



Dear Members of Congress:

As a longtime champion for the continued viability of family farms in your district and across America, American Farmland Trust urges you to co-sponsor H.R. 1831. The Conservation Easement Incentive Act permanently extends a tax incentive for conservation of farm and ranch lands that provide fresh, locally grown food for us all. We need your help to prevent this important conservation tool from expiring at the end of 2009!

Americans are increasingly concerned about food quality and want access to food that is safe, healthy and sustainably produced. America is losing 1.2 million acres of farmland annually, much of it the best and most productive farmland near where most Americans live. Preserving viable farms in our communities provides local access to diverse food products, reduces transportation costs and pollution, and provides a natural buffer against sprawling development. By selling or donating a conservation easement, landowners can retire the development rights on their land, protecting these important public benefits for future.

Under previous law, landowners with modest incomes received little or no tax benefit from the donation of development rights—often their family's most valuable asset. However, this incentive is enormously helpful to state and local farmland protection programs and their partners. By allowing conservation easement donors to deduct a larger portion of their income over a longer period of time, this incentive encourages bargain sales that leverage state and local farmland protection funds and Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program funding to achieve more conservation.

American Farmland Trust is just one of more than 65 organizations working to make this incentive permanent before it expires at the end of 2009. Please call Travis Robey in the Office of Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA) or Wyatt Stewart in the Office of Rep. Eric Cantor (R-VA) to sign on as a cosponsor of H.R. 1831. Thank you for your continued commitment to America's family farms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Jon Scholl'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Jon' being more prominent than the last name 'Scholl'.

Jon Scholl
President