

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2012

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Minority Whip
United States House of Representatives
H-148, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader Pelosi and Minority Whip Hoyer:

We write to voice our concerns about reports indicating that House leadership is contemplating a year-long extension of farm bill programs in order to go to conference with the Senate on a full, five-year reauthorization. We do not support a process that limits debate on an important bill, bypasses the opportunity for regular order and consideration of necessary reforms, leaves important nutrition and conservation programs open to serious cuts, and under-represents a broad spectrum of the Democratic Party.

Passing a short-term “shell” extension as a vehicle to expedite a conference with the Senate on longer-term legislation would leave most House Democrats out of the negotiating process and would lock significant policy changes in place without the robust debate they deserve. Using a farm bill “extension” in order to go to conference is a charade by Republican leadership to bypass the concerns about the FARRM Act within their own caucus. The bipartisan concerns about this bill are some of the reasons why it deserves at least an open debate, if not significant changes.

There are a wide variety of opinions within the Democratic Party about what a farm bill should look like. While there is clear agreement now that direct payments are an irresponsible use of taxpayer dollars, many of us have concerns about the expanded crop insurance provisions, the cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and conservation programs, anti-environmental and anti-animal welfare riders, and other policies contained in the bill passed by the House Agriculture Committee. In a Conference Committee setting, it is unlikely that the full spectrum of Democratic positions would be represented as many Conferees are likely to have interests that don't match those of rest of the Democratic Caucus.

Any process that moves forward must be transparent and must allow the interests of the Democratic Caucus to be represented. We urge you to do everything in your power to ensure that we have a voice in this debate.

Sincerely,

Earl Blumenauer

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Ron Kind

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Henry Waxman

Henry Waxman
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

André Carson

André Carson
Member of Congress

Hansen Clarke

Hansen Clarke
Member of Congress

William Lacy Clay

William Lacy Clay
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett

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Member of Congress

Susan Davis

Susan Davis
Member of Congress

John Conyers

John Conyers
Member of Congress

Sam Farr

Sam Farr
Member of Congress

Bob Filner

Bob Filner
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Rush Holt

Rush Holt
Member of Congress

Mike Honda

Mike Honda
Member of Congress

Hank Johnson

Hank Johnson
Member of Congress

William R. Keating


William Keating
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Dennis Kucinich
Member of Congress


James Langevin
Member of Congress

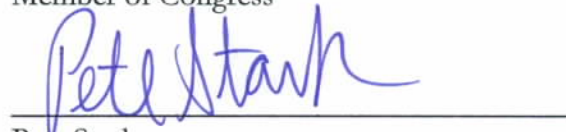

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



James Moran
Member of Congress

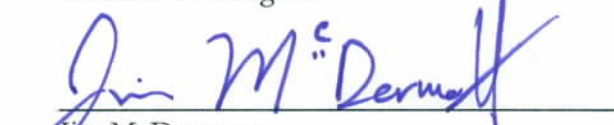

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Member of Congress


Adam Smith
Member of Congress


Jackie Speier
Member of Congress



Pete Stark
Member of Congress

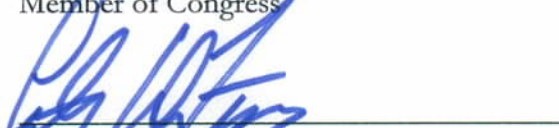

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