

September 13, 2010

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senate
331 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Family Farm Estate Tax Deferral Act

Dear Senator Feinstein:

We are pleased to inform you that the undersigned groups support the Family Farm Estate Tax Deferral Act. It is imperative that this legislation be included as part of the broader estate tax reform effort moving through Congress this year. We are committed to working with you and your staff in ensuring this effort is a success.

Nearly three quarters of the land in the lower 48 states of the U.S. is in private ownership, with the vast majority owned by farmers and ranchers. These lands are vital to both healthy ecosystems and vibrant rural communities. They provide clean water, climate benefits, food and fiber production, and wildlife habitat.

The estate tax, as currently formulated, promotes the break-up, sale and development of family-owned farms, ranches, and green spaces. This bill will reduce the financial burden which currently impedes the handing down of productive, intact, agricultural operations to America's next generation of producers and land stewards. We look forward to working with you and your staff to identify an alternative to the adjusted gross income limit language included in the bill which will ensure that all farmers and ranchers are protected from the estate tax and able to continue to provide open space and economic benefits to rural areas.

The bill would update existing estate tax incentives for voluntary, permanent protection of lands with conservation values. By both reducing pressure for habitat fragmentation and rewarding voluntary commitments to conservation, the bill would generate lasting benefits for all Americans.

We very much look forward to working with you and your staff to make certain this language is included in any estate tax reform package in this Congress.

Sincerely,

American Sheep Industry Association
Environmental Defense Fund
Land Trust Alliance
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
Public Lands Council
The Nature Conservancy