Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 28, 2014

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 200-A
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

As you are aware, Turner Grain Merchandising in Brinkley, Arkansas has ceased making payments to farmers for purchased grain, and multiple sources have indicated Turner Grain is preparing to file for bankruptcy. The current amounts outstanding to farmers for grain purchases by Turner Grain are estimated to reach $50 million dollars.

Dozens, if not hundreds of Arkansas farmers stand to lose everything as a direct result of Turner Grain's apparent mismanagement. At a time when the average age of a row crop farmer is 58, this business failure could deal a devastating long-term blow to Arkansas's agricultural community and have a chilling effect on young farmers now positioned to replace our aging agricultural producer base. With Arkansas supplying over 40% of the United States' supply of rice and a significant portion of its soybeans, it could additionally have a lasting, negative impact on the entire United States as well, in the availability of food products and increased costs to consumers.

We are writing to request USDA, through the Farm Service Agency (FSA), work to ensure that we do not disrupt a considerable portion of America's most productive agricultural base because badly-needed funds were tied up in litigation. Specifically, we request the FSA extend the Commodity Credit Corporation loan repayment date for all farmers who are depending on payment from Turner Grain to pay off those loans. We recommend a period of 180 days to give farmers and the agricultural community some sense of assurance. Further, we recommend that the Agency revisit the extension after 90 days to determine if additional time will be needed beyond the current 180 days.

We await your timely response as this rapidly developing situation, and the associated level of widespread concern, are escalating daily. In addition, we look forward to working with you to identify other areas to help provide relief to affected farmers and to Arkansas's rural economy.

Sincerely,

Rick Crawford
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Tim Griffin
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

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Tom Cotton
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Steve Womack
MEMBER OF CONGRESS