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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

January 22, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write in support of an increase in funding for specialty crop programs in the upcoming budget.

I am honored to represent one of the leading specialty crop production areas in the United States. Central Washington produces everything from apples and cherries to potatoes and wine grapes. These producers must overcome frequent labor shortages and costly government regulations to compete in what has become a truly global marketplace.

As you know, the Farm Bill is due for renewal by the Congress this year. Although most of the funding under the Farm Bill has traditionally gone to the major program commodities like grains, soybeans and cotton, the bill will also authorize modest programs that are geared to the needs of the specialty crops producer. The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and the Market Access Program are two of the most significant of these.

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program enhances competitiveness of specialty crops through state-administered grants in support of research, marketing, nutrition, and trade enhancement. The Market Access Program provides grant support to commodity organizations and broad-based agriculture groups to introduce their products directly to foreign consumers, leading to increased exports and an improved balance of trade. These federal programs help level the playing field for specialty crop producers without creating government-controlled pricing structures. I hope you will give strong support in your budget to programs like these that help address the unique concerns of America's specialty crop producers.

Once again, I urge you to increase funding for specialty crop programs in your upcoming budget proposal. Thank you for your commitment to the agricultural communities of Central Washington.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doc Hastings".

Doc Hastings
Member of Congress