

Senator Johnson's Weekly Ag Round-Up: January 22, 2010

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Johnson Welcomes Haitian Children to United States with New Ties to South Dakota

As a plane load of more than 50 Haitian orphans touched down in Pennsylvania January 19, 2010, it marked the homecoming for two children with new ties to South Dakota. U.S. Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD), who contacted the State Department last week to urge fast action to help save these children from the aftermath of the earthquake, congratulated Bruce and Jill Lear of Watertown as they welcomed their children to the States. Johnson pledged to continue to work with federal agencies to help unite other adoptive families with their children in Haiti as soon as possible.

Johnson had heard from many family members, including Jill Lear's mother Pat Eidsness, last week and has had staff working to connect South Dakotans with the proper government channels. Since the earthquake, Johnson joined with colleagues in contacting Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to urge the State Department to do all it can to help the orphaned children in Haiti and expedite the adoption process for those children who have been already confirmed eligible for inter-country adoption. Before the disaster struck, there were approximately 20,000 children living in Haiti's 187 licensed orphanages. Some of these children were already eligible for international adoption and had been matched with American families, including families in South Dakota.

"As a grandfather of two adopted children, I understand the miracle of adoption and am so happy that these children are safe in their new country waiting to be united with loving families," said Johnson, a founding member of the Congressional Coalition on Adoption. "As the people of Haiti struggle to recover from the devastating earthquake, the orphans are among the most vulnerable survivors. If it is possible to clear these children for adoption with reasonable speed while protecting the integrity of

families still in Haiti, there are loving families here in the U.S. waiting with welcome arms. I understand the paperwork and security dilemmas these orphanages are facing at this time, but I will continue to work with the appropriate federal agencies to help cut through red tape and keep this process moving forward.”

Since the earthquake, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, in coordination with the State Department, announced a humanitarian parole policy to allow orphans from Haiti to enter the United States to ensure they receive the care they need. The policy will be applied on a case-by-case basis to those children who have been legally confirmed as orphans eligible for inter-country adoption by the Haitian government and are being adopted by U.S. Citizens or have been matched to prospective parents in the U.S.

Johnson to Introduce Legislation to Protect Grasslands for Future Generations

U.S. Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD) announced January 20, 2010, that he will introduce legislation in the coming weeks to include a portion of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The move, which was recommended in 2002 under the Bush Administration, would ensure the areas are protected for future generations while also allowing ranchers to continue to use the area for grazing purposes.

“Western South Dakota is blessed with some of the nation’s most treasured landscapes, and moving forward with what would be the country’s first national grassland wilderness would allow future generations to experience the area as it has been for hundreds of years. This is an opportunity to safeguard an important part of our heritage and create a lasting legacy that we can be proud of for decades to come,” said Johnson.

In 2002, the U.S. Forest Service under the Bush Administration recommended areas in Indian Creek and Red Shirt for wilderness protection. Johnson’s bill is based on that recommendation, and would include between 40,000 – 50,000 acres within the Buffalo Gap National Grassland, covering land in the Indian Creek, Red Shirt, and Chalk Hills areas.

The legislation would keep the 6-mile long Indian Creek Road open by excluding it from the wilderness boundaries.

Johnson continues to work with ranchers holding grazing permits on these lands and other affected stakeholders throughout this process. Over the last few months, he has sought the input of a cross-section of groups, including sportsmen, recreation groups, conservationists, local officials, and tribes.

“Finding the right mix of public land management requires balance and careful consideration. I have already begun reaching out to those who are most closely tied to this area, and I look forward to working with the many stakeholders to shape sound legislation,” continued Johnson.

As part of the *Wilderness Act of 1964*, Congress recognized the need to preserve certain lands in their natural condition as a resource for present and future generations to enjoy. A wilderness designation can only be made by an act of Congress on existing federal lands.

