

Dear Colleague letter to Combest:

Dear Chairman Combest:

We write to commend you for your work on the Farm Bill, especially for the improvements to the Food Stamp Program.

As the Farm Bill Conference Committee continues, we write in support of the Bush Administration's FY 2003 budget proposal to restore food stamp eligibility to legal immigrants, which is included in the Senate passed Farm Bill.

The restoration of food stamps to legal immigrants has strong bipartisan support in both the House and Senate, as well as at the state level. The National Governors Association supports restoring food stamps to this population, as reflected in their letter to Farm bill conferees.

The Food Stamp program has long provided critical assistance to many families in need, especially to working poor families struggling to become self-sufficient. However, under current law, most legal immigrants are barred from food stamps, including children, refugees, the elderly, people with disabilities, and individuals who have worked hard and paid taxes.

The adverse impact of these restrictions has been significant. The restrictions have deterred many legal immigrant families from seeking food stamps for their citizen children, even though these children remain eligible. In recent years, food stamp participation by these citizen children in legal immigrant families plunged by 75 percent.

Thank you, again, for your leadership on the Farm Bill, and for your consideration of this important provision.

Sincerely,