

*In a letter to Congressional leaders, Barrow urges swift action on a disaster relief package that includes comprehensive drought assistance; says it should be a top priority for Congress this fall*

**Savannah, GA** - On Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah) and Georgia Agricultural Commissioner Tommy Irvin met with Screven County farmers to talk about the effect this year's drought is having on family farmers and rural communities across Georgia. Both Barrow and Irvin later toured local cotton, corn, peanut, and soybean farms to see the drought conditions first hand.

Today, Barrow wrote to House Speaker Dennis Hastert and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi to describe farm conditions in Georgia, and to urge for immediate action on a comprehensive drought assistance package:

August 31, 2006

Dear Mr. Speaker and Leader Pelosi,

On Wednesday afternoon, Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Tommy Irvin and I met with about two dozen cotton, peanut, and soybean farmers in southeastern Georgia. We discussed how this year's drought is affecting crop yields across my district, and we toured a handful of farms to see the damage first hand.

The drought conditions facing family farmers here in Georgia are dire. Severe weather conditions are devastating family farms and rural communities all across Georgia's 12<sup>th</sup> District. Farmers are some of the nation's best small businessmen, and they can squeeze copper wire out of a penny if they're forced to. But right now, the effects of this year's drought are putting the squeeze on farmers' budgets in my district, and across the nation. In fact, some of the farmers I spoke with this week told me that they're just inches away from quitting farming altogether.

We can't let that happen. When our farmers can no longer afford to stay in business, we lose the backbone of an industry that feeds and clothes our nation. At a time when we're already dependent on foreign countries for our energy, just imagine the consequences of being dependent on foreign countries for our food.

This July was the hottest July on record since the 1936 Dust Bowl, and the lack of rain has caused more than 60 percent of the United States to suffer abnormally dry or drought conditions. To make matters worse, this drought is occurring while agricultural producers are already suffering from excessive input costs from the high price of fuel and fertilizer.

Congress needs to address this problem as soon as possible in order to alleviate the catastrophic impact of this drought.

Since the last farm bill was negotiated, federal farm commodity programs have cost \$13.2 billion dollars less than originally projected through fiscal year 2005. While I certainly understand the need for fiscal discipline, Congress must pass a disaster relief package that includes comprehensive drought assistance. This should be one of our top priorities when Congress returns to session in September.

Farmers have helped the federal government save money at a time when we were facing a deficit, so now it's time to help our farmers in their moment of need. We can't afford to ignore this crisis. I hope you will support America's farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

John Barrow

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