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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC

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**CHIEF DEPUTY WHIP
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**COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
AND COMMERCE**

VICE CHAIR -- ENERGY AND AIR
QUALITY SUBCOMMITTEE

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COMMERCE, TRADE AND CONSUMER
PROTECTION SUBCOMMITTEE

February 3, 2009

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As the Administration considers new rules to improve the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), I would respectfully urge you to include protections for family farmers and the American agriculture economy.

As you know, agriculture is a critically important part of the economy. In 2008, the agriculture sector is projected to have contributed more than \$130 billion to the U.S. economy. Estimates also indicate that this sector employs 14 percent of the total workforce and accounts for nearly 5 percent of the total U.S. gross domestic product.

As we look ahead this year, farming families face a great number of challenges and uncertainties. The global financial crisis, economic recession, rising unemployment, limited credit availability and plummeting asset values are all contributing to a severe weakening of consumer demand and could jeopardize the long-term viability of farming.

As a condition of receiving TARP funds, I would respectfully urge the Administration to obligate banks or other financial institutions to allow farmers to restructure loans when farmers are unable to make scheduled payments due to circumstances beyond their control, such as the current broad-based economic downturn. This would provide a critical protection because most family farmers live on their farms, and their homes are often used as security for farm loans.

This would extend loan protections to family farmers in ways that compare to those already mandated for Farm Service Agency (FSA) farm loans, and it would prevent home foreclosures and bankruptcy among farmers and ranchers. In addition, loan restructuring mandates do not require an investment from the federal government and prevent banks from losing funds as a result of foreclosure and loan default.

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Family farmers play such an important role in our local and national economies, and as we work to rebuild our economy it is vitally important that we do all we can to keep these families on their farms.

Thank you very much.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. K. Butterfield". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font with a prominent loop at the end.

G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress