



December 11, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
 Speaker  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
 Republican Leader  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
 Majority Leader  
 United States Senate  
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
 Democratic Leader  
 United States Senate  
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leaders:

As the leading voices of the conservation and appraisal communities, we urge you to take immediate action and pass S. 170/H.R. 1992, the *Charitable Conservation Easement Program Integrity Act of 2019*.

Every fall, solicitations appear in publications promising enormous profits from short-term investments in conservation easement syndications. This year is no different: One recent ad, for example, promises investors \$600,000 in charitable deductions for each \$100,000 invested.

These fraudulent transactions are costing the U.S. government real money: Between 2010 and 2016, investors claimed more than \$20 billion in bogus deductions from these transactions, with billions more expected this year. Moreover, this egregious abuse risks tarnishing a worthy program that has incentivized the conservation of millions of acres of irreplaceable lands, including farmland, forests, ranches and wetlands that provide communities across our nation with greater access to locally grown food, space to recreate, and cleaner air and water.

The Department of the Treasury has long labeled these investment schemes “abusive tax shelters” while the Department of Justice says these syndicates lack economic substance and are shams. Yet, while the IRS and DOJ have taken action, including warning investors to avoid the schemes, many promoters and investors continue to flout the government’s attempts to curb these abuses.

It’s time for Congress to ensure that this commendable program can no longer be exploited as a get-rich-quick scheme at the expense of American taxpayers. We stand united in our support for the pending legislation, which is the fastest and most efficient way to stop this abuse and save taxpayers billions of dollars. It is urgently needed and long overdue. We respectfully ask you to pass S. 170/H.R. 1992, the *Charitable Conservation Easement Program Integrity Act of 2019*.

Sincerely,

*American Society of Farm  
Managers and Rural Appraisers*

*American Society of Appraisers*

*Appalachian Trail Conservancy*

*Appraisal Institute*

*Ducks Unlimited*

*Land Trust Alliance*

*Partnership of Rangeland Trusts*

*Pheasants Forever Quail Forever*

*The Conservation Fund*

*The Nature Conservancy*

*Theodore Roosevelt  
Conservation Partnership*

*The Trust for Public Land*

CC:

The Honorable Richard Neal

The Honorable Kevin Brady

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley

The Honorable Ron Wyden

The Honorable Mike Thompson

The Honorable Mike Kelly

The Honorable Steve Daines

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow

**For further information, feel free to contact:**

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