

Amendment 3527 – Requires federal farm aid appropriated for preserving aging barns be redirected towards assisting farmers during agricultural emergencies

The 2002 farm bill established the Historic Barn Preservation program to identify, rehabilitate or preserve barns 50 years old or older and to conduct research on the history of barns. The Farm Bill reauthorizes the funding for the Historic Barn Preservation program through fiscal year 2012.

While rehabilitating aging barns may be a well intentioned initiative to preserve vestiges of the past, much more urgent issues face America's farmers. This amendment would seek to preserve the future of America's farmers rather than spending resources preserving aging barns.

In the five years since the barn preservation program was established, Congress has appropriated \$13.45 in emergency supplemental farm disaster assistance.

Clearly, when farmers are in need of billions of dollars in emergency assistance, federal farm funding should be directed to meeting the immediate needs of farmers.

This amendment would prioritize federal farm assistance by requiring the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to redirect any funds appropriated for the Historic Barn Preservation program to agricultural emergencies if the President declared a farm related emergency or Congress has approved emergency farm supplemental assistance. The Secretary would also have the discretion of returning the funds to the U.S. Treasury for debt reduction to offset the costs of any emergency farm spending provided by Congress.

If agricultural emergencies occur annually for 5 consecutive fiscal years, the Historic Barn Preservation program would be permanently repealed to ensure that federal farm funds are no longer diverted from farm emergencies.

Congress Appropriates Billions of Dollars in Emergency Farm Aid Every Year

From Fiscal Year 1989 through Fiscal Year 2007 (to date), 34 appropriations, authorization, or farm disaster acts added approximately \$59.04 billion in supplemental funding for USDA programs, according to the Congressional Research Service.^[1]

Approximately \$46.7 billion, or just under 80 percent of the total amount, was for FY1999-FY2007 alone. The most recent supplemental agricultural appropriation was a \$3.65 billion package included in the FY2007 Iraq war supplemental appropriations act (P.L. 110-28), signed into law in May 2007, primarily to assist crop and livestock producers who suffered weather-related losses in either 2005, 2006, or early 2007.

Since FY1989, the vast majority (\$43.2 billion) of the total supplemental funding has been paid directly to farmers, primarily through two mechanisms: “market loss payments” (\$21.4 billion, all from FY1999 to FY2001) to compensate for low farm commodity prices, and crop disaster payments (\$21.75 billion) paid to any producer who experienced a major crop loss caused by a natural disaster.

The remaining \$15.8 billion has funded a wide array of other USDA programs, including livestock feed assistance programs, farm conservation programs, specialty crop assistance, farm loans, and non-farm USDA programs such as overseas food aid, food and nutrition programs, and rural development and housing assistance.

In recent years, virtually all of the supplemental spending has been provided under an emergency designation from Congress and the Administration, meaning that the new spending did not have to be offset with comparable reductions in other programs. However, in some cases a portion of the supplemental is offset by spending reductions in other programs.

^[1] Ralph M. Chite. “Emergency Funding for Agriculture: A Brief History of Supplemental Appropriations, FY1989-FY2007,” Congressional Research Service, June 27, 2007.

**Total Annual Funding Additions Providing
Farm Disaster Assistance Since 1989^[2]**

Fiscal Year	Emergency Agriculture Appropriation Amount
1989	\$ 3.4 billion
1990	\$ 1.5 billion
1991	\$ 0
1992	\$ 1.0 billion
1993	\$ 1.9 billion
1994	\$ 3.1 billion
1995	\$ 0.6 billion
1996	\$ 0.1 billion
1997	\$ 0.5 billion
1998	\$ 0.2 billion
1999	\$ 6.6 billion
2000	\$ 14.8 billion
2001	\$ 11.3 billion
2002	\$ 0.6 billion
2003	\$ 3.6 billion
2004	\$ 0.2 billion
2005	\$ 3.8 billion
2006	\$ 2.2 billion
2007	\$ 3.65 billion
Grand Total, 1989 to Date	\$ 59.0 billion

Federal Barn Preservation Program Has Never Been Funded

The Historic Barn Preservation program was authorized in 2002 under the Rural Development and Investment title. The Senate bill reauthorizes it for another five years at “such sums as necessary.”

