



January 18, 2012

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In your first State of the Union, you noted that “small towns and rural communities have been hit especially hard” by the recession. What was true then is still true today: rural communities across America are struggling to rebuild in the wake of closed factories, empty Main streets, and record unemployment that exceeds the national average. Many rural Americans lack access to basic necessities, like clean drinking water, sanitary sewers, local healthcare facilities, and adequate fire and police protection.

So, as you prepare for your upcoming State of the Union Address, we ask you to remember the roughly 50 million Americans who live in rural areas. We ask that in your address, you publicly commit to working with Congress to reauthorize the Farm Bill in a way that revitalizes the rural communities that form the backbone of our heartland.

A strong and robust Rural Development Title is critical to ensuring that rural entrepreneurs have access to the credit they need; that small-town utilities can continue to provide affordable water and sewer services to local residents; that small towns can build facilities essential for public health and safety; and that every American has access to high-speed broadband internet.

Congress is aware of these issues and Chairman Stabenow and Chairman Lucas have demonstrated a commitment to reauthorize the Farm Bill this year. By calling for support for Rural Development programs in your State of the Union address, you can ensure that small-town business owners, mayors, and community leaders have access to the tools they need to rebuild, re-energize, and revitalize their local economies.

We thank you for your efforts to date in establishing the White House Rural Council, and look forward to working with the Council, your Administration, and Congress to pass a Farm Bill reauthorization that creates jobs in rural America, protects the health and safety of rural residents, and improves the quality of life in rural communities.



Sincerely,

Rural Community Assistance Partnership
American Public Works Association
Center for Rural Affairs
Coastal Enterprises Maine
Corporation for Economic Development
Forest Guild
HomeCorps
Homestead Affordable Housing
HomeStretch Nonprofit Housing Corporation
Housing Assistance Council
Illinois Rural Partners
League of Rural Voters
National Association of Counties
National Association of Development Organizations
National Association of Towns and Townships
National League of Cities
National Network of Forest Practitioners
National Rural Development Partnership
National Rural Health Association
National Telecommunications Cooperative Association
NeighborWorks Umpqua
PathStone New York
South Delta Regional Housing Authority
Stand Up for Rural America
The Support Center North Carolina
Watershed Research and Training Center
Wyoming Rural Development Council
YouthBuild USA