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Farm groups back Barack Obama for President

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Thursday, on the 60th anniversary of a famous farm policy speech by President Harry Truman, a broad spectrum of farm group leaders endorsed Obama for president.

The endorsement, representing almost all 50 states, comes from:

- Six former leaders of the National Corn Growers Association,
- 38 former State Executive Directors of USDA's Farm Service Agency,
- 28 current and former leaders of the National Farmers Union,
- and 22 current and former State Directors of Agriculture.

Welcoming the farm leaders' support, Senator Barack Obama said that "I am humbled to receive this support from those that know America's farmers best. Many of the issues facing rural America are the same that we are all facing, and I am determined to ensure that we do all that we can to support this key industry. If we fail rural America, we fail all of America."

Obama's presidential campaign office noted that the Democratic presidential nominee offers "a plan to strengthen the rural economy, bring affordable health care to all Americans, invest in renewable sources of energy while creating millions of jobs, and protect the farm safety net." The campaign also notes that the Republican nominee Senator John McCain opposed the 2008 Farm Bill and supported President Bush's Farm Bill veto. The two also differ on ethanol, with Obama a supporter and McCain an opponent of government mandates for ethanol production.

In their four separate endorsement letters,

- Leon Corzine of Illinois, Jack Kintzle of Iowa, Tim Hume of Colorado, and six other National Corn Growers Association leaders from Texas, Ohio and Minnesota wrote that ". . . we believe that voters have a clear choice on issues important to agriculture in this election and we write to express our support for Barack Obama for President. On nearly every issue important to growers, Senator

Obama has been a leading advocate while his opponent Senator McCain has actively fought against our priorities for the future. Though we come from different political backgrounds, we put aside those partisan histories to stand behind Barack Obama who is overwhelmingly a friend of agriculture.”

- The 38 former State Executive Directors of USDA’s Farm Service Agency wrote that “. . . we have experience administering programs that deliver billions of dollars of support to rural communities through commodity support payments, conservation payments, disaster assistance payments, and farm ownership and operating loans. We know firsthand the vital importance of these programs to rural America. One candidate for President has consistently opposed these programs since his election to Congress in 1982 and said he opposed the 2008 Farm Bill – a bill that continued these programs, substantially increased conservation and foods assistance programs, created a permanent disaster assistance program, and increased investments in next generation renewable energy and specialty crop agriculture. Senator Obama understands the importance of these programs to our rural areas, voted for the 2008 Farm Bill, and is the best candidate to address the issues important to farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. We encourage rural families to vote for Barack Obama.”
- National Farmers Union President Tom Buis and 27 other current and former NFU leaders wrote Sen. Obama that “Never before have the two nominees for President offered a clearer choice of who is friendly to rural America, and who is not. Your support for important policies for rural communities and farmers such as the farm bill, renewable energy, fair trade, Country of Origin labeling, and improving rural infrastructure and rural health stands in stark contrast to your opponent’s record. Senator McCain has voted time and again against rural America as he opposed the farm bill, advocated for suspending the Renewable Fuels Standard, and voted against agricultural appropriations and disaster aid. Where you stand in support of farmers and the fundamental importance of a safety net that protects against weather events and market disruptions, your opponent has actively criticized these vital risk management tools.”
- Roger Johnson, elected Commissioner of Agriculture from North Dakota and current President of the National Association of State Directors, Commissioners and Secretaries of Agriculture (NASDA), and 21 other current and former State Directors of Agriculture wrote that: “America’s farmers have been at the forefront of the renewable fuels movement. Barack Obama has been one of the strongest proponents in Congress for increasing production of home-grown American renewable fuels and wind and solar energy. He believes that we must break our dependence on foreign oil and has put forward comprehensive, forward thinking plans that will increase our production of clean, home-grown renewable energy. In endorsing and committing to work hard to elect Barack Obama for President, we call on rural voters to cast their ballots for a leader who knows agriculture and the challenges our rural communities face, will protect the rights of our sportsmen and women, and will work to provide affordable health care for all Americans.”