

## **Public Statement by State Agricultural Leaders Endorsing Barack Obama for President**

September 18, 2008

We the undersigned 22 current and former State Commissioners, Secretaries, and Directors of Agriculture join together to publicly endorse Senator Barack Obama for President of the United States. We believe that Senator Obama is the best candidate to address the issues important to farmers, ranchers, and rural communities, and we encourage rural families to vote for Barack Obama.

We are led in this effort by Roger Johnson, elected Commissioner of Agriculture from North Dakota and current President of the National Association of State Directors, Commissioners and Secretaries of Agriculture (NASDA). Our group of current and past agricultural leaders calls for the election of Obama for President because he is the candidate who best understands the importance of agriculture and the issues that affect rural communities. He is willing to provide the leadership necessary to pursue policies that will improve the quality of life in rural America.

Barack Obama has an exemplary track record of supporting agriculture and rural communities and a vision of how to expand opportunities for rural families and improve health care, education, access to high speed internet, and other critical services for rural communities. As a U.S. Senator from a rural, Midwestern state, Barack Obama fought for our priorities: a robust safety net, infrastructure modernization, preservation of our open spaces, and improved access to affordable health care.

As president, he will help farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses find profitability in the marketplace and success in the global economy. He will ensure support economic development in rural America, foster renewable energy and strengthen the quality of rural life. For those who live in rural communities in part to enjoy the beauty of the countryside, it is important to note that Barack Obama deeply respects the traditions and conservation practices of our sportsmen and anglers, and is committed to protecting their rights.

In 1785, Thomas Jefferson said, "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands." Barack Obama believes that more than two centuries later, family farmers are still the cornerstone of American democracy. He will be a president who stands with farmers and ranchers and helps them thrive for generations to come.

A basic problem facing rural America is access to affordable quality health care. Barack Obama is committed to signing universal health legislation by the end of his first term in office that ensures that all Americans have high-quality, affordable health care coverage.

In an era of market consolidation, Barack Obama will fight to ensure family and independent farmers have fair access to markets, control over their production decisions, and transparency in prices. Barack Obama supports immediate implementation of the Country of Origin Labeling law, which will require meat products to indicate their country of origin. And Obama will work to ensure that all trade agreements contain strong and enforceable labor, environmental, and health and safety standards so American farmers are able to compete on a level playing field.

America's farmers have been at the forefront of the renewable fuels movement. Barack Obama has been one of the strongest proponents in Congress for increasing production of home-grown American renewable fuels and wind and solar energy. He believes that we must break our dependence on foreign oil and has put forward comprehensive, forward-thinking plans that will increase our production of clean, home-grown renewable energy.

In endorsing and committing to work hard to elect Barack Obama for President, we call on rural voters to cast their ballots for a leader who knows agriculture and the challenges our rural communities face, will protect the rights of our sportsmen and women, and will work to provide affordable health care for all Americans.

Roger Johnson  
North Dakota

Robert Boggs  
Ohio

Seth Bradstreet  
Maine

Ron de Yong  
Montana

Rich Rominger  
California

Tommy Irvin  
Georgia

Tom Jennings  
Illinois

Adrian Polanski  
Kansas

Roger Richardson  
Maryland

Ron Sparks  
Alabama

John Stulp  
Colorado

Dennis Wolff  
Pennsylvania

Jay Healy  
Massachusetts

Stephen Taylor  
New Hampshire

Britt Cobb  
North Carolina

Mitch Irwin  
Michigan

Frederic Winthrop  
Massachusetts

Rod Nilsesteun  
Wisconsin

Louis Petersen  
Virgin Islands

Miley Gonzalez  
New Mexico

Gregory Watson  
Massachusetts

August Schumacher  
Massachusetts