

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 17, 2007

The Honorable John Dingell
Chairman
House Energy and Commerce
Committee
2125 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman
House Ways and Means
Committee
1102 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nick Rahall
Chairman
House Natural Resources
Committee
1324 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Dingell, Rangel and Rahall:

We write in support of the inclusion of a renewable fuel standard (RFS) in the final Energy Bill that contains robust environmental safeguards.

The use of biofuels can contribute to the reduction of global warming, decrease America's dependence on fossil fuels, and expand our rural economies. Pursued in the absence of prudent measures however, an indiscriminate increase in biofuels production can pose a grave risk to our lands, forests, water, air, public health, and climate.

The RFS passed in the Senate energy bill (H.R. 6) lacks essential safeguards, despite mandating 36 billion gallons of biofuels production by 2022. If we are to attain this five-fold increase over the existing RFS and avoid potentially catastrophic unintended consequences, we must ensure that we develop this energy source wisely.

The Senate RFS will require that tens of millions of acres of new land be brought into production for feedstocks, but omits safeguards for our private and public lands. This threatens the conversion of large swaths of our remaining natural forests, wetlands, and native prairie. Increased demand will place new pressure on our vulnerable federal lands, which, held in the public trust, are not appropriate for large-scale, sustained sourcing. Ramped up production on agricultural lands could lead to increased soil erosion and more water pollution from pesticide and fertilizer use, further exacerbating phenomena like "Dead Zones" in the Chesapeake Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.

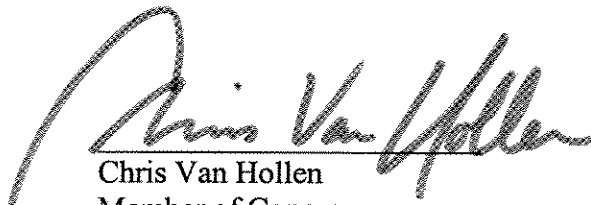
Any expansion of an RFS program should be established under the Clean Air Act in order to ensure that federal and state efforts to improve air quality are not undermined by a new fuel mandate. The Senate RFS is written outside of the Clean Air Act and does not ensure that EPA, which has 30 years of technical fuels expertise, will administer the program. There is no need to "reinvent the wheel" now.

The Senate RFS lacks critical provisions to ensure that the program does not substantially increase global warming pollution. Depending on how they are produced, biofuels can have a net positive or negative impact on climate change. For example, converting tropical rainforests into plantations for biofuel feedstocks such as palm oil would actually increase global warming pollution as a result of releasing the carbon locked up in the forest.

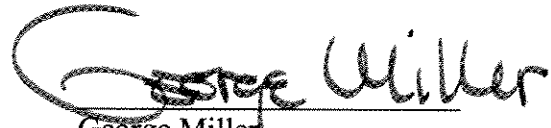
Any RFS that is included in the final Energy Bill must address these significant concerns. A responsible federal biofuels policy must provide critical safeguards for private and public lands, preserve our water quality, protect the air we breathe, and substantially reduce global warming pollution.

Again, as you consider a final energy bill package, we urge you to ensure robust environmental and public health safeguards are part of any RFS that might be included. We thank you for your consideration.

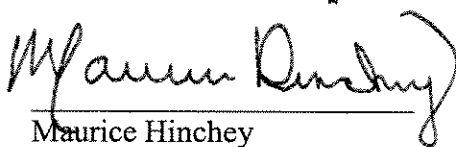
Sincerely,




Chris Van Hollen
Member of Congress



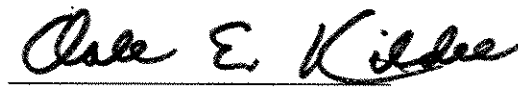
George Miller
Member of Congress




Maurice Hinchey
Member of Congress



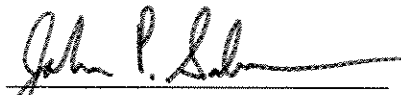
Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Dale E. Kildee
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



John Sarbanes
Member of Congress