United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 15, 2011

The Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

As the 112th United States Congress commences, we write to share with you our continuing concern with the potential regulation of farm and rural dusts through your review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for coarse particulate matter (PM10), or "dust." Proposals to lower the standard may not be significantly burdensome in urban areas, but will likely have significant effects on businesses and families in rural areas, many of which have a tough time meeting current standards.

Naturally occurring dust is a fact of life in rural America, and the creation of dust is unavoidable for the agriculture industry. Indeed, with the need to further increase food production to meet world food demands, regulations that will stifle the U.S. agriculture industry could result in the loss of productivity, an increase in food prices, and further stress our nation's rural economy.

Tilling soil, even through reduced tillage practices, often creates dust as farmers work to seed our nation's roughly 400 million acres of cropland. Likewise, harvesting crops with various farm equipment and preparing them for storage also creates dust.

Due to financial and other considerations, many roads in rural America are not paved, and dust is created when they are traversed by cars, trucks, tractors, and other vehicles. To potentially require local and county governments to pave or treat these roads to prevent dust creation could be tremendously burdensome for already cash-strapped budgets.

While we strongly support efforts to safeguard the wellbeing of Americans, most Americans would agree that common sense dictates that the federal government should not regulate dust creation in farm fields and on rural roads. Additionally, the scientific and technical evidence seems to agree. Given the ubiquitous nature of dust in agricultural settings and many rural environments, and the near impossible task of mitigating dust in most settings, we are hopeful that the EPA will give special consideration to the realities of farm and rural environments, including retaining the current standard.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Dick Lugar

Jim Bunning

Kent Conrad

Mike Johanns

Michael B. Enzi

Jeff Sessions

Jim Inhofe

Johnny Isakson

John Ensign

John Boozman

Jerry Moran

John Thune

Dan Coats

Richard Shelby

Rob Portman

John Hoeven

Roy Blunt

Mark Begich

Mike Crapo

John Barrasso

Jon Tester

Claire McCaskill

Jim Johnson

Al Franken

Amy Klobuchar

John Cornyn

Ron Johnson

Pat Roberts

Clara Kim

Roger Winter