Land Trust Alliance
Together, conserving the places you love

July 22, 2009

The Honorable Eric Cantor
U.S. House of Representatives
329 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cantor:

The Land Trust Alliance, representing 1,700 land conservation organizations across the country, heartily endorses your American Family Farm and Ranchland Protection Act, H.R. 3050. We look forward to working with you and your staff to enact this legislation.

Estate taxes can undermine important conservation values by forcing the break-up, sale and development of family-owned farm, ranch and forest lands, even when those lands provide important resources for the public, including high-quality watersheds, wildlife habitat, and food and fiber production. Federal, state and local governments are investing billions of dollars to protect and restore such resources, and it makes good sense to change our tax policy so that it doesn't undermine these efforts.

Your proposal to expand the current internal Revenue Code 2031(c) exclusion for lands protected by conservation easements will ensure that landowners who have generously protected their lands for future generations will not be forced to sell. Raising this exemption to 50% of the land's value, up to $5 million, recognizes that large contiguous properties—which generally provide the greatest benefit to wildlife and the public—often retain substantial value even after an easement donation.

Your bill benefits all of us who rely on these lands for clean water, wildlife habitat, local food and carbon sequestration. We look forward to working with you to ensure that your language is included in this year's estate tax reform package. Your leadership on this issue can leave an important legacy of land for America's future.

Sincerely,

Rand Wentworth
President

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