****Column for Submission****

Protecting South Dakota’s Grassland Heritage

By U.S. Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD)

Western South Dakota is blessed with some of the nation's most unique and treasured landscapes. In 2002, the U.S. Forest Service under the Bush Administration recognized the value of areas of undisturbed prairie in the Buffalo Gap National Grassland and recommended them for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. I believe it is time to move forward with what would be the country's first national grassland wilderness so that future generations can experience this area as it has been for hundreds of years.

Finding the right mix of public land management requires balance and careful consideration. I have already begun reaching out to those who are most closely tied to this area, and I look forward to working with the many stakeholders to shape sound legislation. I expect the plan to include 40,000 - 50,000 acres in the Indian Creek, Red Shirt and Chalk Hills areas of the Buffalo Gap National Grassland based upon the Forest Service recommendation and the inclusion of some additional exceptional lands. I want to clarify from the outset that I intend to follow the Forest Service's recommendation to keep the 6-mile long Indian Creek Road open by excluding it from the wilderness boundaries in order to preserve an important source of access to the area.

I have heard from a number of people regarding wilderness over the years. Sportsmen have contacted me describing the unparalleled experience of hunting in areas far from the reaches of modern civilization. They talk of experiencing hunting as previous generations did and wanting to pass along that experience to their children and grandchildren. I have also heard from conservationists about the value of this area for native prairie plants and wildlife. Others have pointed to the potential economic benefits of wilderness, as these outstanding lands draw in travelers who in turn contribute to the regional economy. In 2002, the *Rapid City Journal* editorialized in favor of wilderness, noting that within a couple hours drive of Rapid City would "offer a different experience for hikers and campers, who may be more used to mountains and trees than grass prairies and unrestricted vistas."

I've sometimes heard the criticism that wilderness keeps the public from using public land. I disagree. Wilderness offers unique opportunities for the public to enjoy, including hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, horseback riding, wildlife viewing, recreational rock collecting and many others. By limiting road building, structures, and recreational motorized and mechanized use, wilderness protects the land's natural character and open space. Furthermore, the Forest Service retains the ability to combat fire, insects, invasive species and disease.

It's also important to understand that wilderness protects and preserves the rights of ranchers to use these lands for long-held livestock grazing purposes. The Wilderness Act and Congressional Grazing Guidelines clearly state that established grazing shall continue, with the reasonably necessary use of motorized vehicles to maintain it. This includes maintenance of stock ponds, fences, and other existing support facilities, as well as replacement of these facilities as necessary. To me, ranching is very much a compatible use to a healthy grassland ecosystem.

I believe that creating the first national grassland wilderness is an opportunity to safeguard an important part of our heritage and create a lasting legacy that South Dakotans can be proud of for generations to come.

Johnson Announces \$2.5 Million for Energy Efficient Jobs Training
Stimulus funding moving to local communities

U.S. Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD) announced January 20, 2010, that the South Dakota Department of Labor will receive a \$2.5 million grant to prepare workers for careers in emerging industries, including energy efficiency and renewable energy. Today's funding, a total of \$190 million nationwide from the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act*, is part of the U.S. Department of Labor's State Energy Sector Partnership and Training Grant Program.

"I am pleased to see that this stimulus funding is being used to help train South Dakotans for careers in growing industries that will be important to our country's energy future," Johnson said. "Training workers for high-need industries will help put South Dakotans back to work and increase energy efficiency."

"The State Energy Sector Partnership and Training Grants will help workers gain access to good jobs, while supporting the sort of statewide energy efficiency strategies that play a crucial role in building the green economy of the 21st," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis.

The State Energy Sector Partnership and Training Grant Program aims to create career pathways for workers in efforts to build a skilled energy workforce. These investments will prepare the state's workforce to meet the demands of the energy efficiency and renewable industries.

Many agencies and organizations across South Dakota will work together with this program, including the South Dakota Workforce Development Council, South Dakota Department of Tourism and State Development, State Departments of Education and Labor, State Departments of Health and Social Services, the South Dakota Homebuilders Association and educational institutions across the state.

The stimulus package signed by President Obama is focused on tax cuts for the middle class, infrastructure investments and job creation. This funding is a prime example of the kind of resources the legislation provides to help improve communities while advancing South Dakota's economy.

