



To: Interested Parties  
From: Sam Cornale, Organizing for America Pennsylvania State Policy Director  
Subject: Rural Pennsylvania: President Obama Gets It, Mitt Romney Guts It  
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## PRESIDENT OBAMA: INVESTING IN RURAL PENNSYLVANIA

### Rural America: The Backbone of America

President Obama knows that rural America is the backbone of our country. It provides for our food security, our energy security, and – as home to a large number of America’s veterans – it provides for our national security. Collectively, Pennsylvania’s small town and rural farmers, workers, and manufacturers contribute to a stronger economy and more prosperous state for all Pennsylvanians.

President Obama’s continued and consistent investment in rural America stands in stark contrast to Mitt Romney’s proposed budget, which would enact devastating cuts to rural education, health care and infrastructure, while continuing to balance the books on the backs of small farmers and let big agribusiness play by a different set of rules. Pennsylvania’s rural families cannot afford a Romney rural economy.

Since taking office, President Obama has demonstrated a deep commitment to investing in a rural economy built to last. The Obama administration has focused on reclaiming the economic security of the rural middle class by helping them grow products for global consumers and restoring the basic values of hard work, responsibility, and fairness that made our country great. President Obama is helping rural small businesses access the capital they need to sell their products in markets around the world, and he is boosting small town and rural economies through vital investments in clean energy, conservation and outdoor recreation. The President is expanding water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure and investing in agricultural innovation to promote rural economic development, protect public health, and create a global economy for American agriculture. President Obama is investing in the rural way of life, helping rural Americans stay in their homes during hard times while improving access to quality education and health care.

### President Obama: Investing in a Rural Economy Built to Last

By investing in job creation, clean energy, agriculture, healthcare, infrastructure and education, President Obama is building a rural economy built to last – protecting a proud American tradition and way of life in rural America for future generations.

1. **Boosting Rural Small Business:** The Obama administration has extended credit to a record number of small business owners and has helped 50,000 rural small businesses access new credit and financing that has spurred entrepreneurship and supported several manufacturing facilities across Pennsylvania. This administration has also provided training to over 1.5 million entrepreneurs and small business owners, many in rural communities, to get the tools they need to grow our economy. The President has cut taxes for small businesses 18 times, and has proposed a change to our tax code

called the Buffett Rule, a simple principle that would make the tax code fairer by ensuring that middle class families don't pay more in taxes than a household making more than \$1 million a year.

2. **Building a Clean Energy Economy and Promoting Energy Independence:** President Obama is working aggressively with our nation's rural communities, farmers, and ranchers to increase our energy independence and boost the transition to a clean energy economy that is helping to lower energy costs for rural Americans and is supporting more than 182,000 green jobs in Pennsylvania. President Obama is committed to taking every possible action to safely develop natural gas resources – including shale gas right here in Pennsylvania. Domestic natural gas production has increased every year under President Obama, and last year, the United States produced more natural gas than we ever have before. Under President Obama, U.S. biofuel production is at its highest level in history, while investments by the President led to the weatherization of more than 36,700 homes in Pennsylvania, saving the average household \$400 a year on their utility bills. President Obama is also making historic clean energy investments, supporting nearly 800 clean energy and energy efficiency projects in Pennsylvania.
3. **Investing in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Infrastructure:** President Obama understands that the economic competitiveness of rural America depends on its infrastructure, including investments in technology infrastructure like broadband internet that help link rural farmers and small businesses to worldwide markets. That's why he expanded broadband access to nearly 7 million rural Americans, including 12 projects in Pennsylvania to expand broadband access across the state. His administration is dedicating resources to accelerate 3G and 4G network deployment in rural areas throughout the U.S., closing gaps in mobile technology coverage. President Obama is also investing in building 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure in rural communities, including 386 projects in Pennsylvania that will bring bridges, critical roads and rail to rural areas.
4. **Opening New Markets for Farm Exports:** President Obama is expanding markets for American goods, like dairy, livestock and corn that help support important agriculture jobs in Pennsylvania. In 2011, American farm income reached the highest point since 1974, with a record number of agricultural exports and a record agriculture trade surplus that means more of our products are being sold in markets around the world. The President signed three historic trade agreements with Panama, Columbia, and South Korea which will create tens of thousands of jobs by further increasing exports. Through an increased investment in U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grants that promote farmers' markets, roadside stands, and other local food outlets, regional food markets have expanded under President Obama and the number of farmers' markets has increased by 53 percent since 2008.
5. **Strengthening American Agriculture:** The President is planning for a strong agricultural future, proposing a 23 percent increase in funding for research and development to improve agricultural productivity. He also understands the need for a strong farm safety net, which is why he increased the availability of crop insurance and emergency disaster assistance to help 575,000 farmers and ranchers keep their farms in business after natural disasters and crop loss. He expanded farm credit to help more than 100,000 farmers struggling during the financial crisis keep their family farms and provide for their families, including nearly 500 family sized farms and ranches in Pennsylvania who could not qualify for conventional loans or who suffered financial setbacks from natural disasters.

