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HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

HOUSE REPUBLICAN WHIP TEAM

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-4313

April 26, 2021

The Honorable Thomas Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write to you regarding our concerns for the Biden Administration's workplace safety decision-making, to urge this administration to follow local guidelines and re-open Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) facilities to an operable capacity, and to request a meeting with you to discuss these matters. At a time when our nation's farmers are battling the uncertainty of an unprecedented pandemic, years of trying production and market conditions, and severe winter storms, we should be utilizing every tool we have to get them the aid they need. However, this administration's restrictions on re-opening FPAC facilities have exacerbated the struggles of farm families across the country.

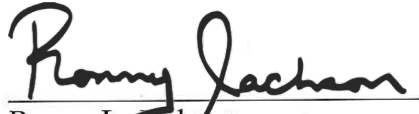
As you know, through FPAC, the U.S. Department of Agriculture helps to implement programs designed to mitigate the significant risks of farming through crop insurance services, conservation programs, technical assistance, commodity programs, lending, and disaster programs. One key component of FPAC is the Farm Service Agency, which helps to provide America's farmers with a strong safety net through the administration of farm commodity and disaster programs.

However, due to this administration's COVID Workplace Safety Plan, these facilities are required to maintain staffing at low levels for the entire agency and telework is being strongly encouraged. While the intent behind this plan may be noble, farmers and ranchers have expressed dissatisfaction with the widespread setbacks they have experienced in your offices' ability to process relief nationwide, due to the limits imposed. Moreover, many farmers struggle with accessing reliable broadband, further aggravating the difficulty that they face in engaging their local FSA office by computer. These challenges could greatly impact the farm families that we represent, which is why we are urging you to reconsider the restrictions.

In recent years, the agriculture industry has dealt with numerous setbacks which have created a need to bring relief and support to the food and agriculture industry. Unfortunately, this administration's one-size-fits-all approach to staffing only amplifies these setbacks and will have grave implications if they are not rectified immediately. As such, we request a meeting with you to discuss these implications, and we urge this administration to reconsider these actions and to

make a commitment to our farmers and ranchers by opening these aid facilities through an exemption to your COVID Workplace Safety Plan.

Thank you,



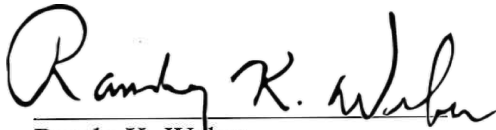
Ronny L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Michael Cloud
Member of Congress



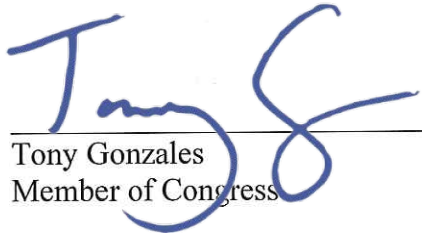
Jodey C. Arrington
Member of Congress



Randy K. Weber
Member of Congress



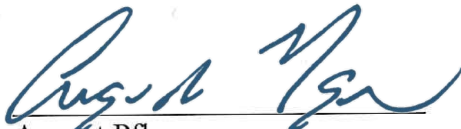
Pete Sessions
Member of Congress



Tony Gonzales
Member of Congress



Louie Gohmert
Member of Congress



August Pfluger
Member of Congress