

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2013

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Thank you for your steady commitment to our nation's farmers, ranchers, and entire agricultural system. We write to express deep concerns about budget reductions scheduled to take effect on March 1, 2013 due to sequestration. Specifically, we urge you to protect funding for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). APHIS is essential to our nation's ability to prevent invasive species and diseases through important research and eradication measures, and in ensuring our food security.

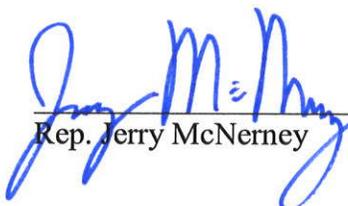
APHIS is responsible for protecting U.S. agriculture from domestic and foreign pests and diseases so that our agricultural economy can remain strong. Without adequate resources to facilitate science-based inspections and responses to diseases and invasive species, our nation's agricultural economy will disproportionately suffer, causing much more economic loss than would be saved through devastating cuts to APHIS.

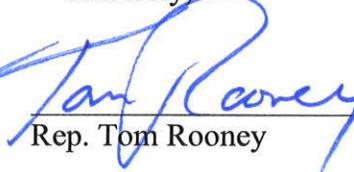
Agriculture is one sector where the U.S. has a trade surplus, which in recent years has reached over \$40 billion dollars. APHIS plays a key role in protecting our farmers and ranchers from potential pests and diseases. For instance, U.S. agricultural producers have had endured more than 130 federal quarantines over the last four years. Farmers are dealing with a growing number of threats - such as the Asian Citrus Psyllid, Oriental Fruit Fly, Emerald Ash Borer, and the European Grapevine Moth. Providing common sense, cost-effective tools, such as those offered by APHIS, are imperative to a healthy agricultural economy.

We recognize that difficult budgetary decisions must be made, and that sequestration places great strain on your department. However, we can save more money by preventing invasive pests and diseases rather than attempting to manage the problem after it's too late. During this fiscal climate, I ask for your full consideration in assuring APHIS is adequately supported as it has been in the past.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter and for your work on behalf of farmers and ranchers everywhere. We look forward to working with you to resolve this important matter.

Sincerely,


Rep. Jerry McNerney


Rep. Tom Rooney


Rep. Juan Vargas