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Senator Charles E. Schumer
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Senator Pat Roberts
109 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Senator Debbie Stabenow
731 Hart Senate Office Building
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Dear Senators:

We wish to congratulate our colleagues on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry for successfully advancing the nomination of Governor Sonny Perdue to be our nation's next Secretary of Agriculture. Governor Perdue clearly demonstrated that he has a strong command of the issues at his confirmation hearing, and we believe he has the qualities, background, and experience needed to be a successful Secretary of Agriculture. We support and eagerly await his confirmation in the full Senate.

America's farmers, ranchers, and rural America in general are facing very serious challenges. Net farm income has collapsed by 50 percent over the past four years and unemployment rates in rural America remain higher than in urban areas. Earlier this month, highly pathogenic avian influenza was discovered in a commercial poultry flock along the Mississippi Flyway. In the southern high plains, wildfires have burned more than two million acres, killed thousands of livestock, and tragically took human life. The U.S. Department of Agriculture plays the lead role in responding to these and many other serious situations that are unfolding, and the Department absolutely must have someone at the helm.

Beyond the challenges that await the Secretary upon confirmation, we have been presented a budget blueprint for discretionary spending that had no input from the nation's Secretary of Agriculture. It is vitally important that America's farmers and ranchers—who have already

endured billions of dollars in cuts under the last Farm Bill —have a seat at the table in any discussions about further budget cuts.

We strongly support the speedy confirmation of Governor Sonny Perdue as the next Secretary of Agriculture. On behalf of our nation's farmers and ranchers, and all of rural America, we encourage you to complete this process this week.

Respectfully,


K. Michael Conaway
Chairman


Collin C. Peterson
Ranking Member