



I Want to Hear From You!

Send an e-mail or call to join my **Agricultural Advisory Group**

Farmers are vitally important to our economy. I would appreciate your input and suggestions regarding agriculture or other federal issues.

Please log on to www.kind.house.gov and send me an email or call 1-888-442-8040 to join my agriculture advisory group.

Need Help?

The WI Farm Center provides services to Wisconsin farmers and agribusinesses to promote the vitality of the state's agricultural economy and rural communities

If you need assistance, please call:

1-800-942-2474

AGRICULTURE NEWS

A Message from Congressman Ron Kind

This spring, I have continued to focus on ways we can improve the economy and get western Wisconsin back to work. Our economic recovery has been slow but it has been steady, and I'm hopeful that after 13 consecutive months of private sector job growth that we will continue to see improvement. But a healthy economy also needs a solid base, and that means getting our deficits under control. Family farmers across western Wisconsin know that a budget is about priorities. That means identifying what investments are necessary and where wasteful spending can be eliminated. I am committed to making the tough choices to balance our budget and rein in the deficit without undermining programs that are vital to our economy and to western Wisconsin families.

As you've likely seen in the news, there have been a lot of cost cutting ideas thrown out on the table. If we are to truly cut our spending in the long-term, we need to examine programs that are not only growing significantly in cost but are both unnecessary and unfair to taxpayers. I have started with examining defense spending, farm subsidies and earmarks. In addition, I will work to build on healthcare reforms to continue lowering costs and improving care for patients. You can read more about my plan in this newsletter and on my website. I also strongly encourage you to contact me with your ideas about how we can reduce spending and get our country on a sound fiscal path.



2012 Farm Bill

Congress will once again need to take up a farm bill in order to extend farm programs, which are currently scheduled to expire on September 30, 2012. This reauthorization process will give us a chance to eliminate programs that we don't need and modify the ones that we do. I am optimistic that we will finally reform the costly taxpayer subsidies that mostly go to a few very large agribusinesses. These subsidies are not financially responsible, do not help family farmers, distort the marketplace, and make it more difficult for new farmers to enter farming. They've also led to greater consolidation in food production and have driven up land values. Previous Administrations, Republican and Democratic alike, agree that our farm subsidy program is in need of reform. Taking an honest look at these subsidies to eliminate unnecessary spending going to big agribusiness will significantly impact our long-term deficits – something I have advocated for years as a budget cutting proposal.



Ron and Dawn Hundt, an organic farmer and active organizer with "The Whole Plate" in Viroqua, talk about the importance of locally grown food in western Wisconsin.

“Rural America continues facing many challenges and it is imperative that we have leaders like Congressman Kind who are dedicated to creating jobs for rural residents while maintaining a strong safety net for our farmers.”

*Agriculture Secretary
Tom Vilsack*

Deficit Reduction Plan

I'm committed to making the tough decisions to actually cut wasteful and unnecessary spending. We can do that by reforming four categories of spending. Please visit the website below to read my Deficit Reduction Plan.

www.go.usa.gov/byt

Secretary Vilsack Meets with Western Wisconsin Farmers

In September, I joined Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack at meetings with local farmers and community members focused on agriculture, rural economic development, current efforts at creating jobs and growing the economy.

We first met with a group of about 60 members of the ag community at Goplin Homestead Dairy Farm in Osseo to discuss rural economic development and efforts to support local farmers. We

discussed tax credits and incentives to help farmers access the credit market and stay afloat in a tough economy. Other topics also included the use of biofuels as well as the importance of farm subsidy reform. Many attendees expressed concerns with dairy prices and asked questions that ranged from immigration to starting a farm to accessing credit.

Secretary Vilsack and I then traveled to Tri County Communications in Strum, where

we were able to join a roundtable of local businesses and co-ops to discuss efforts to promote rural economic development, including increased access to broadband Internet, and spur job creation.

Small businesses and family farmers are the backbone of our economy and the lifeblood of our communities. I'm pleased that Secretary Vilsack was able to visit western Wisconsin and hear from local farmers.

Averting a Government Shutdown

Early this April, I was thankful that Democrats and Republicans in the House of Representatives were able to find a compromise and avoid a government shutdown. Had my colleagues across the aisle had their way, the budget would have made significant cuts to farm loans and severely impacted both trade and pricing of agricultural products.

