

February 23, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Norm Dicks
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Daniel Inouye
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Speaker Boehner, Chairman Rogers, Chairman Inouye, Ranking Member Dicks and Ranking Member Cochran:

We are writing to strongly urge you to support the continued funding of the United States Department of Agriculture's Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP). HR 1, the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011," proposes severe cutbacks to BCAP, a program vital to rural economies and the health of forests across the Nation.

Reducing or eliminating BCAP is "penny wise and pound foolish." In the past 10 years, 49 million acres of U.S. forests have burned to the ground, costing taxpayers \$8.2 billion. Many of these fires occurred because woody biomass debris—the main fuel for these fires which has no value for use as paper or forest products -- was left in the forest to decay. The result has been costly for taxpayers and devastating for local communities plagued by fires, insect infestations and the threat of continued ecological damage.

Quite simply, BCAP leverages modest federal dollars by providing an incentive for the private sector to remove the debris that places forests at risk—residues, thinning and slash—and turn it into energy, creating and sustaining jobs in rural communities.

In addition to being a bargain for taxpayers and helping protect our forests, biomass accounts for nearly 50% of the Nation's renewable energy supply—and yet, government support is virtually nonexistent relative to other forms of renewable or fossil-based energy. For example, of the approximately \$5.9 billion awarded as part of the Section 1603 grant program, less than 2% went to biomass— despite the simple fact that biomass provides the double benefit of providing *both* renewable energy and significant, good paying rural jobs. Moreover, Section 45 tax credits were not extended for existing facilities after 2009, and new biomass only receives 50% of the value of tax credits available to other renewables.

Many of the jobs provided by the biomass industry contribute to rural economies with few employment opportunities. From loggers and truckers to facility managers, there is an entire supply chain of workers who rely on biomass to provide for their families.

In short, BCAP is a cost-effective means of supporting renewable energy and delivering environmental benefits while contributing to struggling economies in small town America.

We are biomass facility operators, vendors, suppliers, truckers and others whose livelihood depends on the biomass industry. We urge you to fight for continued full funding for the Biomass Crop Assistance Program to keep the biomass industry – the Nation's most important renewable energy resource – alive and well.

Sincerely,

Bob Cleaves, President and CEO of the Biomass Power Association (Portland, ME)
Gary Melow, Director of Michigan Biomass (Ithaca, MI)
And 205 biomass supporters across the country