

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

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE
ADMINISTRATION FEBRUARY 15, 2017**

Good afternoon Chairman Harper, 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 115th Congress. As you know, the Committee has a long history of bipartisan cooperation and a history of fiscal responsibility. As Chairman, I am committed to continuing that legacy by running an effective and financially responsible Committee.

In the 114th Congress, the Committee had the 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). Despite having several staff vacancies and despite turning down a budget increase, the Committee managed to hold 84 hearings, complete 24 investigations, and address every expired or expiring authorization of appropriations within its jurisdiction.

Over the past 7 years, the Committee's annual budget has decreased by \$1.5 million or 22.5 percent. Despite that significant decrease, the Committee still managed to return more than \$700,000 to the Treasury in 2016. While part of that budget surplus was due to consolidation of staff portfolios and 11 staff vacancies, Committee staff also worked diligently to reduce any duplication of House-funded technology. These actions included migrating to the House domain, utilizing the House Recording Studio, removing redundant firewalls, and reducing wasteful printing. This is an on-going initiative, and Committee staff will continue to look for other areas to increase efficiency.

While we will continue to look for additional savings, the Committee is facing its largest legislative undertaking during the 115th Congress: reauthorizing the farm bill that expires on September 30, 2018. Put simply, if we are going to be successful in that effort, we must hire additional staff. It is also vitally important that we get outside of Washington, D.C., to hear from those who are directly affected by the decisions we make. We are also proposing a one-time infusion to make much needed IT upgrades to facilitate farm bill conference with the Senate. While we are requesting an overall budget increase of 12.4 percent to address these three key areas, we are asking for level funding in all other budget categories.

We certainly have our work cut out for us this Congress. But we are committed to working toward 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.