The truth is no sum is necessary for this program.

^[2] Ralph M. Chite. “Emergency Funding for Agriculture: A Brief History of Supplemental Appropriations, FY1989-FY2007,” Congressional Research Service, June 27, 2007.

Not surprisingly, the Historic Barn Preservation program has never been funded. Obviously, there are far greater national farm priorities.

Congress should, therefore, keep these other priorities in mind when reauthorizing the Farm Bill and ensure that non-essential programs, such as the barn preservation program, are prevented from siphoning needed resources away from agricultural emergencies or adding to our national debt which already exceeds \$9 trillion.

The Barn Preservation Program Duplicates Existing Federal Programs

There are a number of federal initiatives that provide millions of dollars to preserve historic buildings and sites, including barns.

The Preserve America program is a multi-agency government initiative administered through the National Park Service. The program awarded \$5 million in grants in Fiscal Year 2006. Congress provided \$5 million in 2007 and \$10 million has been requested for 2008.^[3]

Preserve America grants “are designed to support a variety of activities related to heritage tourism and innovative approaches to the use of historic properties as educational and economic assets. This matching grants program began October 1, 2005.” Individual grants range from \$20,000 to \$150,000.

These Preserve America grants are intended to complement the grants available under the Save America’s Treasures program. This program “rescues” historic sites, monuments, artifacts, and documents that “tell America’s story.” Through competitive and earmarked grants, Save America’s Treasures has awarded nearly \$225 million through 2006.^[4]

^[3] Preserve America website, <http://www.preserveamerica.gov/federalsupport.html> , accessed October 31, 2007.

^[4] Preserve America website, <http://www.preserveamerica.gov/federalsupport.html> , accessed October 31, 2007.

A number of other federal programs help support and complement Preserve America goals through direct and indirect assistance; for example:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its Rural Development Community Facilities Grants, gives preference to applications from Preserve America Communities.
- The U.S. Department of Commerce, through its Economic Development Administration, supports and promotes Preserve America projects as potential investment opportunities. These projects, which celebrate America's heritage and natural treasures, are designed to promote job creation and spur private-sector investment in local communities and regions.
- The National Endowment for the Humanities offers both planning and implementation grants for "Interpreting America's Historic Places," part of NEH's *We the People* initiative.
- National Heritage Areas designated by Congress and assisted by the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, as well as National Scenic Byways managed at the local and state level with assistance from the Department of Transportation, support community and regional efforts to preserve, manage, and interpret a broad array of heritage assets. Planning and other grants are available for these areas.^[5]

The grants, which are managed by the National Park Service, must be matched equally with non-federal funds, which encourages and supports state, local, and private involvement in these important projects. A couple examples include:

- **Montana Rural Heritage Experience (\$150,000)**
"The project will collaborate with Preserve America communities to support regional projects including: improving signage and events, promoting education and interpretation,

^[5] Preserve America website, <http://www.preserveamerica.gov/federalsupport.html> , accessed October 31, 2007.

support of tourism trail, assist in documentation of rural barns, and develop business and marketing plans^[6].”

- **Vermont State Historic Preservation Office Barn Census Project (\$150,000)**

“This survey project will develop a methodology, collect data, purchase storage systems, and recruit and train volunteers to conduct a survey of barns in Vermont. Information collected will result in a greater understanding of the number of, and condition of, these structures.^[7]”

Several Existing Federal Tax Credits Support Restoration of Old Barns

There are also federal income tax credits available to help cover part of the cost of restoring old barns.^[8]

A credit is available for rehabilitation expenditures on buildings constructed prior to 1936 and buildings that are “certified historic structures.” The credit is equal to 10 percent of expenditures for “qualified rehabilitated buildings” first place in service before 1936. A credit offsets calculated tax dollar for dollar so it is considerably more valuable than a deduction against income.

