



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

The Voice For Real Estate®

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July 14, 2010

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman, House Committee on Agriculture
2211 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Peterson:

The Agriculture Committee is expected to consider a manager's amendment to H.R. 4785, the Rural Energy Savings Program Act. Included in the amendment, with a technical correction by Representative Tim Holden (D-PA), is a provision clarifying that the authority to implement Rural Star could not be used to implement a mandatory real estate energy labeling program. The National Association of REALTORS® strongly supports this provision as well as voluntary, incentive-based approaches to improving building energy efficiency.

The Rural Star Act would offer significant rebates to rural property owners for voluntary improvements to building energy efficiency. Many property owners would like to make these improvements, but simply do not have the resources to undertake the project. This bill will support these efforts by providing direct incentives, which would not only benefit our environment, but also create jobs and reduce energy bills for consumers. While property owners would like to take advantage of these incentives, many would be discouraged from doing so if the program requires an energy label as a condition for the incentives. Labeling could stigmatize older properties which would most benefit from the Rural Star program. A disproportionate share of these properties are owned or occupied by populations which live on modest or fixed incomes according to the latest American Housing Study. This provision would prohibit USDA from using authority under the Rural Star program to implement a much broader labeling program without interfering with the program's protocol to evaluate and verify building improvements.

Thank you for your work on this clarifying provision. We support a voluntary, incentive-based approach to making properties more energy efficient. The manager's amendment would significantly improve such an approach in the Rural Star program, making its voluntary energy efficiency incentives available to more Americans. We look forward to continuing to work with the Committee and other members of Congress as the legislative process continues.

Sincerely,

Vicki Cox Golder, CRB
2010 President, National Association of REALTORS®

cc: Members of the Committee on Agriculture