

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 5, 2011

The President
1400 Pennsylvania Avenue
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

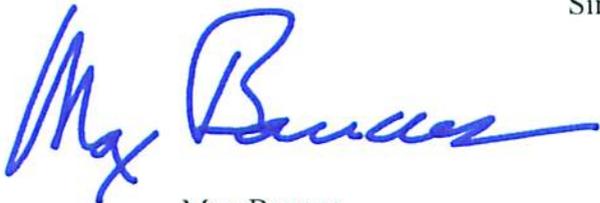
Every month, families across the nation must sit down and balance their budgets to live within their means. For too long, the government has not done the same. Tackling the current national debt crisis is one of the most important issues Congress must face this year.

As we continue to work toward a compromise on spending for fiscal year 2011, the conversation has shifted from just discretionary spending cuts to include mandatory spending cuts as well. Agriculture is prepared to contribute its fair share in putting our fiscal house in order. In fact, the baseline for agriculture was reduced by \$6 billion (\$4 billion of which went to deficit reduction) just last year as a result of the renegotiation of the Standard Reinsurance Agreement. However, it does not make sense to single out the agricultural budget for cuts that will do little to reduce spending in the short run while greatly complicating reauthorization of the Farm Bill later this Congress.

Instead of making arbitrary cuts now through an appropriations bill, we urge that the Agriculture Committee be given the responsibility for crafting any necessary reductions as part of the reauthorization of the 2008 Farm Bill (P.L. 110-246, Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008). The Agriculture Committee has already started hearings on the Farm Bill reauthorization, and it is in the best position to craft balanced policies that will preserve our farm safety net, maintain vital nutrition programs, and support economic development and job creation in rural America.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We look forward to working together towards responsible deficit reduction that does not unfairly target rural America.

Sincerely,



Max Baucus
U.S. Senator



Kent Conrad
U.S. Senator