



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives

May 13, 2008

The Honorable Jeff Flake  
240 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Flake:

Thank you for your letter regarding the farm bill.

I don't believe it is sufficient for House Republican members to simply "vote their districts" on this bill. I believe they should also vote their consciences, and cast their votes in a manner consistent with the small government principles upon which our party was founded. I appreciate the opportunity to make this clear, and I hope you'll work with me to convince all of our colleagues to view the upcoming vote in this light.

The farm bill – which reaffirms flawed policies, and carries earmarks that were "airdropped" into the bill – symbolizes a broken Washington.

During the House Republican retreat this past January, House Republicans adopted a series of earmark reform principles. One of those principles was "no more airdrops" – because we recognized Americans are fed up with the practice of dropping wasteful earmarks into bills at the last minute with little to no scrutiny or public debate. In the months since our retreat, we've lived by those principles, while the Democratic majority has arrogantly thumbed its nose at them.

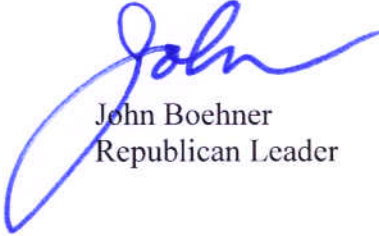
The farm bill is the latest evidence of this contrast. It contains a number of earmarks that were airdropped into the bill out of thin air, including an earmark for the salmon industry requested by Speaker Nancy Pelosi herself. It also includes an outrageous, deceptively written earmark that would spend \$250 million in taxpayer money to help one company – the Plum Creek Timber Company, in the home state of Democratic Senator Max Baucus – under the bogus guise of protecting fish that live in forests. "Forest fish." And tonight it was revealed that Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy has included an earmark in the bill that provides for the non-competitive sale of portions of the Green Mountain National Forest to a ski resort.

This approach signals that Congress intends to continue wasting Americans' hard-earned money at a time when millions of families are struggling to make ends meet. We shouldn't support it.

The farm bill also extends flawed policies that keep American farmers dependent on government subsidies and discourage other countries from opening their markets to American farm exports. This approach doesn't help American farmers; it hurts them. We shouldn't support it.

President Bush has rightly vowed to veto this legislation if it reaches his desk. Senator John McCain has rightly vowed he will veto similar bills if they reach his desk when he is President. I will be voting against the farm bill, which is a symbol of a broken Washington, and I am urging all House Republicans to join me in voting "no."

Sincerely,



John Boehner  
Republican Leader