A 20 percent credit is available for certified historic structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places or are located in a registered historic district and certified as being of historic significance to the district.

Existing Public and Private Programs Already Exist to Preserve Historic Barns

^[6] FY 2006 Preserve America Grant Recipients,

<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/hpg/PreserveAmerica/download/2006PAgrants.pdf>

^[7] Preserve America Proposed Projects, Fiscal Year 2007 - Round 2,

http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/hpg/PreserveAmerica/download/2007_Round_2_blurbs.pdf

^[8] Iowa Barn Foundation, http://www.iowabarnfoundation.org/federal_tax_incentives.htm, accessed October 30, 2007.

There are numerous public and private initiatives across the country that assist with barn restoration activities. These include:

- **The Iowa Barn Foundation**, founded in 1997, provides barn restoration matching grants to help property owners restore their barns. The Foundation has awarded more than 45 matching grants, with a total of over \$400,000, to property owners to help them preserve their barns.^[9] In 2006, the Foundation had \$231,267 in savings and temporary cash investments, \$140,545 in net assets or fund balances, and \$135,387 in revenues.^[10]
- **The Maine Historic Preservation Commission** which allocates “preservation grants to privately owned historic barns and related agricultural outbuildings such as silos, equipment sheds, ice houses and smoke sheds. The aim of the Historic Barn Preservation Grant program is to help private barn owners undertake repair or stabilization of their historic barns. The competitively awarded matching grants are specifically for those barns or agricultural properties that are listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places.” It was established in 1999 and provided \$39,000 for barns preservation efforts in 2006.^[11]
- **The National Trust for Historic Preservation** which is “a private, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to saving historic places and revitalizing America’s communities” founded in 1949 and to provide “leadership, education, advocacy, and resources to protect the irreplaceable places that tell America’s story.” Staff at the Washington, D.C., headquarters, six regional offices and 28 historic sites work with the Trust’s 270,000 members and thousands of preservation groups in all

^[9] Iowa Barn Foundation website, http://www.iowabarnfoundation.org/awards_and_grants.htm, accessed October 30, 2007.

^[10] Guidestar, <http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2006/391/899/2006-391899210-034b6d1b-9.pdf>, accessed October 30, 2007.

^[11] Maine Historic Preservation Commission website, http://www.maine.gov/mhpc/grants/historic_barn_preservation_grants.html, accessed October 31, 2007.

50 states.^[12] The Trust's total revenue for 2005 was \$48.5 million with net assets that exceed \$187 million. The top five executives were compensated a total of \$896,000.^[13]

- **BARN AGAIN!**, an effort launched by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Successful Farming magazine in 1987, claims “hundreds of success stories” restoring historic barns. “The BARN AGAIN! program provides advice, information, and referrals to an average of 700 barn owners each year.”^[14]
- **The Heritage Barn Preservation Initiative** in Washington state established a Heritage Barn Register in May 2007 to commemorate “barns as historically significant resources representing the agricultural, economic and cultural development of the State of Washington.” In addition to the registry, the initiative provides “competitive matching grants to heritage barn owners throughout the state to support their efforts to preserve, stabilize and rehabilitate their barns.”^[15]
- **Historic Barns of Connecticut**,^[16] a project of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, provides “a nostalgia trail for all who love barns and fear their numbers in Connecticut is quickly declining. The Connecticut Barns web site is designed to serve as a central repository for barn surveys, research and general information, images as well as other barn related resources which may retrieved by visitors, residents, scholars, and barn enthusiasts from across the country. The surveys and web site hope to “prompt more advocacy to protect old barns.”^[17]

^[12] National Trust for Historic Preservation website, <http://www.nationaltrust.org/about/>, accessed October 31, 2007.

^[13] Guide Star website, <http://www.guidestar.org/FinDocuments/2005/530/210/2005-530210807-02369b32-9.pdf>, accessed October 2007.

^[14] http://www.agriculture.com/ag/story.jhtml?storyid=/templatedata/ag/story/data/barnagain_about.xml

^[15] Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation, <http://www.dahp.wa.gov/pages/HistoricSites/HeritageBarnRegister.htm>, accessed October 30, 2007.

