The Rural Economy & COVID-19
Focus on Rural America is a 501(c)4 organization aimed at boosting progressive causes and developing economic messages that resonate in rural.

We conduct public opinion research, panel presentations, press conferences and policy discussions to engage and educate federal candidates on messages that capture progressive values in a way that rural voters relate to.
Rural communities feed and fuel our world.

Biochemical and bio-manufactured products from farms provide revenue streams that support towns across America and our national GDP.

Maintaining our economic diversity means maintaining strong rural communities.

Farmers and their families can’t continue to serve our economy without renewed investments in their schools, hospitals, infrastructure, and Main St.

For every American, the buck stops with a good job.
Rural economic pain is not new

Leaders have failed to make critical investments for years

• Farm income in decline
• Lack of infrastructure & investments
• Crumbling housing stock
• School consolidation
• Hospital closures
Farm income has been on the decline for years.

Added instability is hurting farmers and the entire agriculture supply chain.

Rural communities are on the ropes.
Trade disputes of 2019

Farm Bureau Estimates Tariff Related Losses Cost Nebraska Farmers Nearly $1 Billion in 2019

September 3, 2019

Midwestern flooding, Spring 2019

Farm losses drive Iowa's flood damage to $2 billion, Farm Bureau economists estimate

Donnelle Eller The Des Moines Register
Published 2:49 p.m. CT Apr. 3, 2019
In the Spring of 2019, biofuel production buffered the impact of trade disputes and epic floods.

In the summer of 2020, COVID-19 has had a dire impact on travel and business. Biofuel plants all over the country are still shut down, the industry continues to go without aid, and corn farmers continue to go without markets for their crops.

The latest pain from COVID-19 is layered on top trade losses and waivers for oil and gas companies.
In recent years, small refinery waivers for oil and gas have skyrocketed.

4 billion gallons of biofuels diverted from the market.

Companies as big as Exxon and Chevron receive waivers.
In January, the 10th Circuit ruled that certain small refinery waivers should not have been provided.

To lock themselves in for future waivers, refineries have now asked for “gap year” waivers from 2013 on to ensure they meet the court’s criteria for future exemptions, regardless of economic hardship criteria EPA is required to follow.

Providing “gap year” waivers would allow refineries to receive future waivers, even though they don’t meet the hardship requirements.
On June 8, a group of 44 bipartisan House members sent a letter to the Administration, requesting the President and EPA Administrator deny blanket waiver requests.

With 150 biofuel facilities down, the rural economy cannot withstand more carveouts for oil and gas. Biofuel facilities and farmers are being left behind.
Rural Americans know that biofuels help their economies and communities.

79% of Iowa Caucusgoers would support a candidate dedicated to expanding access to ethanol.

The coronavirus pandemic makes rural communities increasingly vulnerable.

‘Something isn’t right’: U.S. probes soaring beef prices

One hundred years ago, U.S. antitrust prosecutors broke down monopolies in meatpacking. But can they do it again?

As meatpacking plants reopen, workers terrified of coronavirus risk

Infection rates are still rising at many plants, prompting lawmakers and unions to call for more enforcement.

politico.com
As farmers worry about who will get help, ethanol producers wonder if they’ll get any.

COVID-19 continued spread will squeeze our hospitals and small towns.

25% of all rural hospitals are in danger of closing.
Ethanol facilities add value to farm income and products and put the revenue into good jobs and benefits for workers in rural America.

Policies the Administration can use to help today:

- Implement the Renewable Fuel Standard as written and intended.
- Set the RFS Volume Obligations
- End the use unjust small refinery waivers
Key take-ways:

Ethanol facilities add value to farm income and products and put the revenue into good jobs and benefits for workers in rural America.

However, they have been hit hard over the years, particularly due to small refinery waivers.

Every inch of the value-added agriculture economy puts money into small towns. Ethanol facilities are a shining example. Without them, we will continue to see our small towns contract.