



REAL LEADERSHIP FOR RURAL SOUTH DAKOTA

Rural America faces numerous challenges, but also economic opportunities unlike anything we have witnessed in modern history. South Dakota has a strong tradition and a promising future in agriculture. South Dakota is part of the great American breadbasket. The state is a large producer of beef, wheat, corn, soybeans, and sunflowers. South Dakotans need a president who is willing to prioritize policies to improve the quality of life in rural America.

Rural communities in America are at a critical point in history. For the past decade, rural America has not been well-served by Washington. If Republicans and Democrats continue these misguided policies, rural families will see their economic fortunes fall further behind those of other Americans. 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 and ranchers.

Barack Obama believes that together we can ensure a bright future for rural America. A senator from a rural, Midwestern 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:

- **Ensure Economic Opportunity for Family Farmers and Ranchers**
- **Promote Rural America's Leadership in Developing Renewable Energy**
- **Support Rural Economic Development**
- **Improve Rural Quality of Life**
- **Protect the Rights of Sportsmen**

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 and ranchers are still the cornerstone of American democracy. He will be a president who stands with family farmers and helps them thrive for generations to come.

I. ENSURE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR FAMILY FARMERS

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. Members of South Dakota's congressional delegation have been fighting for implementation for years. Obama believes that American producers should be able to distinguish their products from imported ones and that consumers have the right to know where their food comes from.

Strong Safety Net for Family Farmers and Ranchers: Barack Obama will fight for farm programs that provide family farmers with the stability and predictability they need. He will ensure that American farmers and ranchers are protected from market disruptions and weather disasters. And Obama will ensure farm programs are strong and are targeted to support family farmers and ranchers.

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 will ensure those payments go to farmers who need them – not farmers who rely on American taxpayers to protect their multi-million dollar profits. Most importantly, Obama will close the loopholes that allow mega farms to get around the limits by subdividing their operations into multiple paper corporations. Obama will take immediate action to close the loophole by proposing regulations to limit payments to active farmers and ranchers who work the land, plus landlords who rent to active farmers. Both the Government Accountability Office and the Payment Limitation Commission have called for closing this loophole. Every president since Ronald Reagan has had the authority to close this loophole without additional action by Congress, but has failed to act.

Prevent Anticompetitive Behavior Against Family Ranchers and Farmers: In an era of market consolidation, Barack Obama will fight to ensure family and independent farmers and ranchers have fair access to markets, control over their production decisions, and transparency in prices. Obama is a strong supporter of legislation that protects independent producers by banning the ownership of livestock by meat packers, a longtime priority of Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD). Just four firms slaughtered 71 percent of all U.S. cattle in 2005. When meatpackers own livestock, they bid less aggressively for the hogs and cattle produced by independent farmers. When supplies are short and prices are rising, they are able to stop buying livestock, which disrupts the market.

The 1921 Packers and Stockyards Act prohibits price discrimination by meatpackers against small and mid-size farmers, but the law has not been enforced. Obama will issue regulations for what constitutes undue price discrimination and his administration will enforce the law. He will also 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.

Make Disaster Assistance Permanent: Farmers are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. Barack Obama has fought to expedite disaster assistance to farmers across the country during crises. Obama will make the disaster program permanent so that farmers do not have to rely on the whims of Congress to get assistance.

Maintain our Export Competitiveness: The United States is the world's largest exporter of agricultural products. More than 50 percent of wheat, 20 percent of corn, and 35 percent of soybeans grown domestically are exported worldwide. Barack 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. And Obama will work to break down trade and investment barriers to maintain the American farmer's competitiveness around the world. Obama has supported bipartisan efforts to lift Korea and Japan's ban on U.S. beef. These trade restrictions limit U.S. beef's access to these lucrative markets and are based on principles inconsistent with internationally recognized science-based standards. 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.

Encourage Young People to Become Farmers: The average age of a farm or ranch operator in South Dakota is 53, 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 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 buyers tax credit for new farmers. These incentives will make it easier for new farmers to afford their first farm.

Preserve Our Forests: The U.S. Forest Service forecasts that America could lose tens of millions of acres of forestland over the next 30 years. Most of our forests are privately owned. As president, Barack Obama will provide technical assistance to forest landowners to manage sustainable forests and to address invasive species, wildfires and other forest health issues. Obama will also encourage landowners to protect forests with federal tax incentives for conservation easements, and increased funding for the Forest Legacy Program and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Obama also will provide technical assistance to forest landowners to manage forests in a sustainable manner and to address invasive species, wildfires and other forest health issues.

Obama will ensure that the Forest Service has the resources necessary to properly manage and conserve forests like the Black Hills National Forest. Obama will treat fire suppression as the emergency it is and not use funds appropriated for forest management to fight fires. Obama will promote cooperative discussion about public forests among all stakeholders including conservationists, wildlife experts, those who use the forests for recreation as well as for timber, and local communities who rely on the forests for economic development, recognizing that forests are all different from each other and need localized management.

