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

February 27, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

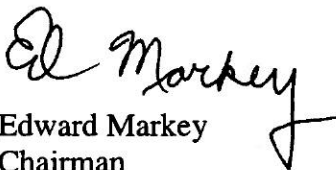
During your Congressional Address this Tuesday, you mentioned the inspirational work of Greensburg, Kansas to rebuild their town using green building practices and clean energy. The Select Committee heard testimony about Greensburg's efforts in a hearing last June titled "Planning Communities for a Changing Climate," and would like you to assist us in supporting their efforts through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

During this hearing, Greensburg's City Administrator Steve Hewitt mentioned that the USDA would not allow rural development funds to be used to rebuild Greensburg using higher building energy efficiency standards than what had previously existed. Hewitt was referring to USDA Rural Development Instruction 1942-A, which 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."

In July, all of the majority Members of the Select Committee signed a letter sent to USDA. They sought a response to whether the USDA believes that energy efficiency falls under the "immodest" exception to rebuilding funds and, if not, whether USDA would fund applicable Greensburg efforts to rebuild to higher energy efficiency building standards. Sadly, the Bush Administration failed to respond to this letter, consistent with its record of inaction on climate and energy issues. The Select Committee believes that the Obama Administration would not similarly turn a cold shoulder to our communities, and seeks your guidance in requesting the USDA to respond to our original letter. A copy of this letter is attached.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance. If you have any questions, please contact Danielle Baussan of the Select Committee at 202-225-4012.

Sincerely,

  
Edward Markey  
Chairman