



REAL LEADERSHIP FOR RURAL SOUTH CAROLINA

Rural communities in South Carolina are at a critical point in history. For the past decade, rural America has not been well-served by federal policies, and if Republicans and Democrats in Washington continue these misguided policies, rural families will see their economic fortunes fall further behind those of other Americans. But we have the power to choose a different course. Innovative rural Americans have demonstrated they can compete in the 21st century. But local initiative must be matched by federal policies that empower rural Americans and family farmers.

Rural America faces numerous challenges, but also economic opportunities unlike anything we have witnessed in modern history. Resolving these challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities will depend on electing a president who understands that rural America is important and is willing to provide the leadership and prioritize policies to improve the quality of life in rural America.

Barack Obama believes that together we can ensure a bright future for the million people of rural South Carolina. A senator from a rural state, Barack Obama has worked to ensure rural America's prosperity and vitality. As president, he will help family farms and rural small businesses find profitability in the marketplace and success in the global economy. He will:

- **Support Rural Economic Development**
- **Improve Rural Quality of Life**
- **Combat Rural Poverty**
- **Ensure Economic Opportunity for Family Farmers**
- **Promote Rural America's Leadership in Developing Renewable Energy**

Obama understands that America is not separated into two countries, one rural and one urban. Across the nation, the concerns of Americans are remarkably similar: they want to end the war in Iraq and improve education, health care, and energy policies. Barack Obama will be the president who does those things – for all Americans.

I. SUPPORT RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In South Carolina, the rural unemployment rate in 2006 was 8.4 percent, one third higher than the urban unemployment rate. Barack Obama will match the innovative spirit that exists in rural South Carolina with federal policies to help enterprising rural South Carolinians create new businesses and spur economic growth.

Small Business Development and Value Added Agriculture. Small business creates most of the new jobs and self-employment opportunities in rural America. In addition, “value-added agriculture,” the process whereby raw agricultural materials are processed into something more valuable, has always been a staple of the rural economy. The conversion of corn to clean-burning ethanol is an example whose development has

been the most important economic event in rural America since the initiation of the Roosevelt-era farm programs. Creation of new industries and products based on farm products is one of the most promising strategies for rural economic development.

To spur the development of small business and value-added agriculture in rural America, Barack Obama will:

- **Help Develop Value-Added Products:** The Value Added Producer Grant Program provides capital for farmers to create value-added enterprises, such as cooperative marketing initiatives for high-value crops and livestock and farmer-owned processing plants. These grants are the seeds of new rural business and provide capital for farmers to create value-added enterprises and cooperatives, such as onsite or farmer-owned processing plants. Obama will increase funding for this important program.
- **Establish a Small Business and Microenterprise Initiative:** Barack Obama will support entrepreneurship and spur job growth by establishing a small business and micro-enterprise initiative for rural America. The program will provide training and technical assistance for rural small businesses, and provide a 20 percent tax credit on up to \$50,000 of investment in small owner-operated businesses. This initiative will put the full support of the nation's economic policies behind rural entrepreneurship.

Connect Rural America: Barack Obama will ensure that rural Americans have access to a modern communications infrastructure. Our current telecommunications policy is not serving rural America. Obama believes we should continue providing universal service funding to wireless carriers that want to provide wireless services in higher cost rural areas but need universal service support to cover the cost of building the towers and networks to serve rural areas. He also believes we should overhaul the universal service program to offer affordable broadband services throughout rural America.

- **Reform the Telephone Universal Service Program:** Obama will direct the Federal Communications Commission to propose reforms changing the Universal Service Fund program from one that supports voice communications to one that supports affordable broadband.
- **Better Manage the Nation's Airwaves:** Obama will manage our wireless spectrum in the public's interest. He will create incentives for more efficient and experimental use of government spectrum and new standards for commercial spectrum so that underserved urban and rural communities can enjoy affordable broadband and also ensure that we have enough spectrum for police, ambulances and other public safety organizations.

Promote Tourism in Rural South Carolina

The tourism industry is growing rapidly, and is a promising source of good jobs for rural South Carolina. Heritage tourism is a particularly promising engine of growth, growing at a rate of 30 percent per year. Rural South Carolina has an abundance of historic and beautiful sites, including Congaree National Park, the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor, Revolutionary and Civil War battlefields, sites from the Civil Rights Movement, the Indian burial mound at the Santee Wildlife Refuge, and the Gullah-Geechee Heritage Corridor. Barack Obama will support tourism-related jobs in South Carolina by preserving historic and natural sites, combating climate change, and improving key transportation routes.

Preserve Historic and Natural Sites: Barack Obama supports strong and continued funding of the Federal Transportation Enhancements program, designed to improve the cultural, historic, aesthetic

and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure. The funding targets historic preservation, archeological research, scenic highways and rails to trails. Obama is an original cosponsor of the Underground Railroad Education and Cultural Program, which will preserve and display artifacts and provide grants to non-profits that interpret the history of the Underground Railroad. Barack Obama also supports the historic preservation federal tax credit.

Preserve Land and Water for Sportsmen: Barack Obama is fully committed to protecting the forests, fish, and game our sportsmen enjoy. Obama will provide full funding for a broad range of conservation programs. He also supports a proposal by more than 25 national hunting and fishing organizations to help fish and wildlife survive the impacts of climate change.

Trade

Promote American Jobs Through Better Trade Policy: At 7 percent of Gross Domestic Product, our trade deficit has never been higher. Barack Obama will fight for a trade policy that opens up foreign markets to support good American jobs. He will use trade agreements to spread good labor and environmental standards around the world.

Fix NAFTA: Barack Obama will work with the leaders of Canada and Mexico to fix the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) so that it works for American workers. As the workers of South Carolina know all too well, NAFTA and its potential were oversold to the American people. It has not created the jobs and wealth that were promised and helped decimate the American textile industry. He believes that we can, and must make trade work for American workers by opening up foreign markets to U.S. goods and maintaining strong labor and environmental standards. As president, he will work to amend NAFTA so that it lives up to those important principles.