Johnson Comments on President's Proposed Risk Rules for Banks

U.S. Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD), member of the Senate Banking Committee, January 21, 2010, released the following statement in regard to President Barack Obama's new proposed rules to limit the size and scope of financial institutions to protect taxpayers. Johnson said:

The crisis revealed that our financial services marketplace is an antiquated and dangerous place in urgent need of reform. We also learned that a number of "too-big-to fail" institutions were so interconnected that they essentially set a series of booby traps in our financial services marketplace that became a serious threat to consumers, investors and the economy as a whole. I look forward to reviewing the proposal more fully and hope that the Banking Committee is able to examine the issue soon.

Johnson Comments on an Increase to the Debt Limit

U.S. Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD) today released the following statement in regard to the Senate's debate of an increase in the national debt limit:

In 2000, we found our federal government operating with a surplus, but over the last decade, tax cuts for the rich, two wars and a weakened economy has put us back in the red and in need of an

increase in the debt limit. Our nation slipped into a deep recession in 2008, and the efforts to change course and keep our economy from collapsing have only added to that debt. I support “pay-go” rules to return the country to a balanced long-term budget.

In the meanwhile, we are faced with the reality that we need an increase in the national debt limit to prevent our nation from defaulting on its obligations. Defaulting is simply not a viable option. We have an economic and moral responsibility to pay our bills. Increasing the debt limit does not authorize a single penny of new spending – it allows the government to pay bills already incurred.

The United States pays its bills, and while an increase in the debt limit is something no member of Congress wants, the alternative would potentially hurt our country’s credit rating and force it to pay higher interest to creditors.

USDA News

USDA Announces Resignation of Deputy Under Secretary Philbrook

USDA announced January 15, 2010, that Deputy Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Burnham "Bud" Philbrook is resigning. Philbrook is leaving to care for his son. Philbrook informed the Secretary personally in late December of his situation and intent. His resignation is effective January 22nd. USDA is moving swiftly to name a replacement. "Bud's dedication and expertise has been a tremendous asset to USDA and our efforts across the globe," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "On both a professional and personal level, we will miss him. We also wish him and his family the best during this difficult personal time."

Commerce Department’s NTIA and USDA’s RUS Announce Availability of \$4.8 Billion in Recovery Act Funding to Bring Broadband to More Americans

Agencies Enhance Program Objectives, Announce Workshop Locations to Assist Applicants

The Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) announced January 15, 2010, availability of \$4.8 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grants and loans to expand broadband access and adoption in America. This is the second funding round for the agencies' broadband programs. The investment will help bridge the technological divide, boost economic growth, and create jobs.

NTIA and RUS also announced the rules for applying in this funding round, which have been modified to make the application process easier for applicants and better target program resources.

"Based on the feedback we received from stakeholders and our own experience in the first funding round, we are making the application process more user-friendly, sharpening our funding focus to make the biggest impact with this investment, and streamlining our review process to increase efficiency," said Lawrence E. Strickling, Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information and Administrator of NTIA.

"In response to lessons learned from the first funding round, RUS is making important changes that will make the process easier for applicants and target our resources toward 'last-mile' broadband connections to homes and businesses," said Jonathan Adelstein, Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, United States

Department of Agriculture. "This draws on our long experience in improving rural networks to the most difficult-to-reach areas of our country that need it most. We've streamlined the application process, added support for satellite service for rural residents left unserved after other funds are awarded, and provided ourselves more flexibility to target areas of greatest need. We are going to stretch every last dime to maximize economic development in rural areas that currently lack adequate broadband service."

The agencies announced the rules for this funding round in two separate but complementary Notices of Funds Availability (NOFAs) that promote each agency's distinct objectives.

NTIA's Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP)

NTIA's NOFA allocates approximately \$2.6 billion in this funding round of which approximately \$2.35 billion will be made available for infrastructure projects. In this round, NTIA is adopting a "comprehensive communities" approach as its top priority in awarding infrastructure grants, focusing on middle mile broadband projects that connect key community anchor institutions - such as libraries, hospitals, community colleges, universities, and public safety institutions. Comprehensive Community Infrastructure projects maximize the benefits of BTOP by leveraging resources, promoting sustainable community growth, and ultimately laying the foundation for reasonably priced broadband service to consumers and businesses.

