

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 19, 2006

The Honorable Robert F. Bennett
Chairman
Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee
188 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Herb Kohl
Ranking Member
Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee
188 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Bennett and Ranking Member Kohl:

The challenges that you face in assembling the annual agriculture appropriations bill are always great, and we are certain that this year will be no different. We appreciate your support last year in improving on flawed proposals that would have drastically reduced critical base funds.

Again this year, we and our colleagues are writing to urge you to protect funding to support America's land-grant university system and to reject the changes to the base funding accounts proposed in the President's FY 2007 Budget.

There are eight base fund accounts administered by the USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service: (1) Hatch Act; (2) McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry; (3) Animal Health and Disease; (4) Evans-Allen; (5) 1890s Extension; (6) Smith-Lever 3(b) and 3(c); (7) Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program; and (8) Institution Challenge Grants.

While these base fund programs were authorized at different times and for specific purposes, they share one important attribute: federal appropriations are matched—at least dollar-for-dollar and often at a much higher multiple—by state and county appropriations. Together, these combined county, state, and federal resources leverage billions of dollars in competitive grants and private funding. But, all of this starts with and depends upon the federal base fund appropriations.

As you are well aware, these base funds are also critical to sustain the research, education, and extension efforts which are advancing human knowledge and scientific understanding in numerous fields and helping U.S. food and fiber producers maintain their global leadership. Unfortunately, the United States is not keeping pace with other nations (most notably China and India) when it comes to public expenditures on food, agriculture, and natural resources programs. Statistics released by the Food and Agriculture Organization's Science Council in December 2005 show that India and China increased public agricultural R&D spending from 1981 to 2000 by 248 percent and 200 percent (respectively), while similar spending in the United States did not

experience growth by more than double digits over the same 20 year period. Moreover, the base fund accounts at CSREES have actually lost buying power over the past decade while other U.S. science programs have increased dramatically.

Last year, you stood with us and the University system to defeat the drastic reductions proposed in the President's budget. We are writing to urge you, once again, to reject the proposals that would fundamentally change the Hatch Act and McIntire-Stennis funding allocation policies to the detriment of many institutions, and would eliminate completely the Animal Health and Disease Program. This year, like last year, such drastic changes are unwarranted.

To the contrary, it is clear that a sustained effort will be required for the United States to maintain its leadership position with respect to food, agriculture, and natural resources research, extension, and education. We urge the subcommittee to address this situation through continued funding for the base fund programs at CSREES, with reasonable increases in these key programs as proposed by the State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges who carry out these programs, to the greatest extent possible within your allocation.

Thanking you for your continuing support and consideration.

Sincerely,



Olympia J. Snowe



Blanche L. Lincoln



Susan M. Collins



James M. Jeffords



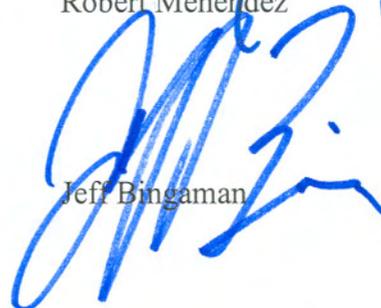
Saxby Chambliss



Robert Menerdez



Tim Johnson



Jeff Bingaman



Pat Roberts



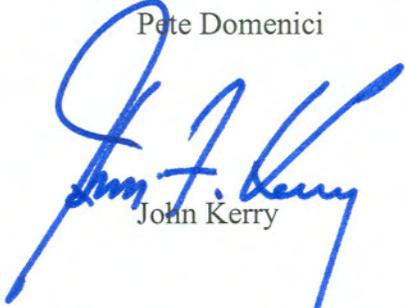
Debbie Stabenow



Pete Domenici



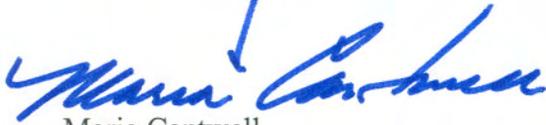
Daniel K. Akaka



John Kerry



Richard Lugar



Maria Cantwell



Frank R. Lautenberg



Russell D. Feingold



Mark Pryor