

May 3, 2010

To Reps. Obey, Lewis, Price, Rogers and Sens. Inouye, Cochran, Byrd and Voinovich:

The American Farm Bureau Federation supports the establishment of a new National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) to upgrade critical disease research programs. We respectfully urge the Appropriations Committee to provide a sufficient allocation to the Homeland Security Subcommittee to demonstrate continued congressional support for the NBAF, a critical homeland security priority dedicated to protecting our nation's food supply and agriculture economy.

The NBAF will be a state-of-the-art facility to conduct world-class basic research, develop vaccines and antiviral therapies, and train veterinarians and public health officials on identification of and response to foreign animal and zoonotic diseases. It offers an opportunity for the integrated research, development, testing and evaluation that will provide needed solutions to natural and deliberate biotreats against agriculture and public health. Furthermore, the NBAF will assist in keeping American agriculture competitive and maintain our position as a world leader in advanced diagnostic capabilities.

The security of America's food supply and agricultural economy is of paramount importance, not only to farmers and ranchers but also to every U.S. citizen. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 9 (HSPD-9) outlined the policy imperative of defending the agriculture and food system against terrorist attacks. The urgency of this policy has been further highlighted by the bipartisan Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism, which found biological threats to be more imminent than a nuclear threat. President Obama also noted this challenge in his State of the Union address when he underscored the threat of bioterrorism and the need to increase U.S. preparedness.

The Department of Homeland Security did not request funding for the NBAF in the FY11 base budget and is instead proposing to submit a \$40 million reprogramming request in October. We are concerned with this unconventional approach and believe it could jeopardize the \$114 million investment already appropriated by Congress for this project.

As you determine the 302(b) allocation for the Homeland Security Subcommittee, please recognize the critical importance of the NBAF to the health and safety of the American people and the need to fund the lab in a manner worthy of a national security priority. Fully funding NBAF will give the United States the tools to effectively combat the threat of biological terrorism. With this in mind, we urge you to include in the FY11 Homeland Security appropriations bill \$40 million for NBAF.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bob Stallman
President
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