



John C. Pracht

June 5, 2007

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FAX TRANSMITTAL FORM

To: Jamie Weyer	From: John Pracht
Name:	Date Sent: 5/31/07
CC:	Number of Pages: 5, including cover sheet
Phone:	
Fax: 202-225-0917	

Message:

My name is John Pracht . I farm in Anderson County. My wife, Reva, and I have 3 boys. We hope that they can have a future in agriculture, if they choose so. I raise corn, wheat, soybeans and cattle. I farm with my two brothers Bill and Dave. If it wasn't for my father, I never would have been able to get started farming. My family has been involved with agriculture for many generations. I would say that we are a true family farming operation.

The challenges in agriculture are many. The high cost of fertilizer, fuel, machinery, property tax, health care, and mother nature's lack of cooperation are just a few of the many items that I, as a Kansas farmer, deal with from day to day. Take for example liquid fertilizer last fall was selling for \$160 per ton. This spring the cost increased roughly 60% to \$260 per ton. As everyone knows fuel cost has followed the same path. The inputs that producers use to raise their crops have risen dramatically. These inputs are what producers have to have, and cannot do without, nor skimp on. These inputs dramatically effect our end profit margin, which is becoming less every year.

My wife, Reva, and I have 3 kids. We are fortunate enough to have health care for now. There are many producers that can not afford it. My neighbor is around 60 years of age. He and his wife pay around \$1200 a month for their health care premium. I am paying about half that. I do not know how we will be able to afford healthcare in the future. Every year my health care premium increases. This problem has to be dealt with or it will be even a bigger problem in the future!

Property tax, machinery and machinery repair costs also rise every year. It is extremely hard for a middle sized farm operation to operate with the prices the way they are, for example a new combine list price is around \$300,000. It makes me sad to think that I am getting roughly the same price for my grain as my father did many years ago and his fuel, fertilizer and machinery prices were nothing like we have today. Hopefully with the help of ethanol and bio diesel plants the price for grain will increase and stay increased. I think that if the farmer has higher grain prices that we will be less independent upon government help. But higher prices are not the only piece of the puzzle.

A safety net must be in place in the farm bill for disasters, like drought and floods. With so much money invested in farming today one bad year can bankrupt a producer. The new farm bill should raise the LDP prices to higher levels then they are know. More money should be spent for disaster relief in the years we have crop failures . I know a lot of talk is to do away with the direct payment program, but for me it's nice to know that some steady income is coming in. Money spent in conservation programs is money well spent, but I believe the program needs more money to carry on to benefit farmers as the program is intended. I do not think payment limitations should be in place for farmers who have higher incomes, if all their income comes from agriculture. Investors with other sources of income that own farms or ranches should not receive government payments. Ranchers with livestock should be included in the farm bill also. There is not a price protection for livestock owners like the LDP payment is for the grain farmer. Lets say hoof and mouth disease was found in America, cattle prices would fall and many producers would loose large amounts of revenue. Times have changed, if

something like this happens the American ranchers needs a safety net to count on. Emergency haying and grazing on CRP or buffer strips need to be released for haying in a much quicker time frame. Lets say most of the county where a producer lives has received adequate rain fall, and the producer lives in a drought stricken area of the county. The USDA will not give the authority to hay or graze because the other part of the county has adequate conditions, this is not right. I know of cattle producers that this has happened too. When a drought occurs, livestock producers have to rely on buying hay and other feeding material to feed their animals, which will end up costing them lots of money. There needs to be a disaster plan in the farm bill to help cattle ranchers out.

Closing of some of the ASCS offices should not be done. The money saved is not worth the inconvenient that this will cause.

I am not in favor of having mandatory animal ID. I believe this program will leave less income for cattle producers. Not just the cost of tags will producer have to pay for. I'm sure sale barns will increase their price of operation to be able to pay for the technology that has to be bought to make this program work. Packing plants will pass the buck on as well. This all adds up to less dollars for us. Located in Anderson County is a large Amish community. I am sure that they are not in favor of this either. A lot of retired farmers have a few cows to supplement their incomes. I believe this could make some of them sell their cow herds and quit. I hope it has been taken into consideration how this might effect people such as these. This could lead to weeding out the little producer. It appears like we are getting closer every day when issues like this arises to becoming large corporate farms instead of family farms. I think there would be other less costly and simpler ways of having animal ID. I would like to remind you that the cattle which had mad cow disease were traced back to the original owner with out the help of this proposed animal ID system. I would support Country origin of labeling, if we were 100% positive that the cattle producer would not have to pay for it.

In closing, I know that tough decisions have to be made. I hope that representatives in congress can keep an open mind, bring all of their ideas to the table and leave with the best solution. I hope this letter can help all of you make your decisions a little easier. Please keep in mind what is best for the people that your decisions will have an effect on. Help keep family farms, family farms and rural communities from extinction.

Sincerely,
John C. Pracht

Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Required Witness Disclosure Form

House Rules* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2004.

Name: John Procht

Address: 24688 NW Georgia Rd

Telephone: 785-448-4693

Organization you represent (if any): _____

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do NOT require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: _____ Amount: _____


Source: _____ Amount: _____

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2004, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: _____ Amount: _____

Source: _____ Amount: _____

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you:

Signature: 

* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: *Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.*

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.

Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Information Required From Non-governmental Witnesses

House rules require non-governmental witnesses to provide their resume or biographical sketch prior to testifying. If you do not have a resume or biographical sketch available, please complete this form.

- 1. Name: John Pracht
- 2. Business Address: 24688 NW Georgia Rd
Westphalia KS 66093
- 3. Business Phone Number: 785-448-4693
- 4. Organization you represent: _____
- 5. Please list any occupational, employment, or work-related experience you have which add to your qualification to provide testimony before the Committee:
Farmer/Rancher
Share holder of Valley R Agri Service.
Share holder of East Kansas Energy LLC Ethanol plant
- 6. Please list any special training, education, or professional experience you have which add to your qualifications to provide testimony before the Committee:

- 7. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list the capacity in which you are representing that organization, including any offices or elected positions you hold:

PLEASE ATTACH THIS FORM OR YOUR BIOGRAPHY TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.