In addition, NTIA plans to award at least \$150 million of the funding for Public Computer Center projects, which will expand access to broadband service and enhance broadband capacity at public libraries, community colleges, and other institutions that service the general public. NTIA also plans to award at least \$100 million for Sustainable Broadband Adoption projects, which include projects to provide broadband education, training, and equipment, particularly to vulnerable population groups where broadband technology has traditionally been underutilized.

RUS's Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP)

RUS's NOFA allocates approximately \$2.2 billion in this funding round for broadband infrastructure projects. A second funding window will open later which will provide grants for satellite service for premises that remain unserved after all other Recovery Act broadband funding is awarded, make Technical Assistance grants for developing plans using broadband for regional economic development, and grants to provide broadband service to rural libraries funded by USDA under the Recovery Act.

RUS will focus this round on last mile projects, which are anticipated to receive the vast majority of funding. RUS will also fund middle mile projects involving current RUS program participants. The first NOFA had two funding options - grants up to 100 percent in remote rural areas, and 50/50 loan/grant combinations in non-remote rural areas. In the second NOFA, RUS has eliminated this distinction and adopted a base 75/25 grant/loan combination for all projects. The new approach provides RUS with flexibility to seek a waiver if additional grant resources are needed for areas that are difficult to serve, and priority for those who seek lower grant levels. RUS believes this simplified and flexible funding strategy will promote rural economic development.

Separate NOFAs will allow applicants to apply directly to either program. RUS also eliminates the two-step process for BIP applicants to improve program efficiency. These changes will also add valuable time for applicants to focus on one specific program in preparing a more solid application.

Incorporated into the RUS NOFA is an opportunity for the reconsideration of BIP requests to provide viable applications with every chance for funding. There is also a second application review process during which RUS would allow an applicant to adjust its application to better meet program objectives

and for the Administrator to provide discretionary points or to increase a grant component to meet rural economic objectives.

Public Workshops

Also today, NTIA and RUS announced a series of public workshops to review the application process and answer questions from prospective applicants. The workshops will be held in Portland, Ore.; Reno, Nev.; Denver, Colo.; San Antonio, Tex.; Eureka, Mo.; Sioux Falls, S.D.; Detroit, Mich.; Blacksburg, Va.; Fayetteville, N.C.; and Atlanta, Ga. Interested parties can register for the workshops at www.broadbandusa.gov.

The agencies plan to accept applications from February 16, 2010, to March 15, 2010, and announce all awards by September 30, 2010.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided a total of \$7.2 billion to NTIA and RUS to fund projects that will expand access to and adoption of broadband services. Of that funding, NTIA will utilize \$4.7 billion for grants to deploy broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas in the United States, expand public computer center capacity, and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service. RUS will use \$2.5 billion in budget authority to support grants and loans to facilitate broadband deployment in primarily rural communities.

USDA Provides Funding to Cooperators for Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced January 19, 2010, that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has allocated \$45 million, provided by Section 10201 of the 2008 Farm Bill, for projects to build and preserve critical plant health safeguarding initiatives across America. Funding will be provided to more than 50 cooperators including state departments of agriculture, universities, nonprofit organizations and USDA agencies in support of over 200 projects. These state, regional, and national projects will support the Farm Bill goals of building strong systems to safeguard the health of our agricultural industries using early plant pest detection and surveillance, threat identification and mitigation.

"As called for in the 2008 Farm Bill, USDA is committed to working with states, industry and other interested groups to enhance our ability to prevent and detect plant pests and diseases as well increase emergency preparedness," said Vilsack. "Projects funded as part of this effort will ensure that farmers and specialty crop growers remain a viable segment of our national agricultural landscape."