^[16] <http://www.connecticutbarns.org/>

^[17] Connecticut Trust For Historic Preservation website, <http://www.cttrust.org/8603?highlight=barn> , accessed October 30, 2007.

- **New York’s Barn Restoration program** was created in 2000 to help preserve historic barns and protect agricultural landscapes throughout New York. The state offers a “Historic Barns Tax Credit” which is an income tax credit equal to 25 percent of the cost of rehabilitating historic barns built prior to 1936.^[18]
- The **Michigan Barn Preservation Network** is committed to rehabilitation of barns for agricultural, commercial, residential, and public uses.^[19] “Mini-grants available through MBPN for workshops related to barn preservation.”^[20]
- The **Kansas Barn Alliance** is a non-profit corporation founded in January 2006 that founded to “research, discover, procure, purchase, restore and assure the preservation of buildings, especially barns, along with land, homes, or other articles which may relate to the history and architecture of Kansas farms” and “to establish and maintain historic buildings, especially barns, or exhibits and land leased to or owned by the corporation.”^[21] The Alliance raises funds and awards grants and loans for historic barns.^[22]
- The Historic Preservation Commission and the County Farm Bureau of Kane County, Illinois “established ‘**That Darn Barn**’ in 1990 as an award program for preservation of historic farm buildings.”^[23]
- Other barn preservation support groups include, but are not limited to, the **Illinois Barn Alliance**,^[24] **Friends of Minnesota Barns**,^[25] **Barn Again Montana**,^[26] the **Dutch Barn**

^[18] New York’s State Historic Preservation Office, <http://nysparks.state.ny.us/shpo/technical/hisbarns.htm> , accessed October 30, 2007.

^[19] Michigan Barn Preservation Network website, <http://www.mibarn.net/> , accessed October 30, 2007.

^[20] Michigan Barn Preservation Network website, <http://www.mibarn.net/Resources/> , accessed October 30, 2007.

^[21] Kansas Barn Alliance, <http://kansasbarnalliance.org/aboutusmission.html> , accessed October 30, 2007.

^[22] Kansas Barn Alliance, <http://kansasbarnalliance.org/barnaidgrants.html>, accessed October 30, 2007.

^[23] Minnesota Historical Society, “Inventorying, Managing and Preserving Agricultural Historic Landscapes in Minnesota; Contents: Case Studies,”

<http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/shpo/landscape/landscape5.html>

^[24] <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/stephenson/agnr726.html>

^[25] <http://www.friendsofminnesotabarns.org/joomla/>

Preservation Society,^[27] the Friends of Ohio Barns,^[28] and the Wisconsin Barn Preservation Program.^[29]

Farmers Have More Urgent Needs Than Barn Preservation

In recent years, American farmers and those living in rural America have faced much more serious issues than how to preserve aging barns. These include crop losses, drought, and other natural disasters.

The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry notes, “Today, rural communities face enormous challenges, with loss of population and jobs contributing to a negative cycle which feeds on itself. Investments in rural development can help reverse this dynamic.^[30]”

According to USDA’s Economic Research Service:^[31]

- Per capita income in rural areas is \$26,147; For urban areas, the per capita income is \$36,153.
- Average earnings per job in rural areas is \$31,596; For urban areas, that number rises to \$48,340;
- In rural areas throughout the U.S., 23.5 percent have not completed high school; in urban areas, that numbers drops to 18.8 percent.

Addressing these are clearly more important priorities that should not have to compete with preservation efforts for federal agricultural and rural assistance.

^[26] <http://www.humanities-mt.org/barnagain.htm>

^[27] <http://www.dutchbarns.homestead.com/home.html>

^[28] <http://ohiobarns.osu.edu/>

^[29] <http://www.uwex.edu/lgc/barns/barns.htm>

^[30] <http://www.agriculture.senate.gov/> : Summary of Rural Development Title

^[31] <http://www.ers.usda.gov/StateFacts/US.htm>