



National Association of Conservation Districts

January 29, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
328-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
328-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman:

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents America's nearly 3,000 conservation districts and the more than 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. Conservation districts work with millions of cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on private and public lands in the United States.

Secretary Tom Vilsack served admirably as the Secretary of Agriculture during the entire administration of President Barack Obama. During his term as Secretary, NACD appreciated his support for the voluntary, locally-led, incentive-based conservation delivery system that has served communities well across the United States for over 80 years. He demonstrated a deep understanding of the history of the conservation delivery partnership that conservation districts across the country participate in, providing conservation planning, technical and financial assistance alongside state conservation agencies and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Under his leadership, several agencies at USDA were critical to ensuring the prompt and successful implementation of the 2008 and 2014 Farm Bills, which created new programs at NRCS like the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), as well as expanding and modifying others like the Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program and private lands programs at the U.S. Forest Service. Secretary Vilsack was also instrumental in broadening USDA programs and services to reach urban communities. We have confidence that if confirmed, he will continue to provide excellent leadership and effective implementation of USDA programs.

Before becoming Secretary of Agriculture in 2009, Secretary Vilsack served as the Governor of Iowa, where he worked closely with conservation districts in the state. He was a strong supporter of programs helping Iowa landowners become better stewards of their natural resources. This experience at the state and national level will serve the Department for future success. The new Biden Administration has tough challenges ahead and has set ambitious climate and conservation goals for the Department. Secretary Vilsack has shown the ability to meet tough challenges and achieve ambitious goals.



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The natural resource concerns facing our nation's diverse communities, from our private agricultural working lands to forestlands and urban lands, span political parties and presidential administrations. We believe that Secretary Vilsack understands and appreciates that a locally-led, voluntary approach to conservation supported by science will help our nation achieve the healthy soils and clean water while also addressing climate change.

We appreciate your support of locally-led conservation and look forward to working with you to support Secretary Vilsack's confirmation.

Sincerely,

Tim Palmer
NACD President

Michael Crowder
NACD President-Elect