In order to determine how best to meet the goals established by the 2008 Farm Bill, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) sought input and suggestions from stakeholders and used this feedback to develop a plan that considers the impacts and benefits of each project, as well as their sustainability and feasibility, among other considerations. Additionally, to promote a consistent, fair and transparent process in the development of the fiscal year 2010 spending plan for Section 10201 funding, APHIS developed criteria to assist in the evaluation of proposed projects.

The resulting plan includes projects that will enhance plant pest and disease analysis and survey, strengthen pest identification and technology, safeguard nursery production and increase related public outreach and education about these issues. Projects include survey for pests along known risk pathways, risk assessment collaboration with states, national honeybee surveys, research on plant pest threats in the Caribbean, new diagnostic tools for plant pests and diseases, nursery audit training for state officials and

outreach to help prevent the spread of invasive pests, among many others. USDA estimates that there may be up to 400 jobs created or supported as a result of this funding.

In the coming weeks, APHIS will be working with the more than 50 cooperators who will receive funds as they develop formal workplans, which will provide the details and information needed to initiate cooperative agreements. This process will also ensure the spending plan is adjusted to meet any changes that may have taken place since the projects were initially evaluated, as well as adjustments to implement the projects.

Once funding obligations are finalized, APHIS will post a copy of the final spending plan to the APHIS Farm Bill Section 10201 Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov. This site also provides more information about USDA's plans under Section 10201 of the 2008 Farm Bill.

Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Releases Four Data Sets as Part of Open Government Initiative

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced January 20, 2010, that the U.S. Department of Agriculture released four data sets to meet the first milestone of the Obama Administration's Open.gov initiative. The President's directive tasked each Federal agency to make available a minimum of three "high-value" data sets available by today.

"President Obama's Open Government Initiative serves as a new government-wide charge that will transform how the government engages the American people in a more open and transparent manner," said Vilsack. "We are pleased to offer four high-value data sets that will provide greater awareness and knowledge of vital USDA programs and activities."

Those data sets include:

Agricultural Research Service (ARS) National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 22 (SR22) is the major authoritative source of information about food composition in the United States. The database features more than 7,500 food items with an information profile that provides data for up to 140 food components, such as vitamins, minerals and fatty acids.

Economic Research Service (ERS) feed grains dataset contains over 300,000 data points on four feed grains (corn, grain sorghum, barley, and oats), foreign coarse grains (feed grains plus rye, millet, and mixed grains), hay, and related items. Available monthly, quarterly and annual data include supply, demand, prices, quantities fed, price ratios, and more. The data are updated at least once per month and represent the cohesive collection and processing of data originating from several USDA agencies and numerous other sources.

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Meat, Poultry and Egg Product Inspection Directory provides a listing of federally inspected establishments that produce meat, poultry, and/or egg products. The dataset will be updated monthly and provide the official establishment number, company, location, establishment telephone number and date their grant of inspection was awarded.

National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) 2007 Census of Agriculture dataset provides summary data file provides county-level demographic profiles of U.S. farm and ranch operators from the 2007 Census of Agriculture. Up to seven profiles have been prepared for each county in the United States. Data are available for the following groups: Women Principal Operators, Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino

Operators, American Indian or Alaska Native Operators, Asian Operators, Black or African American Operators, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Operators, and White Operators. In addition to race, ethnicity and gender information, the profiles include county-level counts of farms and farm operators, as well as economic data such as total value of sales and government payments. To access the profiles and for more information about the Census, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

These datasets are the first of many that will be published on the USDA's Web site and on Data.gov. We will launch the USDA Open Web page by February 5 that will serve as the gateway to activities related to the Open Government Directive. We hope that you will provide feedback for published datasets, join in our efforts to develop an Open Government Plan by submitting your suggestions and comments and help us prioritize future activities.

For more information about the Open Government Initiative go to: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/open>.

USDA Provides Web-Based Disaster Program Payment Calculator to Help Producers with Business Planning

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said January 21, 2010, USDA now has a web-based 2008 crop program payment calculator to help producers calculate the financial benefits they may receive under the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments (SURE) program. The calculator was designed by USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) to give producers a tool to help them better understand and participate in this new crop disaster program.

