legislation impacting rural job creation and ways of life on September 29, 2010. Many things were learned at this Forum, specifically that some of the EPA's proposed regulations would have a depressing effect on rural jobs and economic growth and that the agency needs to justify its proposed regulations firsthand to rural Americans through listening sessions and meetings.

The fourteen Members of Congress, forum participants and audience that attended, were disappointed that you declined our invitation to participate. However, in your absence, we heard from seven panelists who each made a presentation on a recent EPA regulation, policy or proposal and its impact on rural America. The panelists represented a broad cross-section of the groups and small businesses that are crucial to employment and economic sustainability in rural America. Since you or your staff were unable to attend the Forum, we have included excerpts and key points from panelist statements below.

The first panelist the Rural America Solutions Group heard from was Mr. Norm Semanko, representing the Family Farm Alliance, the National Water Resources Association and the Idaho Water Users Association. Mr. Semanko discussed a variety of EPA's proposed regulations, including the impacts of wetlands regulations, pesticide regulations and House Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Jim Oberstar's (D-MN) proposed legislation (H.R. 5088) to amend the Clean Water Act. He also noted how the EPA is undermining new water storage projects. In his remarks Mr. Semanko stated: "It appears that EPA is moving in a direction where a heavier regulatory hammer will be wielded, litigious actions will be encouraged through the use of "citizen suits", and products used by American farmers and ranchers in the production of food and fiber will be foremost in the sights of EPA regulators." He went on to say: "Huge negative impacts of such destructive policies will be aimed at the heart of the economy in rural America."

Mr. Gerald Simonsen, Chairman of the National Sorghum Producers, traveled from Nebraska to discuss the impacts of the proposed Pesticides General Permit and its negative effects on agriculture producers. During his remarks, Mr. Simonsen cited a study by the University of Chicago which found that banning the widely used pesticide atrazine would cost corn growers as much as \$58 an acre and destroy as many as 48,000 jobs. He left no doubt that the job loss figures would be much higher when combined with other commodity crop production.

Mr. Bob Gabbard, Kentucky resident and CEO of U.S. Coal Corporation, came before the Rural America Solutions Group to talk about EPA's proposed regulations relating to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change legislation. He also discussed EPA permitting regulations that have created standards that are virtually impossible to meet. He noted that EPA actions are threatening to destroy jobs in a region that is already economically depressed and pointed out that EPA actions have already put nearly 160,000 Appalachia jobs in dire jeopardy.

Dr. Tim Considine, Professor of Economics at the University of Wyoming, discussed the economic impacts of potential federal regulation on hydraulic fracturing. Professor Considine discussed how, with the use of hydraulic fracturing techniques, development of the Marcellus shale could lead to the creation of up to 250,000 jobs by 2020. Professor Considine also noted that if a de-facto hydraulic fracturing ban in New York remains, it will contribute to the loss of as many as 27,000 jobs by 2020 in that state. Dr. Considine also reiterated the historical environmental safety record of hydraulic fracturing and mentioned that development of our natural gas resources will decrease dependence on foreign energy and reduce economic hardship and job losses.

We also heard from Ms. Tamara Thies, Chief Environmental Counsel at the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. Her statement was very revealing as far as how numerous regulations put forth by the EPA directly threaten jobs and the American economy. In her opening remarks, Ms. Thies stated "by imposing stringent regulations with all the discretion and judgment of a chronic drunk, the EPA will leave many cattle operations with no recourse but to shut down and eliminate jobs." She went on to say: "It is the Obama Administration's many environmental regulations that are vague, overreaching, costly, unnecessarily burdensome, bizarre, and sometimes illegal that cause economic uncertainty, concern, and insecurity throughout the cattle industry and the entire rural American economy." Ms. Thies' statements succinctly put into words what many in rural America are experiencing.

Mr. Keith Van Scooter, President and CEO of Lincoln Paper and Tissue, traveled from Maine to talk about the EPA's proposal for a new Boiler MACT rule. According to a study cited by Mr. Van Scooter, this proposed regulation would put more than 300,000 jobs at risk. Mr. Van Scooter stated that "EPA has a choice – they can regulate in a way that protects both jobs and the environment – or they can regulate in a way that sacrifices jobs." We agree that the EPA must regulate in a manner which considers the economic impacts of their actions.

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Mr. Wilmer Stoneman III, representing the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, discussed how the EPA's overreaching authority is negatively impacting rural Americans within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. He also talked about how the vast expansion of EPA regulations over the last two years is threatening agricultural producers nationwide. Mr. Stoneman stated: "EPA proposals are overwhelming to farmers and ranchers, and they are creating a cascade of costly requirements that are likely to drive individual farmers to the tipping point." He went on to say: "The economic implications of these proposals will be staggering. The cost they represent will impact the economy as a whole, and this committee should not be surprised when our economy contracts and jobs are lost to foreign competition."

In addition to the above excerpts, which highlight key points from Forum participant statements, we are attaching their full written statements for your information. We encourage you to review these statements in full so that you can gain a better understanding of the impacts EPA actions are having on rural America.

In summary, we believe your agency is overreaching in its massive effort to regulate private lands and waters. As such, we urge you to take a step back to listen and learn firsthand how many of the EPA's proposed regulations will impact rural Americans. Your agency should conduct listening sessions and town meetings in rural communities so that everyone understands the reasons for such proposed regulations as well as the costs and benefits. We hope you agree with us that this rural feedback is necessary.

We also fear that pending legislation, such as H.R. 5088 (Oberstar) is aimed at further expanding the agency's mission over rural communities. Such legislation, which could be considered in the lame-duck session of this Congress under the cover of darkness and without sufficient input, should not be considered given their complexity and enormous impact they could have on rural Americans.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues. We look forward to hearing from you on these matters and hope that you will try to work with the American people and Congress.

Sincerely,



Sam Graves
Co-Chair



Doc Hastings
Co-Chair



Frank Lucas
Co-Chair

Encs.