6. **Honoring the Service of our Veterans in Rural America:** President Obama is committed to ensuring that Pennsylvania's 995,000 veterans receive the support they deserve. The President implemented and improved the most comprehensive educational benefit for veterans since 1944, providing support to over 13,000 Pennsylvania veterans. He has invested in more than 500 projects across the country to support rural health care, helping provide primary health care access to nearly 3.3 million veterans. The President is also making homeownership a more accessible goal for military families, helping over 300,000 rural veterans, service members, and their families purchase or refinance a home.
7. **Investing in Our Future with Rural Education:** With nearly a quarter of American students located in rural areas, President Obama is committed to enabling greater numbers of rural Americans to achieve higher levels of education and compete for higher paying jobs by supporting the specific needs of rural schools. The Obama administration is making critical investments to support small and low-income rural schools, and is making higher education a possibility for nearly 313,600 students in Pennsylvania. The President is working with states and local communities to turn around the lowest performing schools, targeting specific funding to rural schools. The President has also proposed a historic investment in our nation's community colleges to train two million workers with skills that lead to good jobs in industries that need workers. The President understands the need for adequate infrastructure for education and has invested in over 6,200 critical community facilities projects – reaching nearly 29 million rural residents.
8. **Securing the Middle Class by Helping American Homeowners:** President Obama knows that our economic recovery depends on our housing recovery, especially in our small towns and rural communities that were hit hard during the housing crisis. Working in conjunction with USDA Rural Development, the President has launched programs to help millions of Americans stay in their homes – including over 4,400 homeowners in rural Pennsylvania in 2011 alone. The Obama administration has helped more than 1.25 million rural Americans in tens of thousands of communities purchase, refinance, and stay in their homes. The President also launched a pilot program to help tens of thousands of rural homeowners in 19 states refinance their home loans and lower their mortgage interest rates.
9. **Providing Affordable Health Care to Rural Communities:** President Obama's policies expand access to affordable health coverage for rural families and ensure that rural health care providers remain a strong and viable part of rural America's economy. His administration has funded 444 community health centers nationwide to increase rural health care access, serving more than 2 million patients. This funding has supported nearly 40 community health centers in Pennsylvania alone. The Obama administration is also supporting community-based projects to promote health, reaching 240 rural communities and serving 395,000 rural residents annually. His new health care law is expanding the health care options for seniors and making it easier to access care. President Obama is also addressing disparities caused by a shortage of primary care doctors in rural areas, placing over 2,600 clinicians in rural communities and investing in 581 health care facilities nationwide.
10. **Conserving Public Lands while Boosting Recreation and Tourism:** President Obama understands that the outdoors represents an invaluable national treasure, a critical resource for the tourism industry, and that our farmers and ranchers are leaders in protecting it. That's why his administration

is working with more than 500,000 farmers and ranchers to implement conservation practices on more than 30 million acres of land. The President signed one of the largest expansions of wilderness protections in 25 years and is taking action to promote outdoor recreation, which contributes more than a trillion dollars to the national economy, and supported over 6,100 jobs in Pennsylvania in 2010.

