

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 25, 2014

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

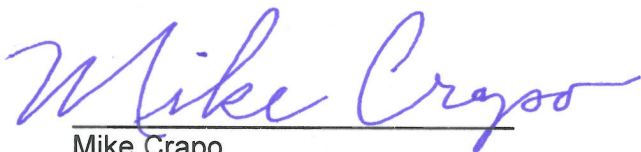
We write to express our serious concern regarding the recent reprogramming request submitted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agriculture Research Service (ARS) to the House and Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees that would have closed the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station in Dubois, Idaho. The sudden nature of this proposed action and the lack of consultation with affected stakeholders was alarming as closing this facility would have had a significant impact on the western sheep industry. As such, we commend the efforts of our colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives in working with the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee to oppose the reprogramming request.

We understand the value of the research conducted at the Dubois center and the economic benefit it provides the sheep industry. ARS is currently conducting important research at this facility on how the interaction between domestic and bighorn sheep may impact wild sheep herds—an issue of critical importance to bighorn and domestic sheep stakeholders in the West. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to continue this research if the Dubois center was closed. The USDA has not sufficiently explained what policy or budgetary factors were behind the proposed closure, how ARS intended to continue this and other research elsewhere or what impact this move would have had on the sheep industry.

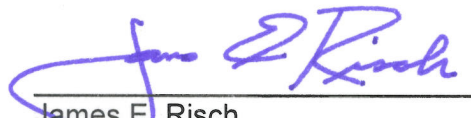
While our concerns over recent agency actions remain, we believe a productive outcome can be achieved. If changes or modifications need to be discussed regarding the mission and scope of the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station, we stand ready to encourage and facilitate conversations between USDA and the affected stakeholders, including the woolgrowers, educational institutions, and other state and federal agencies.

We look forward to your response.

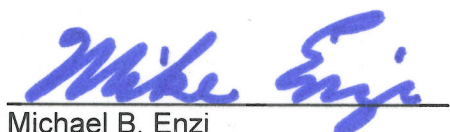
Sincerely,



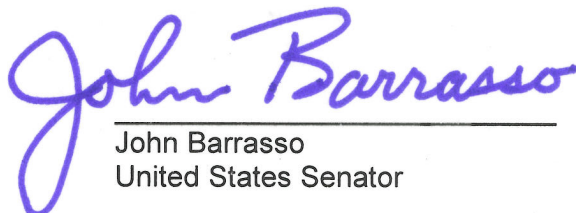
Mike Crapo
United States Senator



James E. Risch
United States Senator



Michael B. Enzi
United States Senator



John Barrasso
United States Senator