Obama will promote renewable energy technologies, including cellulosic fuels derived from sustainably harvested forest biomass. Obama will use our forests as a bastion against climate change by enabling forest owners to benefit from conserving forests that sequester carbon from the atmosphere. Obama also will increase research of forest management practices that make forests more resilient to climate change.

Obama supports prohibiting the import of foreign wood products that have been illegally harvested overseas. Illegal logging is a contributor to global climate change, and illegal wood products undercut domestic producers who follow the rules.

Improve Food Safety: The USDA and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) needs 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.

Partner with Landowners to Conserve Private Lands: Because most rural land is privately-owned, farmers, ranchers, and private landowners are the principal 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. The Bush administration has severely reduced funding for conservation programs important to farmers who care about the land and make a living from it. As a result of these cutbacks, USDA conservation programs are oversubscribed and farmers and ranchers can wait years to get

the help they need to install conservation measures important to improving the environment and their bottom line. As president, Obama will put an unprecedented level of emphasis on the conservation of private lands. He will advance legislation that works with landowners 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.

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 U.S. Department of Agriculture (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: 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 for Americans to buy local, and he will implement USDA policies that promote local and regional food systems.

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.

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. 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.

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.

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

With gas prices in South Dakota topping \$3.50 a gallon, the current energy crisis is not only a burden on rural residents, but also an opportunity for America's farmers and ranchers who 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. Rural areas could be key producers of biofuels and biodiesel from biomass and agricultural waste. Innovative farmers are turning negatives into positives by producing energy from animal 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 more renewable energy than ever before, creating millions of new jobs across the country.

Develop and Deploy New Renewable Technologies:

Require 25 Percent of Electricity to Come from Renewable Sources by 2025: South Dakota has been a national leader in the development of biofuels and has tremendous wind energy potential. South Dakota alone may be capable of producing 566 gigawatts of electrical power from wind, which is the equivalent of 52 percent of the nation's electricity demand. 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 wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass 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 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, including solar, geothermal, wind, and biomass. 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 the 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 will quickly deploy new technologies like cellulosic ethanol, carbon capture and sequestration, and other clean technologies like bio-based plastics and commercial sized solar energy

projects. The Fund 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, particularly in rural areas, is outdated and inefficient, resulting in \$50 to \$100 billion losses to the U.S. economy each year. Just as President Dwight Eisenhower invested in the interstate highway system in the 1950s, Barack Obama will work with the states and private utilities to pursue a major federal investment in our national utility grid. A modernized digital smart grid will enable a tremendous increase in renewable energy generation and accommodate 21st century energy requirements, such as reliability, smart metering, and distributed storage. Today, our energy grid is virtually unprotected from terrorists. By creating a smart grid, the government will be able to more effectively address terrorism concerns. A smart grid will also allow individuals to produce electricity on their property through solar panels or wind turbines, which they will then be able to sell back to utilities through the grid. Obama will direct federal resources, including tax incentives and increased bond authority, to the most vulnerable areas, including rural communities, where significant renewable energy sources are located.

Ensure Heating Assistance: Barack Obama has been a strong supporter of increased funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) which helps low-income citizens pay their winter heating and summer cooling bills. Some 6 million households including nearly 40,000 South Dakotans receive energy assistance, and the program is especially critical to seniors, who are more vulnerable to hypothermia and heat stroke. As president, Barack Obama will build on this important program to ensure low-income families receive proper assistance to pay their heating and cooling bills and receive support to weatherize their homes to reduce energy costs.

Renewable Energy: Obama has worked on numerous efforts in the Senate to increase access to and use of renewable fuels. Obama passed legislation with Senator John Thune (R-SD) to give gas stations a tax credit for installing E85 ethanol refueling pumps. The tax credit covers 30 percent of the costs of switching one or more traditional petroleum pumps to E85, which is an 85 percent ethanol/15 percent gasoline blend. Obama also sponsored an amendment that became law providing \$40 million for commercialization of a combined flexible fuel vehicle/hybrid car within five years.

Invest in Rural Lands and Reduce Carbon Emissions by Promoting Carbon Sequestration: Barack Obama believes any domestic program to reduce carbon emissions must include domestic incentives that reward farmers, ranchers, and landowners when they plant trees, restore grasslands, or undertake farming practices that capture carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Encouraging these efforts will also improve water quality and restore natural areas for wildlife and recreation. South Dakota has become a leader in the carbon credit field by enrolling hundreds of thousands of acres to conservation tillage and grassland and forest preservation.

Invest in Energy Efficiency: Rural households use more electricity per household than their urban counterparts because of limited access to natural gas, the use of electric pumps for residential well users, and the lack of municipal services such as street lighting. Improving energy efficiency is the fastest, cheapest, and 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.