## MITT ROMNEY: OUT OF TOUCH WITH RURAL PENNSYLVANIA

Mitt Romney's candidacy presents a stark and dire contrast to President Obama's continued investment in Pennsylvania's rural middle class. If the Romney-Ryan budget cuts were applied evenly across all discretionary programs, it would cut rural development by nearly 20 percent. For rural Pennsylvania, that would mean devastating cuts to programs that boost economic growth; invest in rural water, sewer, broadband infrastructure, education and small businesses; and would make it more difficult for rural communities to access preventative and emergency health care. Governor Romney's support for the Ryan budget proves just how out of touch he is with rural Pennsylvania. The Romney-Ryan budget:

1. **Undermines Small Businesses:** Unlike President Obama, who has helped over 50,000 rural small businesses access new credit and financing that has spurred entrepreneurship and supported 266,000 jobs,<sup>i</sup> the Romney-Ryan budget would mean nearly 1,700 small businesses seeking loans could be unable to attain them, and more than 7,300 jobs that would otherwise be supported by these programs could be lost.<sup>ii</sup>
2. **Strips Loans to Farmers and Ranchers:** The Romney-Ryan budget could leave over 5,000 farmers and ranchers without a safety net in tough economic times.<sup>iii</sup>
3. **Cuts Investments to Clean Energy:** The Romney-Ryan budget's draconian cuts would invest in about 25 fewer clean energy projects that could power more than 1,100 homes for a year.<sup>iv</sup> Romney also has proposed eliminating incentives for rural clean energy development – especially for wind, solar, and advanced biofuels. Slashing the wind investments alone would kill an estimated 37,000 jobs.
4. **Neglects Infrastructure Needs:** Under the Romney-Ryan plan, more than 460,000 families could go without necessary improvements to their water facilities,<sup>v</sup> and more than 230 rural communities could be denied essential facilities including hospitals, schools, libraries, fire protection, and child and adult day care.<sup>vi</sup>
5. **Cuts Housing Assistance:** The Romney-Ryan budget could leave more than 120,600 families without the assistance they need to keep their homes.<sup>vii</sup>
6. **Cuts Services for Veterans:** The Romney-Ryan budget could strip health care programs for veterans by nearly 20 percent, disproportionately impacting rural veterans, who make up 38 percent of military recruits despite being only 16 percent of our total population.
7. **Weakens Access to Rural Health Care:** The Romney-Ryan budget could eliminate more than 70 community-based projects that improve health care in rural areas, and could leave more than 46,500 without access to possibly life-saving telemedicine services. Repealing Obamacare, as

Romney pledges, would mean that approximately 364,000 young people in rural areas would no longer be able to stay on their parents' health insurance plans and 15.9 million rural Americans would once again have to worry about hitting their lifetime caps in coverage.<sup>viii</sup>

