



National Association of State Departments of Agriculture  
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September 30, 2021

The Honorable  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) asks you to vote in favor of H.R. 3684, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This bipartisan bill provides funding for critical infrastructure programs that will allow farmers and ranchers to deliver their products, move their equipment, expand their markets, and access broadband. NASDA represents the commissioners, secretaries, and directors of the state departments of agriculture in all 50 states and 4 U.S. territories.

The U.S. transportation system is in dire need of significant funding. This bill allocates \$127 billion for roads, bridges, ports/waterways, and other critical infrastructure that will provide farmers and ranchers with consistent and dependable means to move their products and provide financial sustainability for their business. The bill amends the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999, to provide a 150-air-miles exemption from hours-of-service regulations on the backend of hauls. The extra driving radius is needed to provide agricultural haulers extra time and flexibility to perform their job safely in remote areas and to provide ample time for best animal welfare practices before, during, and after transport.

Broadband is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity. As the pandemic highlighted, rural communities need broadband access for health care, government services, educational and business opportunities. Yet, according to the Federal Communications Commission, 26.4 percent of rural Americans lack access to 25 Mbps/3 Mbps service. This bill provides \$40 billion to expand broadband deployment and an additional \$2 billion for the USDA ReConnect Program, to expand broadband in rural areas.

NASDA strongly supports the Forest Service's State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance programs. This bill provides up to \$88 million for the State Fire Assistance program and \$24 million for the Volunteer Fire Assistance program. These programs provide financial and technical assistance to state and local fire departments for wildland fire prevention and suppression. While USDA can provide farmers and ranchers with disaster assistance for wildland fire damage to crops, fencing, and livestock, wildland fire prevention can limit the frequency and severity of fires as well as suppression and recovery costs.

NASDA asks you to support the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which will provide farmers and ranchers with a more consistent and dependable transportation system to

move their products and equipment, expand their markets and provide financial sustainability for their business.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Ted A. McKinney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping loop at the end of the name.

Ted McKinney  
Chief Executive Officer