

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 3, 2006

The Honorable Bill Frist
Senate Majority Leader
S-230, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Democratic Leader
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Frist and Reid:

Many areas of our country are currently facing an extremely severe drought. Agriculture producers in these hard hit areas have gone months, even years, without measurable precipitation. Their need for assistance is urgent and becoming critical.

This problem is not limited to one area of the country. The most recent U.S. Drought Monitor illustrates that a severe drought now covers an area from North Dakota to southern Texas; from western Arizona to Georgia. This drought will only worsen as we progress through the summer.

Farms and ranches, which have been in families for generations, face being sold off because of this drought. If that occurs, we jeopardize our safe, dependable food source. We must then look to other countries to provide the food on our tables. These producers need relief in the form of an agriculture disaster assistance package.

Farmers and ranchers are running out of options and, more importantly, time. We strongly urge you to agree upon a scheduled time on the legislative calendar to debate and quickly pass an agriculture disaster assistance package, shortly after the Senate returns in September. We understand there are few legislative days remaining in the year, but we are fully committed to working with you and the committees of jurisdiction to expeditiously find the proper mechanism and the best vehicle for its passage. Between now and the end of the Senate recess period, we will be working to put together a bipartisan package that we can take to the floor. One option may be to include drought assistance for crop year 2006 in the FY 2007 Agriculture Appropriations bill, which already contains disaster relief for the 2005 crop year and was passed by the Appropriations Committee on June 22. We respectfully call upon you to support this request and work with us to provide much needed relief to American farmers and ranchers.

Thank you for your careful consideration of such an important matter.

Sincerely,



Handwritten signature of Bill Frist in blue ink, positioned above a horizontal line.



Handwritten signature of Harry Reid in blue ink, positioned above a horizontal line.

Jim Alt

Kent Conrad

Ken Salazar

Conrad Burns

Marco Poyser

Jeff Bond

Pat Roberts

Sam Swank

E. Benjamin Johnson

Max Baucus

Blanche L. Lincoln

Asule Haber

Mack Dayton

Wayne Allard

Byron T. Dwyer