8. **Forces Sale of Public Lands:** The Romney-Ryan budget recommends the sale of millions of acres of public land it calls "unnneeded." It suggests starving essential agencies of necessary support to force the sale. This is a raw deal for taxpayers, ceding lands vital for hunting, fishing, camping and hiking, and critical to outdoor recreation, which contributes more than a trillion dollars to the economy and supports more than 9 million jobs.<sup>ix</sup>
9. **Undermines the Necessary Agricultural Safety Net:** The Romney-Ryan budget balances America's checkbook on the backs of family farmers and continues handing taxpayer money to wealthy farmers. It would undermine American farmers' financial security by cutting subsidies for crop insurance premiums by more than 15 percent each year, taking that much more out of our farmers' hard earned paychecks.<sup>x</sup> The Romney-Ryan budget would also shift the burden of the deficit onto middle-class rural Americans by increasing the cost farmers pay for the insurance that protects them against natural disasters.<sup>xi</sup>
10. **Disregards Conservation Programs that Protect Rural America:** The Romney-Ryan budget undermines farm owners and operators who are working to conserve and improve soil, water, air and wildlife resources by gutting federal conservation efforts and preventing any new acreage from being enrolled in conservation programs.<sup>xii</sup> That would make more than 120 million acres of sensitive ecosystems vulnerable, and keep more than 101,500 farmers from enrolling in the program.<sup>xiii</sup> It also cuts a voluntary program that gives farmers incentives to establish long-term conservation areas, potentially affecting more than 225,000 farms each year.<sup>xiv</sup> These deep conservation cuts put many acres of fragile wetlands and grasslands at risk and erase many of the environmental gains made by agriculture in the last three decades.
11. **Nutrition Program Budget Cuts:** The Romney-Ryan budget would severely cut the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by more than 17 percent over the next 10 years. This vital program is a lifeline for millions of women and children, giving them the tools they need to get back on their feet, stay in school, and rejoin the workforce. SNAP kept 5 million people out of poverty in 2010 and reduced the poverty rates by 8 percent in 2009.<sup>xv</sup> Economists find that this program is one of the biggest "bang-for-the-buck" policies to improve a weak economy. Every five dollars spent in new SNAP benefits yields up to nine dollars in new economic activity. This assistance is quickly spent in the community, immediately benefiting other businesses and jobs.<sup>xvi</sup>

## PRESIDENT OBAMA: THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR RURAL PENNSYLVANIA

President Obama is laying a foundation for a rural Pennsylvania economy where hard work pays off, responsibility is rewarded, and everyone plays by the same rules. President Obama knows that strong rural communities are critical for a stronger America, and his continued investment in rural Pennsylvania proves it. Mitt Romney's embrace of the Ryan budget would have a devastating effect on the rural recovery and way of life, and demonstrates a profound misunderstanding of the positive impact

rural Pennsylvania has on the state as a whole. President Obama believes in rural Pennsylvania; Governor Romney simply doesn't understand it.

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<sup>i</sup> [USDA Press Release, [1/9/2012](#)]

<sup>ii</sup> Through the Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan program, the Rural Business Enterprise Grant program, the Rural Business Opportunity Grant program\*, the Intermediary Relending program, the Rural Cooperative Development Grant program, and the Value Added Producer Grant program.

<sup>iii</sup> Through the FSA Farm Ownership and Operating Loans

<sup>iv</sup> Through Rural Energy for America Program

<sup>v</sup> Through Water and Waste Disposal Program

<sup>vi</sup> Through the Community Facilities Program

<sup>vii</sup> Through Single and Multi-family Housing Programs

<sup>viii</sup> [ASPE Issue Brief, [March 2012](#)]; [ASPE Issue Brief, [March 2012](#)]

<sup>ix</sup> [Department of Interior, accessed [3/5/12](#)] [Report for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation by Southwick Associates, [10/10/11](#)]

<sup>x</sup> If the Ryan proposal caps premium subsidies at \$30,000, nearly 54,000 farmers who currently collect premiums over that amount – or 6% percent of farmers who insure their crops – would be required to pay more out of pocket to be insured against unexpected natural disasters. This cap is \$10,000 beyond what the GAO recommends as a cost saving measure.

<sup>xi</sup> [Agri-pulse, 3/22/12]

<sup>xii</sup> Cuts *all new enrollment* from the Conservation Stewardship Program

<sup>xiii</sup> Assuming 1182 acres per farmer, per the program's lifetime record

<sup>xiv</sup> The Conservation Reserve Program: the president proposal would decrease the maximum acreage enrollment by two million acres because high crop prices have spurred farmers to plant rather than collect rents for conservation.

<sup>xv</sup> [The Nation, [5/11/2012](#)] [New York Times, [4/10/12](#)]

<sup>xvi</sup> ["Creating Pathways To Opportunity," White House, [October 2011](#)]