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

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Thank you for your efforts to combat the spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). We look forward to working with USDA to ensure the necessary resources are available as you tackle this massive outbreak and the challenges that lay ahead. Conservative estimates put the economy-wide loss for destroyed production due to HPAI at nearly $3.3 billion. Not only do farms lose infected birds, but the rest of their flock as well. Poultry and egg barns need to be disinfected over a period of time, meaning barns will sit empty and poultry and egg production will further decrease.

While losses to turkey, chicken and egg producers are the most visible, the impact of HPAI can be felt across the entire economy. With fewer birds going to market and potential delays in restocking of farms, farmers will spend less on traditional input purchases, such as feed and veterinary supplies. Farmers and their employees will also have less household income to spend at local businesses. Additionally, trade has been cut off by international partners concerned about the devastating effects of this disease, directing more than $1 billion in poultry products to other markets, all at a cost to farmers. These are the ripple effects of avian influenza.

Therefore, on behalf of our farmer and business constituents impacted by this year’s HPAI outbreak, we ask your continued assistance in three key areas:

1) Complete biosecurity research in a timely manner to ensure industry can take any immediate steps before the fall. This critical research will help make sure that any financial requirements by industry, and certainly the federal government, are practices that are based on science, will improve biosecurity and reduce the impact of this disease on farmers, communities and consumers.
2) Complete bilateral trade talks with key international partners to ensure that any vaccine usage will not harm export sales.
3) Complete research and development of a viable commercial vaccine, so that it is available for fall should it be needed. We applaud USDA for its ongoing work on vaccine development.

As we move toward the fall, we stand ready to assist USDA and our poultry industry in trying to mitigate the negative impacts of HPAI on the economy. Again, we commend USDA for its coordination and dedication in responding to this massive outbreak and the current efforts to minimize the impacts that HPAI could have on our communities in the future.

Sincerely,

Collin C. Peterson  
Member of Congress

David Rouzer  
Member of Congress
Jeff Denham  
Member of Congress

Bob Goodlatte  
Member of Congress

David Young  
Member of Congress

Renee Ellmers  
Member of Congress

Ralph Abraham  
Member of Congress

Robert E. Latta  
Member of Congress

Kristi Noem  
Member of Congress

Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress

Dan Newhouse  
Member of Congress

Rod Blum  
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack  
Member of Congress