

**National Affairs and Legislation Committee  
The Garden Club of America  
113th Congress, 2st Session — February 3, 2014**

**Update #10**

**URGENT!**

**Farm Bill Conference Agreement:  
Senate Vote Tomorrow, February 4**

**What you can do:**

- Please contact your two senators right now. The Senate is debating right now the conference agreement on the long-awaited farm bill. A vote to accept or reject that agreement is expected tomorrow.
- Many senators who usually agree with us are lukewarm or opposed to the conference agreement because of its cuts in federal nutrition programs and its continuation of wasteful subsidies for wealthy farmers and agribusiness. Urge them nevertheless to support the bill because of its strong agriculture conservation provisions.
- Don't forget to check on how your representative voted on January 29. To see the roll call results, go to <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2014/roll031.xml> . If your representative supported the conference agreement, please send him or her a message of thanks.

**The farm bill conference: Strong conservation provisions**

In January, the “gang of four” Republican and Democrat leaders from the House and Senate Agriculture Committees worked out the final compromises needed to conclude a 954-page conference agreement on the 2014 farm bill, H.R. 2654. The full group of conferees quickly fell into line, accepted the conference agreement on January 27, 2014 and the House of Representatives voted 251-166 on January 29 to accept it.

The Senate opened debate on the conference agreement today, February 3. Senator Reid filed a cloture motion and if there are 60 votes this evening to proceed, the Senate will take the final vote tomorrow.

The final conference agreement, while not elegant, nevertheless is probably the best that the legislative process is capable of producing in the current climate. A number of legislators who normally are very supportive of the farm bill and of Garden Club of America positions in general, have serious reservations about the bill and have spoken out against it. **Therefore it is urgent that we contact our senators right now and urge them, in essence, to “hold their noses” and vote FOR the conference agreement.**

The NAL and Conservation Committees identified three provisions that it very much wanted to see in the final bill, and the conference agreement includes all three:

1. A strong and well-funded conservation title, to use the words in our GCA Position Paper on Sustainable Agriculture, Seed Diversity and Food Security. The conference agreement would consolidate 23 current

conservation programs into a dozen, and maintains a reasonable (although not generous) level of funding for them.

2. Linkage: The conference agreement would restore the linkage first enacted in 1984 that would require farmers to adhere to sound agricultural land and water conservation practices in order to qualify for federal crop insurance subsidies.
3. Sod-busters: The conference agreement would limit crop insurance subsidies for the first few years on lands that have been newly plowed up for new crop land, thereby leaning toward protection of prime grasslands and native prairie.

Previous Legislative Updates have covered the farm bill for several years. They are still posted under the NAL committee archives on the GCA web site. Most relevant, in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, are Update #8 covering the House-Senate Conference, and Update #4 covering House debate and Senate passage.

### **How to contact your legislators:**

To send e-mail to your senator, go to [http://www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm) and scroll to the senator's name. There you will see a "web form" address in red type. Click on that address and follow the directions for sending e-mail.

To send email to your representative, go to <https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>

To telephone any legislator, call the Capitol switchboard: 202-224-3121. Ask for your senator's office by name. When the phone is answered, say that you want to leave a message about an issue. A very young aide will take the message or send you to the legislator's voice mail. This seems impersonal, but is nevertheless effective—legislators keep track of how many calls come in on different issues and the direction in which sentiment is running. Even a relatively small number of calls are enough to warrant serious consideration of the views expressed.

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NAL updates serve in an **advisory capacity**, based on committee research. Individual clubs and members may act on any issue as they choose. Editors: Martha Phillips ([mhphillips@optonline.net](mailto:mhphillips@optonline.net)) and Suzanne Canfield ([sbc@sbcandfield.com](mailto:sbc@sbcandfield.com)). All e-mails and faxes are sent from GCA Headquarters. To unsubscribe: Contact Sarah at GCA Headquarters, 212-753-8287, or [sarah.frelinghuysen@gcamerica.org](mailto:sarah.frelinghuysen@gcamerica.org)