III. SUPPORT RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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 and other cellulosic products 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 plans. 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 business, 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 provide the incentives to all telecommunications providers to invest in and offer affordable broadband services throughout rural America. Obama’s plan will be attractive to the existing telephone companies and entrepreneurs who can bring new wireless and other technologies to bear to meet the needs of rural Americans.

- **Reform the Telephone Universal Service Program:** Obama will direct the Federal Communications Commission to propose 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.

IV. 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:** 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 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.
- **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 them to obtain reimbursement for a portion of transportation-related costs. Building networks among health care providers in rural areas is important to ensuring care coordination, particularly for the high proportion of elderly who reside in rural areas, often with multiple chronic conditions. Obama's plan to increase efficiency and quality of care includes planning grants for local health providers to coordinate care.
- **Improve Care for Rural Veterans:** Veterans in rural areas have poorer health and less access to care. In many rural parts of the country, the nearest Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) medical facility is hundreds of miles away. 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.

- **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.

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. Obama is also committed to funding and reforming No Child Left Behind so that we can help schools succeed.

- **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. 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 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:** Experts predict that we will need two million new teachers over the next decade to fill our nation's classrooms. 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.
- **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 to four-year and community colleges, the extension services, non-profit organizations and primary and secondary schools to provide access for rural Americans to entrepreneurship education.
- **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 like South Dakota State University played a pivotal role 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, entrepreneurial education for adults and youth learners, and research on alternative energy production systems and how to produce conservation commodities efficiently.
- **Support Community Colleges in Fulfilling their Mission in Rural America:** Studies show that community colleges graduates often remain in rural communities. Barack Obama will provide funding to community 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 community 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.
- **Make College More Affordable:** Barack Obama will make college affordable for all Americans by creating a new American Opportunity Tax Credit. This fully refundable credit will ensure that the first \$4,000 of a college education is completely free for most Americans, and will cover two-thirds the cost of tuition at the average public college or university. And by making the tax credit fully refundable, Obama's credit will help low-income families that need it the most. Obama will also ensure that the tax credit is available to families at the time of enrollment by using prior year's tax data to deliver the credit at the time that tuition is due, rather than a year or more later when tax returns are filed. Recipients of this credit will be required to conduct 100 hours of public service a year, either during the school year or over the summer months.

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. In South Dakota, some 10 percent of high school senior boys report having tried meth. 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. He 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.

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.

- **Improve Water and Sewer Systems:** Rural areas often depend on federal funding to maintain their water and sewer systems. For instance in South Dakota, the planned Lewis and Clark Rural Water System will supply over 200,000 people with high quality drinking water. The project consists of five reservoirs and seven pump stations, supplying and delivering over 27.2 million gallons of water per day to communities within the tri-state area. Recently, however, budget cuts and reduced grant funds have combined to cut down on the number of new projects across the country. As a result, these important infrastructure areas have been neglected and allowed to degrade. Barack Obama will ensure these programs are adequately funded.
- **Modernize Infrastructure on Lakes and Rivers:** Obama strongly supported the Water Resources and Development Act, which provided funding to modernize locks and dams on rivers across the country. Obama's efforts to pass the Water Resources and Development Act have been praised by the National Corn Grower's Association and the American Soybean Association. As president, Obama will continue to ensure that the federal government invests in upgrading our national transportation infrastructure for agricultural and commercial goods.
- **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.

Reduce 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. 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.

Combat Water Pollution in Rural America: Barack Obama will work to improve incentives that help farmers prevent runoff pollution from soil erosion, pesticides and fertilizer. As a U.S. Senator, he has fought to reduce the amount of mercury that is deposited in our lakes and rivers from power plants and factories hundreds and even thousands of miles away. As president, he will sign into law tough legislation to ban the use of mercury in chlorine chemical plants.

Support Native American Communities: Barack Obama understands that Native American tribal nations

are sovereign, self-governing political entities and enjoy a government-to-government relationship with the United States federal government that is recognized expressly in the U.S. Constitution. Obama will honor the treaty obligations and is committed to meaningful reform of the broken system that manages and administers the trust lands and other trust assets belonging to tribes and individual Indians. As president, Obama will make a special effort to improve the economies of South Dakota's nine Indian Reservations. Most South Dakota Reservations have an unemployment rate in excess of 80 percent with a standard of living that is similar to developing countries, not the rest of the United States.

We must help bring jobs and a private sector economy to the Reservations of South Dakota. Obama's experience as a community organizer working in poor neighborhoods plagued by high unemployment has taught him that there is no single solution to community poverty. Therefore, he supports using a comprehensive culturally appropriate approach that includes investment in physical, human and institutional infrastructure, increased access to capital, the removal of barriers to development, and above all, authentic government-to-government relationships between the federal government and tribes. The high unemployment rate on the Reservations does not just affect those who live on the Reservations. It affects the economy of the entire State. The Obama administration will host a high level White House Conference on Indian Affairs and make improving the quality of live of the Reservations a high priority.

