

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 19, 2014

Chairman Andres Alcantar
Commissioner Ronald G. Congleton
Commissioner Hope Andrade
Texas Workforce Commission
101 E. 15th Street
Austin, Texas 78778-0001

Commissioners,

As Representatives of the state of Texas, we believe that one of America's bedrock principles is our willingness to help our fellow citizens when times get tough. Whether through private donations to local food banks and homeless shelters, or through government programs such as Social Security and the various poverty assistance programs, helping our nation's most vulnerable citizens has always been a priority for Americans. However, in order to truly help those in poverty, we cannot simply provide monetary assistance, but instead should provide these individuals with the opportunity to provide for their family and their future. These Americans need a hand up, not a handout.

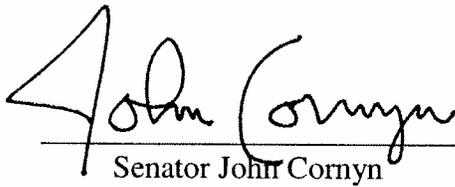
In 1996, Congress and President Clinton understood this need and passed sweeping reforms to our nation's welfare system that, for the first time, provided a pathway for Americans to get out of poverty. The Welfare Reform Act of 1996 eliminated the Aid to Families with Dependent Children welfare program and replaced it with the new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program which began to implement work requirements for recipients of welfare assistance. Many opponents criticized these reforms and claimed that work requirements for welfare recipients would lead to increased hunger and poverty. Instead, over the next five years, the number of Americans on welfare was cut in half, over 3 million people moved out of poverty and hunger among children was significantly reduced. These reforms proved what we already knew, that work is the best way to end poverty.

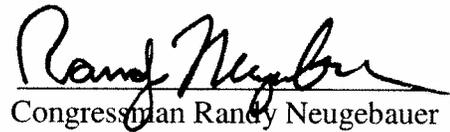
On February 7, 2014, President Obama signed into law H.R. 2642, the Agricultural Act of 2014, which, for the first time since the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, will implement reforms to the way our country manages the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), commonly referred to as food stamps. Included in these reforms is the opportunity for ten states to enter into cooperative agreements with the federal government to develop and test methods for employment and training programs. This pilot program emulates the successful work requirements from 1996 and will help those who currently rely on food stamps to reach an income level where they no longer need government assistance.

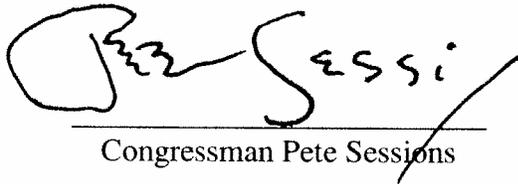
Our nation's welfare programs should help recipients become independent, not dependent on permanent government assistance. While we are proud of the work Texas is already doing to get

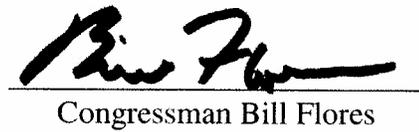
SNAP recipients in the state back to work, participating in this pilot program will allow the state to expand these efforts by allowing for greater flexibility to implement innovative new practices. We strongly encourage Texas to apply to become one of the ten states in the pilot program created in H.R. 2642 to set the standard for national reform. Our state's leadership in job creation, low unemployment and positive reform will only continue if Texas participates in this important pilot program.

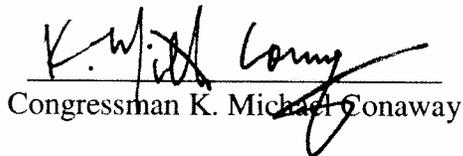
Sincerely,

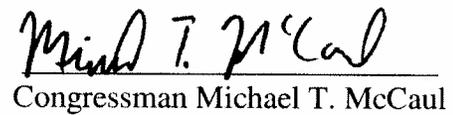

Senator John Cornyn

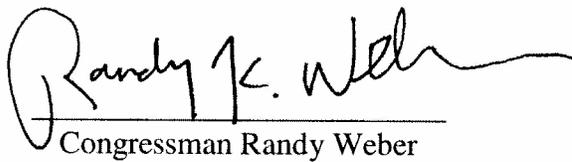

Congressman Randy Neugebauer


Congressman Pete Sessions


Congressman Bill Flores

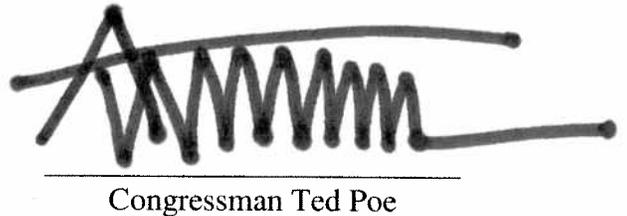

Congressman K. Michael Conaway

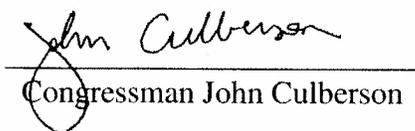

Congressman Michael T. McCaul

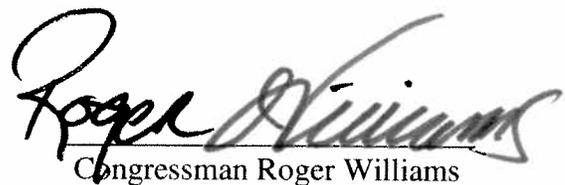

Congressman Randy Weber


Congressman Kenny Marchant


Congressman Ralph Hall


Congressman Ted Poe


Congressman John Culberson


Congressman Roger Williams

Sam Johnson

Congressman Sam Johnson

Kevin Brady

Congressman Kevin Brady

Joe Barton

Congressman Joe Barton

Pete Olson

Congressman Pete Olson

Lamar Smith

Congressman Lamar Smith

Louie Gohmert

Congressman Louie Gohmert

cc: Dr. Kyle Janek, Texas Health and Human Services Commission