

## United States Senate

February 25, 2016

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary of Agriculture  
US Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Secretary  
Washington, DC 20250

Secretary Vilsack:

I write to you today regarding the newly established partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Created to enhance employment opportunities for veterans in agriculture, this memorandum of understanding between the USDA Bridges to Opportunity program and Chamber of Commerce Hiring our Heroes program is a leading example for ways to ensure those who served our country are able to successfully transition into the civilian life. I urgently request you to ensure these efforts are expanded to the great state of Montana, which is home to the second most veterans per capita and a wealth of agriculture opportunities.

Agriculture is deeply rooted in Montana's communities and is the number one industry in the state. Pulling in over \$4 billion annually, the agriculture industry in Montana creates vast opportunities for veterans, who bring invaluable leadership and knowledge to the workforce. At a time when 5.7% of the veterans that served our country after the tragic events on September 11, 2001 are unemployed, working to ensure all veterans have a job is one of my top priorities. Unfortunately, the USDA Bridges to Opportunity program, which will soon be used to connect veterans to the agriculture workforce and a vast network of jobs, is not in Montana.

The potential for success that 20 other states are awarded by this newfound partnership is applauded, but it is extremely important that USDA work to ensure the Bridges to Opportunity Program expands efforts to Montana, where almost 100,000 veterans call home. Montana has proven its leadership in the agriculture industry and its commitment to its veterans, I greatly appreciate your assistance in ensuring that success is continued.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please contact me or a member of my staff at 202-228-1188 if there is anything we can do to assist.

Sincerely



STEVE DAINES  
United States Senator