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SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS,  
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SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENERGY  
INDEPENDENCE AND GLOBAL WARMING

## Congress of the United States House of Representatives

April 15, 2008

Dear Farm Bill Conferee:

As conference negotiations for the Farm Bill get underway, I strongly commend your attention to the critical importance of including Sodsaver provisions in the final report.

**Sodsaver is a vital initiative to protect our nation's most threatened and fragile ecosystem: our remaining native grasslands.** A broad Sodsaver provision enacted in the Farm Bill would help defuse the threat to our native grasslands and to our country's traditional ranching families who depend on this land.

To be most effective, **it is critical that Sodsaver be a nationwide program and that the provision include at least a four year ban on crop insurance on converted grasslands,** as passed in the House version of the Farm Bill.

As you know, converting grassland to cropland increases the chances of soil erosion, can reduce water quality, and removes land valuable to wildlife habitats, livestock grazing, and recreation. In addition, converting marginal grounds to cropland can significantly increase federal spending on farm programs.

Given the cuts to other valuable conservation programs like the Conservation Reserve Program, programs like Sodsaver become even more important in ensuring the continued protection of our native grasslands. Additionally, as you may know, the Congressional Budget Office has scored the House version of Sodsaver at a savings of \$33 million over five years and \$99 million over ten years and the Senate version at a savings of \$23 million over five years and \$119 million over ten years. Knowing the budget implications on this Farm Bill and how critical every source of revenue and savings has become, it is important to know that in both the House and Senate bills, Sodsaver is good policy that will create a net economic gain in farm legislation.

Support and leadership for such a provision has been uniformly strong not only from Members of Congress and the Administration (USDA's 2007 Farm Bill priorities include Sodsaver), but also from the livestock industry and a variety of wildlife conservation and sportsmen groups.

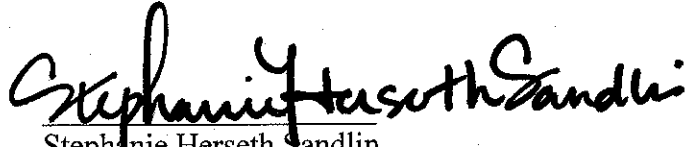
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Lastly, it's important to note that that Sodsaver will not prevent land owners from converting grass to cropland; only eliminate a financial incentive that encourages it. Again, I thank you for your work on the Farm Bill conference and strongly urge the inclusion of Sodsaver in the final conference agreement. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my Agriculture staffer, Ashley Martin, with any questions, at 5-2801.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Herseth Sandlin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and 'H'.

Stephanie Herseth Sandlin  
Member of Congress