"Our goal is to help the producers make informed decisions so their business planning is as easy as possible, and this calculator is one of the tools we're making available to do exactly that," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

The calculator collects information about farming operations, including planted acreage, actual production, insurance coverage data and other federal disaster payments. This relevant information is used to calculate an estimated payment for crop losses.

The calculator provides an estimated 2008 program payment to help producers better understand what they may qualify for under SURE, but it does not constitute an application for the program. The calculator is available on the FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/sure>. For more information or to apply for SURE, producers should visit their local FSA county office.

SURE provides crop disaster assistance payments to eligible producers on farms that have incurred crop production or crop quality losses. The program takes into consideration crop losses on all crops grown by a producer nationwide. SURE provides assistance in an amount equal to 60 percent of the difference between the SURE farm guarantee and total farm revenue. The farm guarantee is based on the amount of crop insurance and Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage on the farm. Total farm revenue takes into account the actual value of production on the farm as well as insurance indemnities and certain farm program payments.

To be eligible for SURE, producers must have suffered at least a 10 percent production loss on a crop of economic significance. In addition, producers must meet the risk management purchase requirement by either obtaining a policy or plan of insurance under the Federal Crop Insurance Act or NAP coverage, for all economically significant crops. For 2008 crops, producers had the opportunity to obtain a waiver of the risk management purchase requirement through a buy-in provision. Producers considered socially

disadvantaged, a beginning farmer or rancher, or a limited resource farmer may be eligible for SURE without a policy or plan of insurance or NAP coverage.

Smithsonian Acquires Historic Food Coupons from USDA

At a special presentation, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History acquired Food Stamp Program coupons and other related materials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the cornerstone of U.S. food assistance programs designed to ensure that low income citizens can obtain a nutritious diet. In October 2008, Congress renamed the Food Stamp Program (FSP) to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to emphasize the program's focus on nutrition.

This acquisition showcases nearly 40 years of significant program changes, from paper coupons to today's Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, which have been issued nationally since 2004. The donation includes individual food coupons, booklets, proof sheets, early artist designs, printer's plates, and sample EBT cards.

The rare materials will be part of the National Numismatic Collection (NCC) housed at the museum, which consists of more than 1.5 million objects, including coins, medals and paper currency and preserves the role of money in economic history. The Collection's highlights include a colonial Massachusetts shilling from 1690—the first paper money in the Western hemisphere — the unique 1849 \$20 gold coin as well as non-traditional currency and medals. The NCC's collection includes the history of the early FSP that began with the 1935 Agricultural Adjustment Act and lasted until 1943, as well as other forms of emergency currency, such as clamshells used by Americans during the Great Depression. With the new acquisition, the museum now holds the single most comprehensive research collection pertaining to food coupons.

"The inclusion of the Food Stamp Program in the National Numismatic Collection is especially significant considering the current economic hardships facing Americans today," said museum director Brent Glass. "Millions of Americans have relied on these coupons to sustain themselves and their families, and the museum is proud to join with the USDA to document this important program."

"It is important to preserve the history of this nutrition program and recognize its continued benefits to communities across the country," said USDA Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Kevin Concannon. "There has never been a time in history when SNAP, the successor to the Food Stamp Program, has been more critical to Americans since it puts healthy food in reach for millions of individuals, children and families in a difficult economy."

While billions of food coupons have been distributed by the USDA since the beginning of the program, only a small sample has survived, due to the practice of the coupons being destroyed at a Federal Reserve Bank once redeemed by grocers. By law, food stamp coupons were de-obligated on June 17, 2009 and are no longer legal tender.

Food Stamps began as a pilot in the 1960s under President John F. Kennedy. Today SNAP, formerly the Food Stamp Program, has the highest participation in the program's history, serving nearly 38 million people, half of whom are children. While feeding low-income Americans across the country, the program also helps stimulate the economy. Every \$5 in new SNAP benefits equals \$9.20 in local economic activity. SNAP is the largest of the Food and Nutrition Service's 15 nutrition assistance programs that

touch the lives of one in five Americans each year, and work in concert to form a national safety net against hunger. For more information about FNS visit www.fns.usda.gov.

