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**Select Committee on
Energy Independence and Global Warming
U.S. House of Representatives**

July 15, 2008

The Honorable Ed Schafer
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Schafer:

Buildings are responsible for almost half of all greenhouse gas emissions annually and over 70% of electricity consumption in the United States. As a federal agency tasked to support rural development, the Select Committee on Energy Independent and Global Warming believes that your agency and this administration have an obligation to ensure that all federally-supported economic development is executed using principles of economic and environmental stability. This includes supporting development standards that will result in greater energy efficiency, lower utility costs and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

With these goals in mind, the Select Committee on Independence and Global Warming urges USDA to support rebuilding and recovery in Greensburg, Kansas in accordance with their new building codes. After a tornado effectively destroyed over 90% of the town, Greensburg adopted some of the most efficient building standards in the country as part of its recovery effort. These standards include LEED Platinum status for city buildings larger than 4,000 square feet and city building codes that meet the 2003 International Residential Code, 2003 Uniform Plumbing Code, and 2006 International Building Code.

The Select Committee requests that USDA recognize Greensburg's role as a national model for energy-efficient rebuilding standards, and to support its associated costs and environmental benefits. The Committee specifically asks USDA to inform the Committee if it considers rural reconstruction in accordance with higher building energy efficiency standards to run contrary to USDA Rural Development Instruction 1942-A. This guidance offers financing to improve or develop essential community facilities in rural areas. This financing is meant to construct, enlarge, extend or otherwise improve essential community facilities, but cannot be used for "[f]acilities which are not modest in size, design, and cost." The Select Committee would like to know if the USDA believes that energy efficiency falls under the "immodest" exception to rebuilding funds and, if not, whether USDA will fund applicable Greensburg efforts to rebuild to higher energy efficiency building standards.

Building to higher efficiency standards is crucial to reducing global warming emissions, reducing the risk of the associated severe weather, floods, hurricanes and droughts, and therefore reducing the future need for USDA's financial support for rebuilding devastated communities.

Replacing an inefficient building with another inefficient building makes no long-term sense, financial or otherwise. The Select Committee urges USDA to support Greensburg's forward-thinking rebuilding and energy efficiency efforts and looks forward your response in a timely manner.

Sincerely,



EDWARD J. MARKEY
Chairman, Select Committee on Energy
Independence and Global Warming



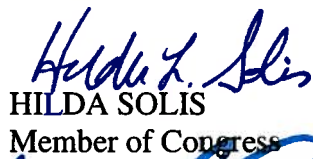
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JOHN HALL
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JERRY MCNERNEY
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cc: The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner
Ranking Member