

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies • Boone & Crockett Club • Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation • Idaho Cattle Association • Michigan United Conservation Clubs • Montana Stockgrowers Association • Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation • Western Legacy Alliance • Wyoming Stock Growers • Wildlife Management Institute

August 2, 2013

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
& Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
& Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Frank Lucas
Chairman
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Colin Peterson
Ranking Member
House Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs Stabenow and Lucas, and Ranking Members Cochran and Peterson:

On behalf of millions of sportsmen conservationists, livestock producers, and state and private academic research institutions, we ask your help in the end-game strategy for controlling bovine brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis. These diseases are transmissible between livestock and wildlife – and under certain circumstances, humans. Despite nationwide efforts to eradicate zoonotic diseases in livestock, both bovine brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis remain active in isolated wildlife reservoirs in the West and Midwest. To bring this decades-long campaign to a long-term resolution, we ask your support for Sec. 12101 in S. 954 during the upcoming conference on the Farm Bill.

Sec. 12101 creates a category for competitive grants offered by the National Institutes for Food and Agriculture. These grants will support the state and private efforts underway to develop better tests, vaccines, and surveillance methods for the remaining hotspots of brucellosis and bovine tuberculosis. The grants are available to researchers nationwide and require matching investments from and collaboration among state and private research institutions. Many partnerships have already been built in this wide network, representing significant non-federal investment, which includes recent upgrades in laboratories to higher standards of safety for handling the bacteria that cause these diseases.

The persistence of these diseases is an obstacle for wildlife conservation and livestock health. The current strategy of responding to outbreaks by slaughtering or depopulating infected herds

and populations sacrifices economic and social values. Slaughter necessarily involves the taking of healthy animals along with the sick and deprives economies and communities of benefits from livestock industry and wildlife recreation. False-positive detections using current tests are also a problem, costing ranchers substantial sums out of profit. Financial pressure on livestock operations is also a risk to conservation as these businesses keep America's rural lands as open spaces under good stewardship. When ranches fail and land is developed, wildlife habitat is lost.

Sec. 12101 is a proposal for achieving control of these diseases mindful of the nation's fiscal emergency and respectful of the state and private efforts already underway. We seek to focus the combined efforts of many who are already struggling with the problem diseases in livestock and wildlife. This approach is designed for clear accountability of measurable results.

Thank you for your consideration.

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