The National Museum of American History collects, preserves and displays American heritage in the areas of social, political, cultural, scientific and military history. After a two-year renovation and a dramatic transformation, the museum shines new light on American history, both in Washington and online. To learn more about the museum, check <http://americanhistory.si.edu>. For Smithsonian information, the public may call (202) 633-1000, (202) 633-5285 (TTY).

USDA, Navy Sign Agreement to Encourage the Development and Use of Renewable Energy

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of the Navy (DoN) announced January 21, 2010, that leadership from the two departments have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to encourage the development of advanced biofuels and other renewable energy systems.

"This agreement is part of President Obama's vision of a coordinated federal effort to build a clean energy economy, create new jobs and reduce our dependence on foreign oil," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "USDA looks forward to working with the Navy and other public and private partners to advance the production of renewable energy by sharing technical, program management and financial expertise."

Secretary of the Navy, Ray Mabus emphasized how partnering with USDA supports his vision for energy reform. Mabus' overarching goal is to increase warfighting capability. "In order to secure the strategic energy future of the United States, create a more nimble and effective fighting force, and protect our planet from destabilizing climate changes, I have committed the Navy and Marine Corps to meet aggressive energy targets that go far beyond previous measures."

From a strategic perspective the objective is to reduce reliance on fossil fuels from volatile areas of the world. Tactically, on the battlefield, the costs of transporting fuel is exponentially increased; in extreme cases a gallon of gasoline could cost up to \$400. Mabus continued "Even more serious and sobering, we are putting our Sailors and Marines in harms way as fuel convoys often meet a lethal enemy." To address this reality Mabus recently announced five ambitious energy targets for the Navy and Marine Corps and biofuels are a major component of four of those goals. Those targets are summarized below:

- When awarding contracts, appropriately consider energy efficiency and the energy footprint as additional factors in acquisition decisions.
- By 2012, demonstrate a Green Strike Group composed of nuclear vessels and ships powered by biofuel. By 2016 sail the Strike Group as a Great Green Fleet composed of nuclear ships, surface combatants equipped with hybrid electric alternative power systems running on biofuel, and aircraft running on biofuel.
- By 2015 cut petroleum use in its 50,000 non-tactical commercial fleet in half, by phasing in hybrid, flex fuel and electric vehicles.
- By 2020 produce at least half of shore based installations' energy requirements from alternative sources. Also 50 percent of all shore installations will be net zero energy consumers.
- By 2020 half of DoN's total energy consumption for ships, aircraft, tanks, vehicles and shore installations will come from alternative sources.

The MOU complements USDA and The Navy and Marine Corps' existing renewable energy programs and efforts. USDA has a variety of programs and services that support renewable energy development, including:

- Rural Development loan and grant programs focused on developing renewable energy systems and helping agricultural producers and businesses adopt energy efficiency improvements;
- The Farm Service Agency's Biomass Crop Assistance Program, which supports the establishment and production of crops for conversion to bioenergy, biobased products and power, and
- The Research, Education and Economics division's comprehensive bioenergy research program focused on developing new varieties and hybrids of bioenergy feedstocks.

The Department of the Navy recently established a Naval Energy Office to develop and employ proven business models and investment strategies that leverage public and private investment to achieve naval, defense, and national energy goals.

The parties will work together to support President Obama's initiative to make the United States a global leader in developing a renewable energy economy, reducing energy consumption derived from fossil fuels, and increasing energy production from renewable energy sources. The United States has abundant natural resources – including wind, solar, hydrokinetic, ocean, geothermal, and land for biomass energy crops – that can be refined into biofuels to meet commercial, military transportation and other energy needs.