A Smarter Approach to CAFTA: The livelihoods of South Carolina's workers, particularly those in the textile industry, were put at risk when the Bush administration sent the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) to Congress for approval. Barack Obama voted against CAFTA because it did not contain labor and environment protections. Furthermore, the administration has not responded to the challenge of globalization by reforming the social safety net to provide tools for workers who lose jobs in the new economy. As president, Obama will work closely with textile workers, governors, and the U.S. Trade Office to safeguard the American textile industry from unfair trade practices and open foreign markets to U.S. textile goods.

II. IMPROVE RURAL QUALITY OF LIFE

Improve Health Care: On many important measures of health, people in rural areas are in poorer health than their urban counterparts. Rural populations, including children, are less likely to have health insurance or good access to doctors and hospitals. The more isolated a rural community, the more difficult it is to ensure the availability of needed health care services. A fundamental challenge facing rural America is stabilizing, sustaining, and strengthening access to affordable quality health care.

- **Provide Universal Health Care and Lower Health Costs:** 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 all Americans have high-quality, affordable health care coverage. His plan will save a typical American family up to \$2,500 every year on their health care costs.

- **Help Small Businesses Afford Health Care:** The rural economy is dependent upon small business, but small employers often struggle to offer health coverage to their employees because it is too expensive. Obama’s plan will help small employers unable to offer health coverage to their employees by allowing small employers to participate in the National Health Insurance Exchange and purchase either a new public plan or a private plan for their employees. Obama’s plan will also provide subsidies for those who need them. Very small businesses will be exempted from the plan’s requirement to pay into the system.
- **Promote Fairness in Medicare and Medicaid Reimbursement:** Medicare and Medicaid funding systems have historically penalized rural areas. Health care providers in rural states often get less money for the very same procedure performed in urban areas. These lower reimbursement rates make it difficult for rural areas to recruit and retain doctors. As president, Obama will work to ensure a more equitable Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement structure.
- **Bring Doctors, Nurses, and other Health Care Professionals to Rural America:** Rural America faces shortages of providers, making it a challenge for those with health insurance to get the care they need. Two-thirds of the federally designated health professional shortage areas in the United States can be found in rural America. Barack Obama will attract providers to rural America by creating a loan forgiveness program for doctors and nurses who work in underserved rural areas. Additionally, he will encourage the expansion of state-of-the-art health professional online education courses to reach students across rural America.
- **Expand Community Clinics:** To promote access to preventive, diagnostic and other primary care services, Barack Obama will increase federal capital funds for the building and start-up costs of community health centers. He will also allow community health centers to obtain reimbursement for a portion of transportation-related costs, which is a major obstacle in rural areas where residents live far apart. Obama will also provide planning grants for local health providers to coordinate care, which is particularly important for the many elderly people who live in rural areas and often have multiple chronic conditions. He will promote innovative models such as South Carolina’s “Smiles for a Lifetime,” which uses school-based health clinics to deliver dental care to low-income children.
- **Improve Care for Rural Veterans:** Veterans in rural areas have poorer health and less access to care. Barack Obama will expand the number of Vet Centers so more veterans can access care more easily. As president, Obama will fight efforts to weaken the VA by outsourcing critical competencies, but he will also give the VA the tools and flexibility to contract with other providers in any remote area of the country in which the VA determines there is inadequate access to a VA medical center or in which it is impractical to build one. Obama will strengthen the VA’s telemedicine infrastructure to expand the delivery of high quality health care to veterans residing in rural communities.
- **Fight HIV/AIDS:** While African Americans make up 29 percent of the South Carolina population, they make up 75 percent of new HIV/AIDS cases. Nationwide, AIDS is the leading cause of death in African-American women aged 25-34 and the third leading cause of death in African-American men in the same age group. Barack Obama has pledged that, in the first year of his presidency, he will develop and begin to implement a comprehensive national HIV/AIDS strategy that includes all federal agencies. The strategy will be designed to reduce HIV infections, increase access to care and reduce HIV-related health disparities. Obama is also a strong supporter of the Ryan White Care Act

(RWCA), which provides critical access to life-saving treatment and care for over half a million low-income Americans with HIV/AIDS. Obama joined Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) at a large California evangelical church to promote greater investment in the global AIDS battle. Obama also worked with Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and others to introduce the Microbicide Development Act, which will accelerate the development of products that empower women in the battle against AIDS.

- **Invest in Health Information Technology and Telemedicine:** Obama supports increasing access to care in rural areas by promoting the wider adoption of effective telecommunications and health information technologies. He will invest \$10 billion a year over the next five years to move the U.S. health care system to broad adoption of standards-based electronic health information systems. He will phase in requirements for full implementation of health IT and commit the necessary federal resources to make it happen. Obama will ensure that these systems are developed in coordination with providers and frontline workers, including those in rural and underserved areas. Obama will also expand the use of telemedicine, using communications technology to bring important health care services to isolated rural communities.
- **Eliminate Health Disparities:** Compared to their urban counterparts, people in rural areas suffer from worse health, are less likely to have health insurance, and have less access to quality doctors and hospitals. His universal health care plan expands coverage to all Americans, addressing a major cause of health disparities: insurance coverage. Understanding that these problems occur due to both access and affordability, the Obama plan promotes research into combating health care disparities, conducts educational and health outreach, increases the diversity and supply of healthcare professionals, and improves the delivery of health care. Finally, the Obama plan also requires health providers to inform the public about disparities and take steps to reduce those disparities. In the U.S. Senate, Obama helped write the Kennedy-Cochran-Obama Minority Health Improvement and Health Disparity Elimination Act. This bill puts new emphasis on disparity research by directing the Department of Health and Human Services to collect and report health care data by race and ethnicity, as well as geographic and socioeconomic status and level of health literacy.

Improve Rural Education and Attract and Retain Young People in Rural America: Public schools lie at the heart of rural communities. These schools educate children, serve as local employers and are social and cultural centers. Rural South Carolina has actually made tremendous progress in education. Between 1980 and 2000, the share of rural South Carolinians who had graduated from high school went up by 50 percent, as did the share who had graduated from college. But there is still more work to be done. Too often, our rural schools are still not giving our children the education they need.

