

May 21, 2018

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member:

We write to you today on behalf of MAPPS, URISA, AAG, NSGIC and ASPRS, which are briefly described overleaf, to express our support for the National Agriculture Imagery Program.

We strongly support the inclusion within the Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018 (H.R. 2) of Section 11604, which authorizes the successful National Agriculture Imagery Program (NAIP). Over the past few years, the NAIP program has progressively improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the monitoring of agricultural subsidies, estimation of agriculture output, and detection of fraud, waste, and abuse, through the collection of imagery data and the production of geographic information. Section 11604 of this legislation will reinforce that framework.

As the Senate continues its work to draft and consider legislation regarding our nation's agriculture policies, we strongly encourage you to include identical language as introduced in H.R. 2, as shown below:

SEC. 11604. NATIONAL AGRICULTURE IMAGERY PROGRAM.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Administrator of the Farm Service Agency, shall carry out a national agriculture imagery program to annually acquire aerial imagery during agricultural growing seasons from the continental United States.

(b) DATA.—The aerial imagery acquired under this section shall—

- (1) consist of high resolution processed digital imagery;
- (2) be made available in a format that can be provided to Federal, State, and private sector entities;
- (3) be technologically compatible with geospatial information technology; and
- (4) be consistent with the standards established by the Federal Geographic Data Committee.

(c) SUPPLEMENTAL SATELLITE IMAGERY.—The Secretary of Agriculture may supplement the aerial imagery collected under this section with satellite imagery.

(d) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section \$23,000,000 for fiscal year 2019 and each fiscal year thereafter.

This language officially authorizes the National Agriculture Imagery Program that has been carried out by the Farm Services Agency with support from many other agencies for over 10 years. This program provides shared products to over 10 federal agencies, 48 states, and many county and local governments that are used not only in agriculture, but also forestry management, soil management, natural resource management, planning, and monitoring. The data helps to prevent fraud of the subsidy programs by providing clear evidence of what is being grown on a plot of land and also is used in the application process for subsidies in the Farm Service Agency's Modernize and Innovate the Delivery of Agricultural Systems (MIDAS) program which is a modernization initiative to provide a secure, long-term, web-based solution to simplify, integrate, and automate the delivery of Farm Programs across the United States. The data produced in this program is also provided free of charge to the general public.

MAPPS is a national association of firms that are engaged in surveying, photogrammetry, satellite and airborne remote sensing, aerial photography, hydrography, aerial and satellite image processing, GPS and GIS data collection and conversion services. For more information, visit mapps.org.

The Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA) is a multi-disciplinary geospatial organization that provides professional education and training, a vibrant and connected community, advocacy for geospatial challenges and issues, and essential resources. URISA fosters excellence in GIS and engages geospatial professionals throughout their careers. For more information, visit www.urisa.org.

The American Association of Geographers (AAG) is a nonprofit scientific, research, and educational society with a current membership of over 12,000 individuals, including geographers and geospatial scientists in all 50 states. Our members work in the public, private, and academic sectors to advance the theory, methods, and practice of geography.

The National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC) promotes the efficient development and management of location-based information resources, and advocates for innovative, strategic use of these assets to advance the interests of states, tribes, regions, local governments and the nation. Led by state geospatial information officers (GIOs) and state government GIS managers, NSGIC is the premier state-led forum for developing, exchanging and endorsing geospatial technology and policy best practices. We share solutions to benefit the entire geospatial ecosystem and facilitate critical connections between people and organizations across multiple sectors. For more information, visit nsgic.org.

Founded in 1934, the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) is a scientific association serving thousands of professional members around the world. Our mission is to advance knowledge and improve understanding of mapping sciences to promote the responsible applications of photogrammetry, remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS) and supporting technologies. For more information, visit asprs.org.

Again, as the Senate considers the reauthorization of the Farm Bill, we strongly encourage you to include similar or identical language as it relates to the authorization of the National Agriculture Imagery Program.

Signed,

