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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Agriculture**  
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June 13, 2011

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The Honorable David Dreier  
Chairman  
Committee on Rules  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you know, the Committee on Rules will today consider crafting the rule governing debate on H.R. 2112, legislation making appropriations for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies. This bill contains unprecedented assaults upon the jurisdiction of the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture, and I ask that the Rules Committee protect the rights of the members of the Agriculture Committee to challenge these attacks upon our jurisdiction.

During consideration of H.R. 2112, the Appropriations Committee adopted amendments that would effectively amend the 2008 Farm Bill; the results of which could be detrimental to current farm safety net programs. As these amendments constitute legislation on an appropriations bill, they fail to comply with clause 2 of rule XXI of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives. Consequently, they should be struck out by a point of order.

There are legitimate policy differences among Members regarding how farm safety net programs should be structured; but those differences should be hashed out in the legislative process for the 2012 Farm Bill. In the past, the Rules Committee has waived all points of order against provisions that did not comply with clause 2 of rule XXI. I would ask the Committee not to protect these amendments from such points of order when it crafts the rule governing debate on H.R. 2112.

H.R. 2112 also contains large reductions in many of the programs authorized and funded through the 2008 Farm Bill. Appropriators have used these CHanges In Mandatory Program Spending (CHIMPS) for years in order to fund other priorities. However, H.R. 2112 contains an unprecedented \$1.845 billion in CHIMPS. Many of these CHIMPS are significant cuts to conservation programs, which will leave farmers and ranchers without the necessary tools to meet burdensome regulatory requirements. The last time CHIMPS

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approached these levels was in FY06 when they reached \$1.666 billion, which was even higher than CHIMPS enacted in FY11, \$1.502 billion. This is dramatically different from CHIMPS in agriculture appropriations bills during FY07-10, which averaged just \$763 million.

Decisions on how much mandatory spending should be allocated to programs that benefit farmers, rural communities, researchers and others should be made by the authorizing committee, not appropriators. Therefore, I would also ask the Rules Committee not to protect these CHIMPS and the other legislating provisions when you craft the rule governing debate on H.R. 2112 and allow authorizers to raise relevant points of order.

There is no doubt that we have to get our financial house in order and agriculture is willing to do its part. However, under the 302 (b) allocation given to the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, agriculture shoulders a disproportionate share of cuts. The allocation left appropriators with such limited resources that they used cuts to mandatory programs to fund their priorities. While I understand the budget constraints, I fear that if appropriators continue to take from the farm safety net it could potentially cost the government more money, not less. We've seen this before and it appears, to me, we're heading down this road again.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Collin Peterson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Collin Peterson  
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Louise Slaughter