- **Address the Corridor of Shame:** On a trip to South Carolina's rural schools in the I-95 corridor, or the "Corridor of Shame," Barack Obama personally witnessed the travesty and degradation of classrooms and buildings built 30 years after the Civil War was over. Obama understands the fundamental funding inequalities that plague the school systems of poor rural South Carolina. Indeed Obama stands by the belief that no child in South Carolina or elsewhere in this country should be educated at a "minimally adequate standard". As a state senator, Obama helped provide additional funding for capital improvements to schools to modernize their infrastructure, and he supports similar efforts at the federal level.
- **Support Rural Teachers:** Rural teachers face many unique challenges, including lack of access to professional development opportunities, preparation for multiple subjects and grade levels, and

multiple extracurricular duties. Barack Obama will support rural teachers at all stages of their careers. This means modifying the certification and teacher preparation process so that, for example, a biology major can avoid unnecessary and expensive coursework to become a teacher, and instead learn to teach through proven programs such as teaching residencies that pair up new recruits with master teachers in rural classrooms. Such a program was introduced by Obama and passed by the U.S. Senate. It also means giving successful teachers more control over what goes on in their classrooms, and more opportunities to advance through career ladders, where teachers may choose to take on additional instructional leadership roles.

- **Attract Teachers to Rural Schools:** Obama will provide incentives for talented individuals to enter the teaching profession, including increased pay for teachers who work in rural areas. He supports making the teaching profession well-respected, well-paid, and results-based with real opportunities for lifetime career growth and development.
- **Expand Early Childhood Education:** Barack Obama supports increasing funding for the Head Start program to provide preschool children with critically important learning skills, and supports the necessary role of parental involvement in the success of Head Start.
- **Expand Summer Learning Opportunities:** Differences in learning opportunities during the summer contribute to the achievement gaps that separate struggling poor and minority students from their middle-class peers. Barack Obama's "STEP UP" plan addresses this achievement gap by supporting summer learning opportunities for disadvantaged children through partnerships between local schools and community organizations. Obama also supports restoring funding for the National Youth Sports Program, a long-running program that provided low-income youth with a constructive summer experience focusing on fitness, nutrition and academic enrichment. Funding for the program was eliminated by Congress in 2006; the year before, it served more than 1,400 children in South Carolina.
- **Support After School and College Outreach Programs:** Barack Obama has supported legislation to provide funding for after-school programs for low income students, and he will continue to support these enriching programs as president. Obama also supports programs such as GEAR UP, TRIO, and Upward Bound to encourage more young people from low-income families to consider and prepare for college.
- **Support Entrepreneurship Education:** Barack Obama will create a Rural Revitalization Program to attract and retain young people to rural America. The program will make grants available for rural Americans to pursue entrepreneurship education, partnering with four-year and community colleges, the extension services, non-profit organizations and primary and secondary schools.
- **Bring Farms to Schools:** Barack Obama will support providing locally grown, healthy foods to students as a part of the school meals program. This will both reduce childhood obesity and grow vibrant rural economies, supporting community-based food systems and strengthening family farms. Barack Obama will support funding for farm-to-school projects for food, labor, equipment, and staff training. He also will allow schools to give priority to local sources when ordering food. Currently the USDA prohibits schools from requesting local products during the bidding process. Finally, Obama will expand commodity support to include the school breakfast program as well as the school lunch program.

Expand Research at Land Grant and 1890 Schools: The research and education provided by the nation's land grant and 1890 colleges, including Clemson and South Carolina State, played pivotal roles in establishing America's competitive advantage in agriculture. Today, these schools need more funding to respond to new challenges. Barack Obama will increase research and educational funding for projects such as enhancing the profitability and competitiveness of small and mid-size farms, including distribution mechanisms; entrepreneurial education for adults and youth learners; and research on alternative energy production systems and how to produce conservation commodities efficiently.

Support Local Colleges in Fulfilling their Mission in Rural America: Studies show that community college graduates often remain in rural communities. Obama will provide funding to community colleges, technical colleges, and other local colleges to reevaluate the types of skills and education that are in demand from students and local businesses in support of health careers, renewable energy initiatives, and other ventures to revitalize rural economies. This will lead these colleges to implement new associate degree programs that reflect the increasingly dynamic and technical skills required for rural America to respond to a globalizing workforce.

Supporting Historically Black Colleges and Predominantly Black Institutions: Barack Obama has been a champion of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and has worked to preserve their funding. Barack Obama also introduced legislation that would amend the Higher Education Act to provide resources to Predominantly Black Institutions. These institutions are primarily urban and rural two-year colleges that serve at least 50 percent low-income or first-generation college students. This designation is projected to apply to 75 institutions in 17 states, benefiting approximately 265,000 students. Presently, eight rural institutions in South Carolina will qualify for these grants. The \$15 million authorized in PBI grants will provide more opportunities for equal academic achievement to minority students. Obama also worked to ensure that the creation of funding for PBIs would not threaten funding for HBCUs; his PBI proposal is supported by the National Association for Educational Opportunity, the United Negro College Fund, the American Association of Community Colleges, and other organizations.

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

As president, Barack Obama will continue his fight, begun as a community organizer, to protect our children from health hazards and developmental disabilities caused by environmental toxins, such as lead, mercury, and nuclear waste.

- **Combat Mercury Poisoning:** South Carolina has advised against consuming fish from 1,683 miles of its rivers and 45,804 acres of its lakes due to the risks of mercury contamination; all of its coastal miles also are under advisory. Many rural residents, particularly African-Americans, eat the fish in these waters, exposing themselves to mercury poisoning, which is particularly dangerous to women of childbearing age and young children. These high levels of mercury poisoning would have been made worse by Bush Administration rules that Barack Obama fought. As president, Obama will enact strong mercury emissions rules that protect rural South Carolina right away.
- **Combat Air Pollution:** The adverse health effects of air pollution include premature death, lung disease, heart disease, and asthma. Because emissions from power plants and other sources can travel long distances, many rural communities experience air pollution. South Carolina pays \$150 million a year to treat its 94,000 children who have asthma. Fine particle pollution from power plants shortens the lives of 564 South Carolinians each year while causing 71,276 lost work days, 484 hospitalizations and 12,378 asthma attacks. Barack Obama helped stop President Bush's attempt to undermine the Clean Air Act, which would have increased industrial emissions of mercury and

sulfur. He also helped block attempts to roll back environmental regulations on oil refineries. As president, Barack Obama will restore the strength of the Clean Air Act. He will protect rural families from smog and soot, which harm lung function and may aggravate asthma.