In fact, the Congressional Research Service found that the original Republican budget proposal cut more than \$5 billion (nearly 25%) from the USDA's budget, including major cuts to the Farm Services Agency. Our credit-worthy farmers rely on the county offices of the Farm Services Agency to help them get direct and guaranteed farm loans to ensure that they can get the resources they need to stay competitive in today's market. Abruptly cutting funds for this important agency simply makes it harder for our constituents to get the basic services they



Ron and Secretary Vilsack discuss commodity prices with western Wisconsin farmers in Osseo.

need. This is something that I could not stand for – our family farmers do not deserve this burden in an already tough economic environment. I have long fought for FSA resources so that credit-worthy farmers aren't forced to close their farms simply because they can't get the loans they need.

At the same time their budget made these cuts that hurt our hardworking farmers, my colleagues across the aisle refused to touch wasteful spending programs that would actually reduce the

deficit. I offered an amendment to put an end to one such program. According to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, we are paying \$147 million every year to subsidize the Brazilian cotton industry simply because we are unwilling to reform our own cotton subsidy programs. I think this is wrong. Unfortunately, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle refused to see this subsidy as unnecessary and this amendment failed.

Reforming Dairy Programs

In addition to subsidy reform, budget proposals from both Democrats and Republicans would cut \$2-3 billion per year from direct payments and crop insurance. These cuts are in line with suggestions made by the chairmen of the President's Deficit Commission and by outside groups including the Center for American Progress and the Bipartisan Policy Center's Debt Reduction Task Force. These reforms are a good first step toward fiscal responsibility and helping to create a more level playing field for family farmers. Not only do we need to provide farmers the tools to responsibly manage risk, but we need to reward them for being responsible stewards of the land.

To reform our dairy programs to help farmers better deal with the excessive volatility in the market, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack created the Dairy Industry Advisory Committee in August 2009. I was proud that three Wisconsinites I supported were eventually appointed to this committee. In March 2011, the Committee came out with their final recommendations for improving dairy programs, which included exploring the elimination of end product pricing, creating a growth management program, and reforming the Milk Income Loss Contract program (MILC) to use an all-milk income/feed cost margin trigger. These recommendations will play an important role in shaping the debate over the future

of dairy policy. You can download a copy of the report at <http://go.usa.gov/Tu6>.

The National Milk Producers Federation has also released a comprehensive plan called "Foundation for the Future," which would eliminate both the MILC program and the Dairy Product Price Support program and instead implement a margin protection program, reform federal milk marketing orders, and put in place a growth management system. This proposal has significant support from a number of organizations representing dairy producers across the country. I encourage you to visit their website to learn more about their proposal.

High Prices, High Costs

Fortunately, milk prices have climbed back to a more decent price. Yet I know that these higher prices are not necessarily turning into higher profits. On the other hand, commodity prices across the board are at all-time highs right now. For livestock producers, the hike in commodity prices means another jump in feed costs and for recovering dairy producers the tight margins continue to put a strain on operations. A sharp increase in fuel costs over the past year has also impacted the cost of production for our farmers. While the link between fuel costs and commodity prices is still

being debated, I am particularly concerned that both Congress and the Administration are not taking rising energy costs seriously enough. We need a sustainable, comprehensive energy plan that moves us away from our dependence on foreign oil. At the same time, a new American energy policy must focus on alternative and renewable energy sources here at home and support new technologies that help us become more energy efficient. It's time for both sides to come together and work on practical solutions to this energy crisis.



Ron and Secretary Vilsack speak to farm group leaders about agriculture reform at Goplin Homestead Dairy.



What happens in Washington, D.C. can have a major impact on the family farm. Stay connected to me online in order to ensure you have the most up-to-date information on key bills before Congress. In addition, I frequently ask for your input on today's most important issues.



Flood Damage?

You may qualify for federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Please call your county Farm Service Agency office or contact the state office at:

608-662-4422

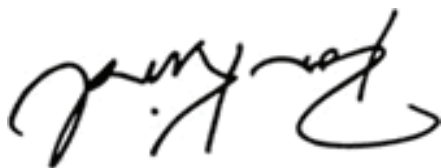
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Violation Hotline

Available 24 hours

1-800-TIP-WDNR or #367 by cellular phone

Text: TIPWDNR [space] followed by the tip to 847411 (tip411)