USDA Rural Development administers and manages more than 40 housing, business, and community infrastructure and facility programs through a network of 6,100 employees located in 500 national, state and local offices. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of more than \$125 billion in loans and loan guarantees.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) facilitates income support, disaster assistance and conservation programs for the nation's farmers. It provides operating loans for the procurement of farm equipment, seed and fertilizer, and offers ownership loans to help new and veteran producers purchase a farm. FSA also works to procure various commodities to benefit low-income families through domestic food assistance programs.

The Research, Education and Economics mission area is dedicated to the creation of a safe, sustainable, competitive U.S. food and fiber system and strong, healthy communities, families and youth through integrated research, analysis and education. This mission area includes the [Agricultural Research Service](#), the [National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#), the [Economic Research Service](#), and the [National Agricultural Statistics Service](#).

Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces \$4 Million in Recovery Act Funding for Business Development Projects in Rural Areas

Projects Include Business Expansion, Education and Training, Community Development and Technical Assistance

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced January 22, 2010, the selection of 44 recipients for more than \$4 million in grants to create jobs by starting or expanding businesses in rural communities. Through funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), businesses will be able to

access critical capital that will help with start-up and working capital loans, building and plant renovations, transportation improvements, project planning and other business needs.

"These Recovery Act grants are part of the Obama Administration's ongoing effort to promote job development by ensuring that strategic investments are made in rural America," said Vilsack. "Small businesses drive community revitalization by providing products and services to local residents. This funding will help spur important economic development and strengthen communities around the country."

For example, in Calhoun County, Ala., the town of Ohatchee has been selected to receive a \$99,000 grant to refurbish and remodel a vacant building that will become a local grocery store. Currently the residents of the community travel of town to purchase their groceries.

The Cleveland Bradley Business Incubator in Cleveland, Tenn., has been selected to receive a \$99,000 grant to construct the Cleveland Bradley Energy Center which will serve start-up businesses specializing in the fields of alternative energy, conservation, innovative "green" businesses, and businesses developing "green" technologies.

In addition to the grants that USDA Rural Development is providing for the 44 projects announced today, fund recipients have raised an additional \$6.9 million from other sources to dedicate to the projects.

The funding announced today is being provided by ARRA through USDA Rural Development's Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program (RBEG), which helps finance new and existing businesses as well as employment-related adult education programs. RBEG funds can be used for start-up and working capital loans, building and plant renovations, transportation improvements, project planning and other business needs. Additional information on the RBEG program may be found at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbeg.htm>.

Funding of individual recipients is contingent upon their meeting the terms of their grant agreement. More information about USDA Rural Development can be found at www.rurdev.usda.gov. Grants announced today include:

South Dakota
Estelline Area Economic Development Corporation, \$99,000

(The full list of recipients can be found here:

[http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/.s.7.0.A/7.0.1OB/.cmd/ad/.ar/sa.retrievecontent/.c/6.2.1UH/.ce/7.2.5JM/.p/5.2.4TQ/.d/3/.th/J.2.9D/.s.7.0.A/7.0.1OB?PC.7.2.5JM.contentid=2010%2F01%2F0031.xml&PC.7.2.5JM.parentnav=LATEST_RELEASES&PC.7.2.5JM.navid=NEWS_RELEASE#7.2.5JM\)](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/.s.7.0.A/7.0.1OB/.cmd/ad/.ar/sa.retrievecontent/.c/6.2.1UH/.ce/7.2.5JM/.p/5.2.4TQ/.d/3/.th/J.2.9D/.s.7.0.A/7.0.1OB?PC.7.2.5JM.contentid=2010%2F01%2F0031.xml&PC.7.2.5JM.parentnav=LATEST_RELEASES&PC.7.2.5JM.navid=NEWS_RELEASE#7.2.5JM)

President Obama signed The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 into law on Feb. 17, 2009. It is designed to jumpstart the nation's economy, create or save millions of jobs and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so our country can thrive in the 21st century. The Act includes measures to modernize our nation's infrastructure, enhance energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve and improve affordable health care, provide tax relief, and protect those in greatest need.

More information about USDA's Recovery Act efforts is available at www.usda.gov/recovery. More information about the Federal government's efforts on the Recovery Act is available at www.recovery.gov.

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