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Barrow Honored for His Commitment to America's Family Farmers

Washington, DC – At an afternoon reception held earlier this week, 12th District Congressman John Barrow (D-GA) was awarded the *2005 National Farmers Union Presidential Award for Leadership*, an honor recognizing select members of Congress who have demonstrated strong leadership on important issues affecting rural America.

Specifically, Congressman Barrow was recognized for his support of fair trade initiatives to protect American jobs and American agricultural producers from foreign competitors unwilling to adhere to negotiated trade laws. Barrow opposed CAFTA, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, and urged his colleagues in Congress to dramatically improve and strengthen the trade agreement to help protect national interests.

“In the nine months since he took office, Congressman Barrow has quickly shown that he’s willing to do what it takes to fight for rural America,” Dave Frederickson, President of the National Farmers Union said. “He’s pushing to help get fuel and fertilizer costs under control, he’s been an outspoken opponent of unfair trade laws like CAFTA, and he’s argued against proposed cuts in the farm bill.”

“This is a great honor,” Barrow said accepting the award. “I’ve spent a lot of time with family farmers in my district – holding town hall meetings, touring family farms, and meeting with farmers on their turf to talk about the issues that matter to them. That’s the way our democracy is supposed to work and that’s the best way to strengthen rural America – listening, learning, and then turning real concerns into sound policy here in Washington.”

Earlier this year Congressman Barrow joined with Republican Congressman Sam Graves of Missouri to introduce bipartisan legislation that will help bring price stability back to the natural gas market. Natural gas makes up 70-90% of the production costs for nitrogen based fertilizer, and it also heats over 56 million American homes. Despite record high natural gas inventories and near record production in 2003, prices continue to be extremely volatile and are prone to huge spikes. As a result, many of the nation’s farmers have seen their fertilizer costs more than double, while those Americans living on fixed incomes, like many seniors, find themselves spending more and more of their income to heat their homes.

Without harming free market principles, the Barrow's Commodity Improvement Exchange Act would restore common-sense trading limits found on virtually every other publicly traded commodity – limiting daily trading prices of natural gas to an 8 percent increase or decrease, and requiring the CFTC (Commodity Futures Trading Commission) to review and approve future natural gas contracts. The bill has been publicly endorsed by the National Farmers Union.

In June, Barrow set out on a nine county listening tour across Georgia's 12th District – visiting local Farm Bureaus, holding open town hall meetings, and touring family farms throughout eastern Georgia. Some of the issues discussed included affordable quality health care for small businesses and family farms, high energy and fertilizer costs, and the future of the farm bill.

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Contact: Harper Lawson, (202) 225-2823