Education is the key to improving the lives of Native Americans and empowering tribal nations to build a better future. Educational policies in the 1970s attempted to reverse past federal policies aimed at eradicating Native American languages and cultures, but Native Americans still suffer from some of the lowest high school graduation and college matriculation rates in the nation. We must continue to honor our obligations to Native Americans by providing tribes with the culturally appropriate educational resources promised by treaty and federal law.

The Indian Health Service (IHS) estimates that it receives only 55 percent of the federal funding it requires. Federal per-capita funding for Indian health care amounts to about half of the federal per capita health funding for federal prisoners. Obama supports sufficient funding for IHS and proper staffing and maintenance for IHS facilities.

Barack Obama also supports fully funding the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program that many tribal law enforcement agencies have come to rely upon. He also recognizes the important role tribal courts play on the reservation. Obama will continue to support additional resources to strengthen tribal courts as well as correction by statute of the jurisdictional gaps that currently inhibit tribes' ability to protect their communities.

V. PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF SPORTSMEN

Hunting and Fishing are storied traditions in South Dakota. Hunters have access to nearly 5 million acres of public land. While it is known as the pheasant state, South Dakota is also known for its big game, waterfowl, turkey and varmint hunting as well.

Protect Gun Rights: Millions of hunters own and use guns each year. Millions more participate in a variety of shooting sports such as sporting clays, skeet, target and trap shooting that may not necessarily involve hunting. As a former constitutional law professor, Barack Obama believes the Second Amendment creates an individual right, and he greatly respects the constitutional rights of Americans to bear arms. He will protect the rights of hunters and other law-abiding Americans to purchase, own, transport, and use guns for the purposes of hunting and target shooting. He also believes that the right is subject to reasonable and commonsense regulation.

Expand Access to Places to Hunt and Fish: Barack Obama recognizes that American hunters and anglers are losing access to places to hunt and fish. Obama supports the Open Fields Incentives legislation that provides incentives to farmers and ranchers who voluntarily open their land to hunting, fishing and other wildlife-related activities.

Conserve Habitat: Barack Obama is fully committed to protecting the habitat for the fish and wildlife that sportsmen enjoy. He is an advocate for preserving our wetlands and supports a broad range of national conservation programs, including the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and the National Fish Habitat Plan.

Open Private Lands: Because most land is privately owned, private landowners are the principal stewards of America's land and water. As a U.S. Senator, Barack Obama has supported conservation programs that serve as a resource to landowners and assist them with sustainable environmental planning and best land management practices. As president, Obama will make the conservation of private lands a priority. He will fight to increase funding for the Conservation Security Program and the major set-aside programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, and Grasslands Reserve Program, so that rental rates can compete with rising commodity prices. Obama also supports the use of tax incentives and other financial mechanisms to encourage private landowners to restore and protect habitat.

Protect Wetlands: Barack Obama supports numerous efforts to protect wetlands, including full funding for the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and fulfilling the goal of "no net loss", extending the swampbuster provisions of the Farm Bill, and amending the Clean Water Act to clarify that it protects isolated wetlands. His record on wetlands conservation dates back to his days as a state senator. In 2004, he was a cosponsor of the Wetlands Protection Act. As a state senator, Obama also supported the creation of the Illinois Open Land Trust, which allows the state to buy property from willing sellers for conservation and recreation purposes and make grants and loans to local governments for acquiring land for open spaces.

Combat Climate Change: Barack Obama recognizes that global warming is real, is happening now, and poses a real threat to America's fish, wildlife, natural habitats, and the future of hunting and fishing. Obama supports proposals endorsed by dozens of national hunting and fishing organizations, including the Mule Deer Foundation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, BASS/ESPN, Pheasants Forever, the American Sport fishing Association and Trout Unlimited, to devote billions of dollars annually to state game and fish agencies and federal land management agencies to help them ensure that fish and wildlife survive the impacts of climate change. Obama also has a plan to put America on the path to stop global climate change by reducing carbon emissions 80 percent by 2050 and investing in advanced technologies that will spur innovation, create millions of new jobs and help stop climate change.

Educate Young Hunters and Anglers: Barack Obama understands the importance of America's hunting and fishing traditions. For many, these activities help forge a conservation ethic that lasts a lifetime. He also recognizes that hunting and fishing are family activities that create bonds that last across generations. As president, Obama will provide state game and fish agencies with additional resources and encouragement to reach out to young men and women to educate them about hunting and fishing opportunities, hunter safety, and the basic principles of fish and wildlife management.