- **Protect the Public from Nuclear Material:** While South Carolina's nuclear sites have provided good jobs to local residents, not enough attention has been paid to protecting local health. The Barnwell Radioactive Waste Facility does not have state of the art holding designs, and it is near a creek which feeds into the Savannah River, which in turn supplies water for the people of Beaufort and Jasper Counties. Meanwhile, there are concerns about the ongoing cleanup of the Savannah River Site. As a senator, Barack Obama introduced legislation that would require nuclear companies to inform state and local officials if there is an accidental or unintentional leak of a radioactive substance. As president, he will fight to keep South Carolinians safe from nuclear material. He also will continue the cleanup of past operations at Savannah River.
- **Strengthen Federal Environmental Justice Programs:** Barack Obama will make environmental justice policies a priority within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). As a U.S. Senator, Obama has worked to ensure that low-income communities are represented in EPA's long-term planning. As president, Obama will work to strengthen the EPA Office of Environmental Justice and expand the Environmental Justice Small Grants Program, which provides non-profit organizations across the nation with valuable resources to address local environmental problems. Obama will also work to ensure that environmental health issues in the wake of man-made or terrorist disasters are promptly addressed by federal, state and local officials. Obama will also work to provide low-income communities the legal ability to challenge policies and processes that adversely affect the environmental health of low-income and minority communities.

Combat the Scourge of Methamphetamine: According to the 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 11.7 million Americans had tried methamphetamine ("meth") at least once in their lifetime and an estimated 1.4 million Americans regularly used the drug. The number of Americans who have tried meth is up an incredible 156 percent since 1996. This epidemic has hit rural communities particularly hard. Barack Obama has a long record of fighting the meth epidemic. In the Illinois State Senate, Obama fought for and passed legislation to increase penalties against meth manufacturers, particularly in cases where a child was exposed. In the U.S. Senate, Obama supported the Combat Meth Act of 2005, major parts of which became law in 2006. The bill puts federal funds into the fight against methamphetamine, provides assistance to children affected by meth abuse, and places restrictions on the sale of the ingredients used to make the drug. As president, he will continue the fight to rid our communities of meth and offer support to help addicts heal.

- **Cracking Down on Importation of Meth Chemicals:** As president, Obama will cut off drug lab supplies by restricting global imports of precursor chemicals, and he will take on the Mexican drug cartels in partnership with Mexico and other nations in the region.
- **Help Mothers Beat Meth Addiction:** The meth crisis in South Carolina - and in other rural states - is taking an especially severe toll on mothers and children. A survey of 500 county law enforcement officials in 44 states found that 61 percent of counties saw an increase during the last three years in the number of women abusing meth. Yet, when mothers in America's heartland seek out treatment to heal from their addiction, they are often forced to make a choice between treatment and their children. Most treatment programs prohibit children or disregard children in the provision of services. Barack Obama believes we need to expand family treatment programs where mothers and

their children are treated together, as a whole family.

- **Cleanup Meth Labs:** There are presently no federal standards to determine if a former meth lab is now safe and livable. Obama supports efforts to establish voluntary scientifically-based standards for former meth lab sites.

Protect the Financial Security & Health of Seniors: Rural communities are significantly older than their urban counterparts. Across America, 20 percent of rural Americans are older than 59 compared to 15 percent in cities.

- **Protect and Strengthen Social Security:** As the cornerstone of America's social compact, Social Security has lifted millions of seniors and their families out of poverty. Without Social Security, 57 percent of elderly people in South Carolina would be poor. Social Security is particularly critical to our rural communities. In fact, one study found that rural communities depend on income from Social Security nearly twice as much as non-rural communities. The full measure of Social Security's value for its recipients – as well as for those who look after and love them – is incalculable. Barack Obama will preserve Social Security by working in a bipartisan way to maintain its solvency for future generations.
- **Secure Pensions:** Barack Obama will insist that companies keep the promises they have made to their employees. He will amend bankruptcy laws to keep companies from filing for Chapter 11 in order to avoid obligations to their workers. In the Senate, Obama voted for new rules to force companies to properly fund their pension plans so taxpayers don't end up footing the bill. Obama has also voted to shore up funding of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, the federal agency that guarantees retirees receive at least some of their pension monies if their companies go out of business.
- **Eliminate Income Taxes for Seniors Making Less Than \$50,000:** Since the New Deal, we've had a basic understanding in America: If you work hard and pay into the system, you've earned the right to a secure retirement. But too many seniors aren't getting that security, even though they've held up their end of the bargain. Barack Obama will eliminate all income taxation of seniors making less than \$50,000 per year. This will provide immediate relief to 22 million American seniors who will not need to file an income tax return, and will eliminate all income taxes for nearly seven million seniors at a savings of roughly \$1,400 each year. For many seniors, this will eliminate the need to hire a tax preparer, resulting in even larger savings.
- **Provide Cheaper Prescription Drugs:** Our seniors pay the highest prices in the world for brand-name drugs. They even pay slightly more than individuals who buy their drugs at an online retail pharmacy. To help lower the cost of pharmaceuticals, Barack Obama believes that the federal government should negotiate for lower drug prices for seniors in the Medicare program, just as it negotiates to obtain lower prices for our veterans. He also supports efforts to allow seniors to import prescription drugs from Canada.

Upgrade Rural Infrastructure: Much of the public infrastructure in rural America has fallen into significant disrepair. This has hurt the long-term competitiveness of our rural communities. Barack Obama believes that America's long-term competitiveness depends on the stability of our critical infrastructure. As president, he will invest in the core infrastructure that rural communities need to thrive.

