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HOUSE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE ELIMINATES FUTURE FUNDING FOR KEY FARM BILL ENERGY PROGRAMS

On Friday, October 28, the House Agriculture Committee zeroed out funding for FY 07 for the popular Sec. 9006 Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Program and Sec. 6401 Value-Add Program. (FY 07 is the last year authorized under the current farm bill.) The Committee cut programs across the board, including conservation, nutrition, commodity, and rural development, as part of its deficit-cutting budget reconciliation package. The proposal by Committee Chairman Goodlatte (R-VA) made \$3.7 billion in cuts in the farm bill over the next five years, going well above and beyond the \$3 billion in cuts required by the Congressional Budget Resolution. The package passed on a party line vote, with Rep. Johnson (R-IL) being the sole exception.

This measure now goes to the House Budget Committee which will next week combine the proposed cuts from other House committees into one large reconciliation bill. It is likely to come to the House floor for a vote the week of November 7.

The House Agriculture Committee action is in stark contrast to the approach of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee, which also made significant cuts but did so without touching the Renewable Energy Program (Sec. 9006) or the Value-Add Program (Sec. 6401) to garner the \$3 billion in required cuts.

After the House and Senate take their respective floor actions, the differences will have to be worked out in a joint conference committee – which will play an exceedingly pivotal role given the differences in the overall House and Senate approaches.

These cuts could not come at a worse time with energy prices hitting all time highs and farmers and other citizens reeling from high fuel, heating and power costs. These programs have had strong bipartisan support in the past because they looked to the future and promoted innovation and home-grown clean energy alternatives.

Now is an important time for supporters of these programs to express their views to their Members of Congress. EESI will be sending out more information as this process proceeds. If you have questions, please email or call us. For more information on the action taken today, see: <http://agriculture.house.gov/index.html>

HOUSE APPROVES CONFERENCE REPORT FOR FY 06 AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS BILL

Today, October 28, 2005, the conference report to the Agriculture Appropriations bill was approved by the House 318 – 63, with 52 Members not voting. Despite the bad names discussed above, the FY 06 Agriculture Appropriations bill fully funds Sec. 9006 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program at \$23 million, and increases the funding for Sec. 6401 Value-added Program from \$15.5 million in FY05 to \$20.5 million for FY06. The conference report will be taken up soon on the Senate floor and will then be sent to the President for signature.

For more information see: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/approp/app06.html>

The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) is a non-profit organization that works at the nexus of policy and innovation to promote environmentally sustainable societies. EESI was founded in 1984 by a bipartisan group of Congressional Members dedicated to finding environmental and energy solutions. EESI provides credible, timely information and innovative policy ideas through coalition building, media outreach, publications, briefings, workshops and task forces on the issues of energy efficiency and renewable energy, transportation, smart growth, agriculture and global climate change. Carol Werner leads the EESI team as executive director.

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