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July 19, 2012

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Vilsack,

In recent weeks, drought conditions have continued to worsen throughout the Midwest. The lack of significant rainfall has resulted in increasingly challenging conditions for Nebraska's farmers and ranchers. As of today, farmers and ranchers in every county in Nebraska are facing drought conditions. And, more than 75 percent of the state is in a state of severe drought. Unfortunately, the weather forecasts predict little relief from the high temperatures and little moisture in the days ahead.

I understand that the Nebraska State Farm Service Agency (FSA) has requested a Secretarial Disaster Designation for 58 counties. As you know, this designation can ensure that farmers and ranchers in these counties are eligible for low-interest emergency loans. Thus, I urge you to act promptly on this and other similar requests in the days and weeks ahead.

Additionally, I appreciate the U.S. Department of Agriculture's efforts to streamline the authorization of emergency haying and grazing on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land. In particular, this will help provide some relief to our livestock producers. Currently, 69 of Nebraska's counties have been approved for emergency haying and grazing of CRP. I ask you to consider approving the rest of the state for this much needed relief.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of the Secretarial Disaster Designation request. If I may be of assistance to you or a member of your staff, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 202-224-4224.

Very truly yours,



Mike Johannis
United States Senator

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