- **Improve Transportation Options:** Rural America depends on reliable, cost-effective, and efficient transportation - whether by barge, truck or rail - to deliver its products to market. Nearly half the cost of U.S. grain is accounted for by transportation costs. These problems are made worse by increasing rates for rail service, aging locks and dams and congested roadways. As president, Obama will make strengthening our transportation systems, including our roads and bridges, a top priority. This will also strengthen tourism in South Carolina.
- **Improve Water and Sewer Systems:** Rural areas often depend on federal funding to maintain their water and sewer systems. Recently, however, budget cuts and reduced grant funds have combined to cut down on the number of new projects. As a result, these important infrastructure areas have been neglected and allowed to degrade. Barack Obama will ensure these programs are adequately funded.
- **Target Rural Development Aid to Truly Rural Areas:** Since 2001, the USDA has distributed more than \$70 billion in grants and loans through its Rural Development program. Unfortunately, less than half of those funds have gone to truly rural areas. Instead, USDA has awarded the bulk of these benefits to metropolitan regions, recreational and retirement communities, and businesses that hardly qualify as contributing to the quality of life in rural America. In one particularly egregious example, USDA awarded \$4.5 million to the Black Dog Tavern on Martha's Vineyard to refinance a mortgage and to expand its clothing stores. One key cause of this distorted allocation of funds has been the Bush administration's decision to shift much of the funding from grants to loans, pricing out the lower-income, truly rural areas that most need the funding but can least afford to repay the loans. As president, Barack Obama will rationalize USDA funding rules to ensure that these funds are provided to truly rural areas, with preferences for areas that have a harder time attracting private investment.

Protect the Rights of Sportsmen: Barack Obama deeply respects America's sportsmen and is committed to protecting their rights. Tens of millions of Americans hunt and fish. Obama believes that we can protect the rights of hunters and other lawful gun owners while still working to reduce gun violence and make sure that guns do not fall into the hands of criminals or the mentally ill.

III. COMBAT RURAL POVERTY

South Carolina's poverty rate has improved over the last 25 years, but there is still more work to be done. South Carolina's rural areas suffer 23 percent more poverty than the state's cities, and 43 percent more poverty than the nation as a high. The problem of rural poverty has many facets, and Barack Obama is committed to combating the underlying causes of rural poverty to break the cycle and help rural South Carolina prosper.

Expand Transitional Jobs and Career Pathways Programs: Barack Obama will invest \$1 billion over five years in transitional jobs and career pathways programs that implement proven methods of helping low-income Americans to gain meaningful employment, and move up the career ladder.

- **Transitional Jobs.** Obama will create a transitional jobs program to place people with extreme difficulties getting and keeping good jobs into temporary, subsidized wage-paying jobs to gain necessary job skills before applying for unsubsidized jobs in the private and public sectors.
- **Career Pathways.** In addition to helping people enter the job market, Obama will also help people move up the career ladder by providing funding for bridge and career pathways programs to identify

job opportunities, develop customized training and apprentice programs, and help place low-income employees in better jobs.

Provide a Tax Cut for Working Families: Barack Obama will restore fairness to the tax code and provide 150 million workers the tax relief they deserve. Obama will create a new “Making Work Pay” tax credit of up to \$500 per person, or \$1,000 per working family. This refundable income tax credit will provide direct relief to American families who face the regressive payroll tax system. The “Making Work Pay” tax credit will completely eliminate income taxes for 10 million Americans.

Reduce Crime Recidivism by Providing Ex-Offender Supports: In the U.S. Senate, Obama has worked to provide job training, substance abuse and mental health counseling, and employment opportunities to ex-offenders. In addition to signing these important programs into law, Obama will create a prison-to-work incentive program, modeled on the successful Welfare-to-Work Partnership to provide training and support to ex-offenders.

Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit: In both the Illinois State Senate and the U.S. Senate, Obama has championed efforts to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which is one of the most successful anti-poverty programs to date. As president, Obama will reward work by increasing the number of working parents eligible for EITC benefits, increasing the benefit available to parents who support their children through child support payments and reducing the EITC marriage penalty which hurts low-income families. Under the Obama plan, full-time workers making the minimum wage would get an EITC benefit up to \$555, more than three times greater than the \$175 benefit they get today. If the workers are responsibly supporting their children on child support, the Obama plan would give those workers a benefit of \$1,110.

Raise the Minimum Wage: As a U.S. Senator, Obama fought to increase the federal minimum wage for the first time in a decade. As president, Obama would further raise the minimum wage and index it to inflation to make sure that full-time workers do not live in poverty.

Create Fund to Help Homeowners Avoid Foreclosures: In addition to taking important steps to prevent mortgage fraud from occurring in the future, Barack Obama will create a fund to help people refinance their mortgages and provide comprehensive supports to innocent homeowners. The fund will also assist individuals who purchased homes that are simply too expensive for their income levels by helping them sell their homes. The fund will be partially paid for by Obama’s increased penalties on lenders who acted irresponsibly and committed fraud.

Increase Access to Capital in Underserved Communities: Barack Obama will strengthen Small Business Administration programs that provide capital to minority-owned businesses, support outreach programs that help minority business owners apply for loans, and work to encourage the growth and capacity of minority firms.

Promote Responsible Fatherhood: Children without fathers in their lives are 5 times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime, 9 times more likely to drop out of school, and 20 times more likely to end up in prison. Barack Obama introduced legislation to remove some of the government penalties on married families, crack down on men avoiding child support payments, and ensure that payments go to families instead of state bureaucracies. As president, he will sign this bill into law and continue to implement innovative measures to strengthen families.

Support Parents with Young Children: The Nurse-Family Partnership provides home visits by trained registered nurses to low-income expectant mothers and their families. Proven benefits of these types of

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programs include improved women's prenatal health, a reduction in childhood injuries, fewer unintended pregnancies, increased father involvement and women's employment, reduced use of welfare and food stamps, and increased children's school readiness. Barack Obama would expand this program to help 570,000 first-time mothers each year.

IV. ENSURE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR FAMILY FARMERS

Barack Obama understands the importance of keeping South Carolina farming in good health. In fact, one fifth of rural South Carolina jobs are farm or farm-related jobs.

Maintain Our Export Competitiveness: The United States is the world's largest exporter of agricultural products. More than 13 percent of peanuts, 15 percent of poultry, 31 percent of cotton, 33 percent of tobacco, and 43 percent of soybean products grown domestically are exported worldwide. South Carolina is one of our nation's biggest exporters of poultry, tobacco, and peanuts. Barack Obama will work to break down trade and investment barriers to maintain the American farmer's competitiveness around the world. As president, Obama will devote more resources to research and technology development so that American farmers can maintain their technological edge in production and distribution of their goods. He will broaden export promotion programs to include export training and workshops. He will help producers develop global marketing networks through the use of new electronic transaction systems and special promotion programs. 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.

