

F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, Jr.

FIFTH DISTRICT, WISCONSIN

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July 28, 2015

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

In May, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced it would invest up to \$100 million to double the number of fuel pumps capable of handling gasoline mixed with higher blends of ethanol, such as E15 and E85.ⁱ

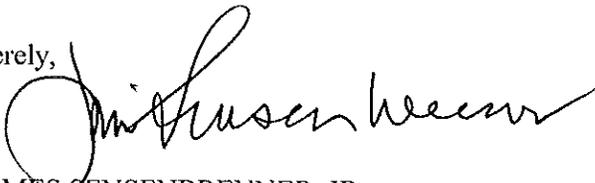
The 2014 Farm Bill prohibits using funds from the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to install blender pumps to dispense gasoline containing increased amounts of ethanol.ⁱⁱ Congress clarified that the intent of REAP is to promote energy efficiency and the production of renewable energy, rather than energy delivery.ⁱⁱⁱ Therefore, USDA is using money from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to fund more biofuel infrastructure.^{iv} The goal of the CCC is to stabilize, support, and protect farm income and prices.

A number of farmers have stated that increasing the amount of ethanol in gas increases the cost to feed their animals. Consumers also suffer because the increased cost of corn is reflected in the price of food at the grocery store and restaurants. Furthermore, I heard testimony in the House Science Committee on July 23, 2015 that E-85 sales at retail stores are falling because even customers with flex fuel vehicles do not want to purchase the fuel.

With this in mind, please answer the following questions by August 31, 2015.

- What evidence do you have that the marketplace needs more blender pumps to deliver higher ethanol blended fuels?
- The Renewable Fuels Association (RFA) opposed the EPA's proposed rule regarding renewable volume obligations (RVOs).^v Was it a coincidence that you announced the \$100 million grant program the same day that the EPA issued RVOs that angered the RFA?
- If the goal of the CCC is to stabilize, support, and protect farm income and prices, did the USDA use CCC funds to protect farm income and prices in this instance?
 - If yes, which farmers are you protecting?
 - Will any farmers suffer from the higher ethanol standard?
- Is the USDA concerned that some customers may use fuel that their engine is not designed for?

Sincerely,



F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, JR.
Member of Congress

ⁱ United States Department of Agriculture. "USDA to Invest \$100 Million to Boost Infrastructure for Renewable Fuel Use, Seeking to Double Number of Higher Blend Renewable Fuel Pumps." May 29, 2015.

http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2015/05/0156.xml&

ⁱⁱ <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-113hr2642enr/pdf/BILLS-113hr2642enr.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://lis.gov/cgi-lis/cpquery/R?cp113:FLD010:@1%28hr333%29>

^{iv} United States Department of Agriculture. "Fact Sheet: USDA Invests in Clean Energy Economy, Supporting U.S. Producers and Seeking to Double Number of Higher Blend Renewable Fuel Pumps Available to Consumers." May 29, 2015. <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentid=2015/05/0157.xml&contentidonly=true>

^v Renewable Fuels Association. "EPA's RVO Decision is Not What the Statute Intended, Not in the Best Interest of Consumers." May 29, 2015. <http://www.ethanolrfa.org/news/entry/epas-rvo-decision-is-not-what-the-statute-intended-not-in-the-best-interest/>