

May 7, 2020

Senator John Hoeven
338 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Kevin Cramer
400 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator John Thune
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Mike Rounds
502 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Chuck Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Joni Ernst
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Deb Fischer
454 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Ben Sasse
107 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Amy Klobuchar
425 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Tina Smith
720 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Kelly Armstrong
1004 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Dusty Johnson
1508 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Steve King
2210 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Cindy Axne
330 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Abby Finkenauer
124 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Dave Loebsack
1211 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Adrian Smith
502 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Jeff Fortenberry
1514 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Jim Hagedorn
325 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Collin Peterson
2204 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of rural electric cooperatives located in the states and districts you represent, we write to respectfully request much-needed economic relief for rural America, which continues to suffer from the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic. Rural electric cooperatives were created to provide electricity to farms and rural communities and have continued to expand this essential service as rural America has grown and prospered. Our member-owners have invested billions in not only electric infrastructure through their cooperative to serve these areas, but also in helping to develop the rural economy in which they live. These investments have allowed for diversification into biofuels, food processing, and other business development opportunities.

With respect to the biofuels industry, the steep drop in liquid fuel demand across the country has resulted in a major economic impact on biofuels processing plants across the country. In addition, several food processing facilities have either idled or been forced to shut down because of the virus. These events have left producers of several agricultural commodities without a market for their product, forcing some to euthanize animals or destroy their products. The pandemic has compounded the impacts of low commodity prices and extreme weather events that had already created a struggling farm and rural economy.

As Congress considers another potential stimulus package, we request your support for additional relief that will specifically benefit food and ethanol processing plants, and the farmers and ranchers who serve them - most of whom are also members of an electric cooperative. Estimates show as much as half of U.S. ethanol production has been idled. Without ethanol sales, our corn farmers are significantly harmed. Reduced ethanol production and livestock processing threatens our food and energy security, and in turn results in reduced electric load, a burden that ultimately falls on the individual members of an electric cooperative. The combination of these issues poses a significant threat to the overall well-being of the rural communities that we serve.

We urge your continued support of the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS) and ask for your assistance in helping the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognize the need to stabilize ethanol demand, especially during this pandemic. As gasoline demand falls across the country, the amount of ethanol blended into the nation's fuel supply will decrease dramatically, reducing the total demand for biofuels. We ask that you reject any attempts by EPA to grant new waivers to the RFS, and encourage the EPA to rein-in the use of Small Refinery Exemptions, which undermined renewable fuel use and harmed biofuel producers long before the added impacts of the pandemic.

Further, additional economic support is necessary through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). We have learned that the USDA is unlikely to directly provide biofuels producers any of the increased funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act appropriated to the Commodity Credit Corporation. Any additional stimulus legislation must provide biofuels-specific support. Failure to do so will significantly threaten investments made to develop biofuel and agricultural processing infrastructure, and the role these facilities play in supporting rural communities.

Again, these industries are absolutely vital to the economic health of rural America, and we appreciate your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Bismarck ND
Central Power Electric Cooperative, Minot ND
McLean Electric Cooperative, Garrison ND
Dakota Valley Electric Cooperative, Edgeley ND
Roughrider Electric Cooperative, Hazen ND
Minnkota Power Cooperative, Grand Forks ND
East River Electric Power Cooperative, Madison SD
Central Electric Cooperative, Mitchell SD
FEM Electric Association, Ipswich SD
Northern Electric Cooperative, Bath SD
Oahe Electric Cooperative, Blunt SD
Sioux Valley Energy, Colman SD
Southeastern Electric Cooperative, Marion SD
Agralite Electric Cooperative, Benson MN
Federated Rural Electric Association, Jackson MN
Minnesota Valley Cooperative Light and Power Association, Montevideo MN
Redwood Electric Cooperative, Clements MN
South Central Electric Association, St. James MN
Upper Missouri Power Cooperative, Sidney MT
Harrison County Rural Electric Cooperative, Woodbine IA
North West Rural Electric Cooperative, Orange City, IA
Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative, Le Mars IA
Corn Belt Power Cooperative, Humboldt IA
Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, Estherville IA
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative, Glidden IA
Midland Power Cooperative, Jefferson IA
Nishnabotna Valley Rural Electric Cooperative, Harlan IA
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative, Allison IA
L&O Power Cooperative, Rock Rapids IA

Osceola Electric Cooperative, Sibley IA

Nebraska Electric Generation and Transmission Cooperative, Columbus NE

North Dakota Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives

Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives

South Dakota Rural Electric Association

Minnesota Rural Electric Association

Nebraska Rural Electric Association

CC: Governor Doug Burgum
Governor Kristi Noem
Governor Kim Reynolds
Governor Tim Walz
Governor Pete Ricketts