Establish Country of Origin Labeling: Barack Obama supports immediate implementation of the Country of Origin Labeling law, which will require meat products to indicate their country of origin. Obama believes that American producers should be able to distinguish their products from imported ones and that consumers deserve the right to know where their food comes from. Obama also will support efforts of domestic producers to brand their products. For instance, shrimpers in the Southeast certify and brand their "Wild American Shrimp" to gain more market share.

Improve Food Safety: The USDA and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) need more authority to issue and enforce recalls for contaminated food. Barack Obama supports efforts to improve federal food safety surveillance to better improve our ability to identify, contain, and prevent outbreaks. He is committed to expanding resources to inform the public when an outbreak happens so that they can make good decisions about food safety.

Make Disaster Assistance Permanent: Farmers are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. For instance, the unprecedented drought that is devastating the South is impacting South Carolina farmers. Barack Obama has fought to expedite disaster assistance to farmers in Illinois and across the country during difficult times. Obama will make the disaster program permanent so that farmers do not have to rely on the whims of Congress to get assistance.

Ensure Fair Treatment of Black Farmers: For too long, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has discriminated against black farmers, including many in South Carolina, unjustly denying them access to loans and other assistance. The historic 1999 *Pigford Settlement* was intended to provide black farmers with some relief from this discrimination. So far, the *Pigford Settlement* has provided more than \$850 million in relief for some aggrieved black farmers, including more than \$42 million¹ to black farmers in South

¹ <http://www.pigfordmonitor.org/reports/rpt20061006.pdf>

Carolina. Unfortunately, too many black farmers were denied relief under this settlement, many due to minor technicalities, such as late filing. Barack Obama introduced the Pigford Claims Remedy Act of 2007, which will provide unjustly rejected *Pigford* claimants with a fair review of their claims. He has also demanded an investigation of apparently illegal activities of USDA officials to lobby against this common-sense legislation. As president, Barack Obama will ensure that all farmers are treated justly by the Department of Agriculture.

Help Peaches, Nurseries and Other Specialty Crop Growers: Barack Obama believes federal farm policy must reflect the diversity of American agriculture. Growers of fruits, vegetables, nursery, and floriculture do not take part in price support or other programs targeting commodities, but this is not a license for USDA to ignore the interests of this \$50 billion sector of the American economy. Specialty crop producers face competition from subsidized foreign production, invasive pests and disease that may damage their crops and close their markets, and the loss of prime agricultural land. Greenhouse, nursery, & floriculture represent the second largest commodity crops in South Carolina. South Carolina ranks number two in the nation for fresh peach production. As a senator, Barack Obama supports increasing assistance and nutrition programs that focus on specialty crops in the 2007 Farm Bill. As president, Obama will work for programs designed specifically for specialty growers, to expand access to foreign markets, provide school children with more fruits and vegetables, and promote research focused on their particular needs.

Encourage Organic and Sustainable Agriculture: Organic food is the fastest-growing sector of the American food marketplace. Demand for sustainable, locally grown, grass-finished and heritage foods is also growing quickly. These niche markets present new opportunities for beginning farmers because specialty operations often require more management and labor than capital. To support the continued growth of sustainable alternative agriculture, Barack Obama will increase funding for the National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program to help farmers afford the costs of compliance with national organic certification standards. He will also reform the USDA Risk Management Agency's crop insurance rates so that they do not penalize organic farmers.

Support Local Family Farmers with Local Foods and Promote Regional Food System Policies: Farming is a vanishing lifestyle. Less than one million Americans claim farming as their primary occupation. Those farmers who sell directly to their customers cut out all of the middlemen and get full retail price for their food. Barack Obama recognizes that local and regional food systems are better for our environment and support family-scale producers. As president, he will emphasize the need to "Put your state on your plate," and he will implement USDA policies that promote local and regional food systems.

Encourage Young People to Become Farmers: The average age of a farm operator in South Carolina is 57, and there are not enough young people entering farming. Becoming a successful farmer is a lifelong endeavor. Barack Obama will establish a new program to identify the next generation of farmers and ranchers and help them develop professional skills and find work that leads to farm ownership and management. He will help our land-grant university system and the cooperative extension services work closely with organizations such as 4-H and FFA to identify and prepare candidates for this program.

Barack Obama will also provide a capital gains tax break for landowners selling to beginning family farmers, and a first-time buyer's tax credit for new farmers. These incentives will make it easier for new farmers to afford their first farm.

Partner with Landowners to Conserve Private Lands: Because most rural land is privately-owned, farmers, ranchers, and private landowners are the principle stewards of rural land and water. As a U.S.

Senator, Barack Obama has supported conservation programs, such as the Conservation Security Program (CSP), that serve as a resource to farmers and assist them with sustainable environmental planning and best land management practices. As president, Obama will put an unprecedented level of emphasis on the conservation of private lands. He will advance legislation that works with landowners and follows in the tradition of the Wilderness Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act to focus federal attention and increased resources for this key environmental issue. He will also increase funding for CSP and the Conservation Reserve Program and will create additional incentives for private landowners for sustainable agriculture to protect and restore wetlands, grasslands, forests and other wildlife habitat. Finally, he will work to improve incentives that help farmers prevent runoff pollution from soil erosion, pesticides and fertilizer.

Protect Small Farms and Businesses from Unnecessarily Burdensome Regulations: Too often, federal regulations are one-size-fits-all, written as if only big businesses will be affected. But without careful attention, regulations can disadvantage small farms that don't have the economies of scale to support the expensive lawyers or equipment that compliance necessitates. As president, Barack Obama will work to make federal laws and regulations more sensitive to these considerations.

Regulate CAFOs: Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), which raise more than 40 percent of U.S. livestock, comprise a larger share of the livestock industry every year. Barack Obama has worked for tougher environmental regulations on CAFOs. He has supported legislation to set tough air and water pollution limits for livestock operations, including limits on nitrogen, phosphorus, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia, and other pollutants. In the Obama Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency will strictly monitor and regulate pollution from large CAFOs, with fines for those who violate tough air and water quality standards. Obama strongly supports efforts to ensure meaningful local control. He will also encourage the production of renewable energy from animal waste, such as by using methane digesters.

