

**CHAIRMAN K. MICHAEL CONAWAY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
FEBRUARY 4, 2015**

Good afternoon Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Brady and members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting Ranking Member Peterson and me to share the Committee on Agriculture's proposed budget for the next year. As you know, the Committee has a long history of bipartisan cooperation and a history of fiscal responsibility. As a new Chairman for this Committee, I also bring my experience as a CPA, and am committed to continuing this legacy by running an effective and financially responsible Committee.

In the 113th Congress, the Committee, under the direction of Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson, was successful in passing the 2014 Farm Bill. While this was a great accomplishment, the Committee's work does not stop there. In the 114th Congress, the Committee will have the monumental task of overseeing the implementation of the 2014 Farm Bill, reauthorizing the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) and implementing a robust oversight program, including a complete review of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Further, the Committee has prioritized providing more effective member services to Committee Members and the House as a whole, and working to achieve more effective consensus building among the Committee's constituents.

In taking on this work, the Committee will be taking on new costs. For example, the Committee will be increasing staff levels this Congress over the levels in the previous Congress. The Committee has already prioritized the hiring of designated staffers for oversight, member services and coalitions and more staffers will be added as necessary.

To offset the costs of these new hires and increased Committee activity, the Committee has looked for ways to increase its efficiency and to more effectively use taxpayer dollars. In the 114th Congress, Committee staff began working to reduce any duplication of House-funded technology. These actions include migrating to the House domain, utilizing the House Recording Studio and removing redundant firewalls. Several staff portfolios have been consolidated to make room for new positions and the Committee is also exploring avenues to reduce wasteful printing. This is an on-going initiative and the Committee staff will continue to look for other areas to increase efficiency.

While the Committee does believe that there is a justification for increased funding due to its increased activities in the 114th Congress, the Committee understands that the legislative appropriations were funded at the same level as last year. With this understanding in mind, the Committee has taken steps to increase efficiency and, as a result, is not requesting additional funds, but is requesting level funding, as was provided in 2014.

We certainly have our work cut out for us this Congress. But we are committed to working towards increased efficiency to accomplish our goals. We appreciate your consideration of our budget request. Please let us know if we can provide you any additional information.