

Joint Conference Committee to Meet Over Farm Bill

Article By:

Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP

On September 30, 2013, the one-year extension of the 2008 Farm Bill Reauthorization expired. In June 2013, the Senate passed its five-year reauthorization measure, the *Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2013* (S.954). The House passed its measure, the *Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act* (H.R.2642) in July 2013. Unlike the Senate bill, the House bill did not include a nutrition title dealing with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the federal food stamps program, and related nutrition programs. Divisions over spending cuts and policy changes to the SNAP have hampered prospects for reauthorization. The House bill seeks to cut \$40 billion from SNAP over ten years while the Senate bill proposes \$4 billion in reductions.

Tomorrow, October 30th, negotiations between the House and Senate will begin anew over reauthorizing these key agriculture programs. House Republican conferees are House Agriculture Chairman Frank Lucas (OK), Steve Southerland (FL), Steve King (IA), Randy Neugebauer (TX), Mike Rogers (AL), Mike Conaway (TX), Glenn Thompson (PA), Austin Scott (GA), Rick Crawford (AR), Martha Roby (AL), Kristi Noem (SD), Jeff Denham (CA), Rodney Davis (IL), Ed Royce (CA), Tom Marino (PA), Dave Camp (MI), and Sam Johnson (TX). House Democrat conferees include House Agriculture Ranking Member Collin Peterson (MN), Marcia Fudge (OH), Mike McIntyre (NC), Jim Costa (CA), Tim Waltz (MN), Kurt Schrader (OR), Jim McGovern (MA), Suzan DelBene (WA), Gloria Negrete McLeod (CA), Filemon Vela (TX), Eliot Engle (NY), and Sander Levin (MI).

The Senate conference committee includes the following Democrats: Agriculture Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow (MI), Patrick Leahy (VT), Tom Harkin (IA), Max Baucus (MT), Sherrod Brown (OH), Amy Klobuchar (MN), and Michael Bennett (CO). Republican conferees include Senate Agriculture Ranking Member Thad Cochran (MS), Pat Roberts (KS), Saxby Chambliss (GA), John Boozman (AR), and John Hoeven (ND).

The conference committee will meet in an effort to reconcile the differences between the two bills, which include the following:

- The House bill cuts \$54 billion in programs over ten years while the Senate bill cuts \$23 billion.
- The Senate bill provides a full five-year authorization of SNAP while the House bill authorizes the program for three years and extends other farm programs for five years.

- Within the commodity title, the House bill uses planted acres to calculate price subsidies while the Senate bill uses base acres. Rice, peanut and barley growers favor the House bill, while corn and soybean producers favor the Senate bill.
- The Senate bill contains language directing the Agriculture Secretary to conduct a feasibility study of a tribal demonstration project for tribes to administer Federal food assistance programs in place of states. The House bill does not contain such language.
- The Senate bill changes the definition of “rural” and “rural area” for the various programs administered by USDA Rural Development. It would expand the definition to include cities or towns that have a population of up to 50,000 inhabitants. USDA currently has a 10,000 population limit for rural water programs and a 20,000 limit for other programs. The House bill does not contain such language.
- If the conferees are unable to resolve their differences, the House bill makes the 2013 farm bill the controlling law by default. Currently, if the farm bill is not reauthorized every five years, the 1949 law automatically takes effect.

We will keep you apprised on developments as they occur.

© 2025 Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP. All Rights Reserved.

National Law Review, Volume III, Number 312

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/joint-conference-committee-to-meet-over-farm-bill>