Limit EQIP Funding for CAFOs: Barack Obama believes that we should help farmers find the resources to comply with environmental requirements. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides important financial support to farmers seeking to improve the environmental quality of their operations. Unfortunately, the 2002 Farm Bill lifted the cap on the size of livestock operations that can receive EQIP funding, enabling large livestock operations to receive EQIP payments and subsidizing big CAFOs by as much as \$450,000. Obama supports reinstating a strict cap on the size of the livestock operations that can receive EQIP funding so that the largest polluters have to pay for their own environmental clean up.

Strong Safety Net for Family Farmers: Barack Obama will fight for farm programs that provide family farmers with the stability and predictability they need. He will ensure that American farmers are protected from market disruptions and weather disasters. And Obama will ensure farm programs are strong and are targeted to support family farmers. The lack of effective payment limitations has resulted in federal farm programs financing farm consolidation and the elimination of many mid-size family farms. Obama believes we should implement a \$250,000 payment limitation.

Prevent Anticompetitive Behavior Against Family Farms: 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. He will strengthen anti-monopoly laws; change federal agriculture policy to strengthen producer protection from fraud, abuse, and market manipulation; and make sure that farm programs are helping family farmers, as opposed to large, vertically integrated corporate agribusiness. Obama will protect independent producers by banning the ownership of livestock by meat

packers. He will also issue regulations for what constitutes undue price discrimination against small and mid-size farmers under the 1921 Packers and Stockyards Act, and his administration will enforce the law.

Help Communities Conserve Water: The Southeast is experiencing the worst drought in a century. Barack Obama will set forth policies to encourage communities to develop voluntary water banks, wastewater treatment, and other market-based measures. He will also work to improve technology for water conservation and efficiency, and remove institutional barriers to increase cooperation and collaboration among federal, state, and private organizations. Obama wants to help farmers deploy water conservation measures, including irrigation techniques that save energy and water and small reservoirs that farmers can use to capture rainfall. Obama intends to help local communities develop water saving projects that work for them.

V. PROMOTE RURAL AMERICA'S LEADERSHIP IN DEVELOPING RENEWABLE ENERGY

America's farmers have been on the forefront of the renewable fuels movement. Barack Obama has been one of the strongest proponents in Congress for increasing the national supply of home-grown American renewable fuels. As president he will ensure that our rural areas continue their leadership in this arena. South Carolina's rural areas could be key producers of biofuels and biodiesel from pine trees, poultry fat, soybeans, and switchgrass for example. We may even be able to turn negatives into positives, by producing energy from poultry waste. Obama will use some of the revenue generated from his cap-and-trade permit auction to invest in climate-friendly energy development and deployment. This will transform the economy, especially in rural America which is poised to produce renewable energy than ever before, creating millions of new jobs across the country.

Invest in the Fastest, Cheapest Way to Energy Independence: Energy Efficiency: Improving energy efficiency is the fastest, cheapest, most cost-effective method to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and it results in significant savings for our government, economy and consumers. Cost effective energy efficiency should take priority over the construction of new generation facilities. Barack Obama will set a bold national goal of reducing the energy intensity of our economy 50 percent by 2030.

Make Federal Buildings More Efficient: Obama will ensure that all new federal buildings are zero-emissions by 2025, and to help reach that goal, he will ensure that all new federal buildings are 40 percent more efficient within the next five years. Obama will also place retrofitting existing federal buildings at a top priority, and seek to improve their efficiency by 25 percent within 5 years.

Increase Fuel Economy Standards: Obama has developed an innovative approach to double fuel economy standards within 18 years while protecting the financial future of domestic automakers. His plan, which will save nearly a half trillion gallons of gasoline and 6 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases by 2028, will establish concrete targets for annual CAFE increases while giving industry the flexibility to meet those targets. Obama's innovative approach broke through a 20 year deadlock in Congress and is the basis for bipartisan legislation that passed the Senate this year. Some of the most exciting research on fuel efficiency is currently underway at Clemson University's International Center for Automotive Research, creating jobs for the surrounding areas.

Build Biofuel Distribution Infrastructure: As the amount of biofuels in gasoline exceeds 10 percent, conventional fueling equipment will need to be replaced with pumps and tanks capable of handling higher biofuel blends, like B20 and E85. Barack Obama has been one of the strongest proponents in Congress for increasing the national supply of home-grown American ethanol and biodiesel. Obama is the only

Democratic presidential candidate to cosponsor and actively campaign to establish the nation's first federal Renewable Fuel Standard, which is now law. In the U.S. Senate, Obama introduced a proposal to create the first national Renewable Diesel Standard to increase our country's production and supply of American-grown biodiesel. Obama also led the successful effort to make gas stations eligible for a tax credit to cover 30 percent of the costs of installing E85 ethanol refueling pumps. Obama will build on those efforts to improve the production, supply and distribution of advanced biofuels like cellulosic ethanol and biodiesel.

- **Develop the Next Generation of Biofuels:** Barack Obama will work to ensure that advanced biofuels, including cellulosic ethanol, are developed and incorporated into our national supply as soon as possible. Corn ethanol is the most successful alternative fuel commercially available in the U.S. today, and we should fight the efforts of big oil and big agri-business to undermine this emerging industry. But it represents only a drop in the bucket of our energy demands and making ethanol from corn has some significant limitations. Today we produce about 5 billion gallons of corn-based ethanol per year while we use about 140 billion gallons of gasoline. Even if we are able to double – or even triple – production of ethanol from corn this will still offset only about 10 percent of our gasoline demand. There are also real concerns about bringing set aside lands into corn production as well as concerns about an increase in the use of pesticides, water use and upward pressure on the cost of food for people and livestock alike. These constraints reveal the scope and scale of our energy and environmental challenges. As we develop the next generation of biofuels we must be vigilant to insure that we do in a sustainable fashion so that land and water resources are conserved. Obama will invest federal resources, including tax incentives, cash prizes and government contracts into developing the most promising technologies with the goal of getting the first two billion gallons of cellulosic ethanol into the system by 2013. Obama will also work to improve the national supply of advanced biodiesel. From here the Clean Technologies Deployment Venture Fund will speed the deployment of multiple facilities.
- **Expand Locally-Owned Biofuel Refineries:** Less than 10 percent of new ethanol production today is from farmer-owned refineries. New ethanol and biodiesel refineries help jumpstart rural economies. For example, it has been estimated that a 40 million gallon ethanol refinery will add up to 120 jobs, expand a local tax base by \$70 million per year and boost local household income by \$6.7 million annually. The economic development opportunities for advanced cellulosic ethanol technologies hold potential to revitalize rural communities across the country. Barack Obama believes we must ensure that local investment continues to play a significant role as the biofuels industry continues to expand and evolve. Obama will create a number of incentives for local communities to invest in their biofuels refineries, including expanding federal tax credit programs and providing technical advice to rural communities that are in a strong position to open their own refineries. Obama will also provide an additional subsidy per gallon of ethanol produced from new facilities that have a minimum of 25 percent local capital, and he will provide additional loan guarantees for advanced ethanol facilities with local investment.
- **Increase Renewable Fuel Standard:** As a leader in the effort to establish the nation's first Renewable Fuel Standard, Obama understands firsthand the importance of continuing to increase the supply of biofuels in our national fuel supply. Obama believes it is imperative that Congress adopt the Senate-passed proposal to increase the RFS to 36 billion gallons by 2022. As president, Obama will seek to surpass these targets and establish a requirement to produce at least 60 billion gallons of biofuels, including cellulosic ethanol and biodiesel, by 2030.
- **Establish a National Low Carbon Fuel Standard:** Barack Obama will establish a National Low

Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS) to speed the introduction of low-carbon non-petroleum fuels. The standard, which Obama introduced in the U.S. Senate, requires fuels suppliers to reduce the carbon their fuel emits by ten percent by 2020. The Obama plan will help incentivize increased private sector investment in advanced biofuels and has a sustainability provision to ensure that this boom in U.S. ethanol and biodiesel production does not come at the expense of environmental conservation. The standard will reduce lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions 10 percent by 2020. The LCFS is an important mechanism in ensuring that our efforts to reduce our oil dependence also reduce carbon emissions.

- **Mandate All New Vehicles are Flexible Fuel Vehicles:** Barack Obama believes that all new vehicles sold in the U.S. should be flexible fuel vehicles, which means they can run on biofuel blends like E85. Obama will work with Congress and auto companies to ensure that all new vehicles have flexible fuel vehicle capability by the end of his first term in office.

Develop and Deploy New Renewable Technologies

- **Require 25 Percent of Electricity to Come from Renewable Sources by 2025:** Barack Obama will establish a 25 percent federal Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) to require that 25 percent of electricity consumed in the U.S. is derived from clean, sustainable energy sources, like solar, wind and geothermal by 2025. This requirement will spur significant private sector investment in renewable sources of energy and create thousands of new American jobs, especially in rural areas. As an Illinois state senator, Obama cosponsored a measure to create an RPS in Illinois. And recently, Illinois signed into law a 25 percent RPS by 2025 measure modeled on Obama's state senate RPS efforts. As a U.S. Senator, Obama successfully fought regulatory efforts to put Midwestern wind projects on hold.
- **Extend the Production Tax Credit:** Obama will also extend the federal Production Tax Credit for five years to encourage the production of renewable energy like wind and solar. This program will provide incentives to farmers and other local producers of renewable energy to boost rural renewable energy production.
- **Create a Clean Technologies Deployment Venture Capital Fund:** Barack Obama will create a Clean Technologies Deployment Venture Capital Fund to fill a critical gap in U.S. technology development. This Fund will partner with existing investment funds and our National Laboratories to ensure that promising technologies move beyond the lab and are commercialized in the U.S. The risks and associated costs of commercializing a new energy technology often prevent critically important technologies from ever seeing the light of day. The gap between the lab and the marketplace is sometimes referred to as the "Valley of Death," because many technologies enter but few ever make it out the other side because of the prohibitive costs of building the first commercial-scale facility that processes that energy source. Currently, U.S. venture capital funding is doing an effective job promoting research and development stage, but far too often, technologies invented here in the U.S. such as wind turbines, solar panels, and compact fluorescent bulbs are commercialized overseas and then sold back to American consumers.

Coupled with an Obama Administration's increased investment in renewable energy research and development, this Fund's efforts to quickly deploy new technologies like cellulosic ethanol, carbon capture and sequestration, and other clean technologies like bio-based plastics will help ensure that the American economy and environment benefit from clean technologies in the next few years, as

opposed to the next several decades. Obama will invest \$10 billion in this fund for five years, and reinvest profits back into the fund.

- **Invest in a Digital Smart Grid and Improve Rural Transmission:** Like other pieces of infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, our energy grid is outdated and inefficient, resulting in \$50-100 billion dollar losses to the U.S. economy each year. Like President Eisenhower did with the interstate highway system, Barack Obama will pursue a major investment in our national utility grid to enable a tremendous increase in renewable generation and accommodate 21st century energy requirements, such as reliability, smart metering, and distributed storage. Obama will invest federal money to leverage additional state and private sector funds to help create a digitally connected power grid. Creating a smart grid will also help insulate against terrorism concerns because our grid today is virtually unprotected from terrorists. Installing a smart grid will help individuals produce electricity on their property through solar panels or wind turbines, which they will be able to sell back through the grid. Obama will direct federal resources, including tax incentives and increased bond authority, to the most vulnerable areas as well as rural areas where significant renewable energy sources are located, as well as work toward national transformation of our energy grid in partnership with states and utilities.

Invest in Rural Lands and Reduce Carbon Emissions by Promoting Carbon Sequestration: As forests are cut down, burned, and converted to other uses, carbon stored in wood, leaves, and soils are released into the atmosphere, making the global climate change problem worse. Barack Obama believes any domestic program to reduce carbon emissions must include domestic incentives that reward forest owners, farmers, and ranchers when they plant trees, restore grasslands, undertake farming practices that capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, or engage in no-till practices that retain carbon currently stored in the soil. Encouraging these efforts will also provide improve water quality and restore natural areas for wildlife and recreation.

Encourage Farmers at the Cutting Edge of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency: Farmers realize that they can help their bottom line and the environment by using more wind and solar to power production systems and sharing energy with other users. They are using new irrigation practices to conserve energy and water. Obama will encourage the use of methane digesters that are being used to produce power from animal wastes. No-till and other agricultural practices are reducing energy input and keeping the health of our soil sustainable. As president, Obama will expand USDA projects that focus on energy efficiency and conservation.