

June 29, 2012

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

As scientific societies that advance the cause of natural resources and food and agriculture research, we write to you to highlight the value of participation at scientific and technical conferences by USDA scientists and researchers to the advancement of agricultural science and the USDA mission. These meetings and conferences are an essential venue for scientific discussion, debate, collaboration and exchange that are fundamental to the conduct of science.

We recognize that the Federal Government has a responsibility to prevent waste, fraud and abuse. However, we are concerned that travel restrictions could inadvertently impede the free flow of scientific information and the professional development of scientists and research professionals. This would, in turn, work contrary to critical national goals related to agriculture, food security, public health, science education, and competitiveness.

Our organizations realize the goal of scientific progress through the publication of peer-reviewed journals, and by convening scientific conferences, workshops, lectures, and seminars. The free exchange of scientific ideas and information is crucial to advancing agricultural science and innovation, and conferences are a standard mechanism for the transfer of information among scientists and researchers.

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to protect the integrity of the scientific enterprise and encourage you to continue to provide the necessary flexibility for government employees to attend scientific and technical conferences organized or supported by professional societies and non-governmental organizations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Agricultural & Applied Economics Association  
American Dairy Science Association  
American Fisheries Society  
American Phytopathological Society  
American Society of Agronomy  
American Society of Animal Science  
American Society for Horticultural Science  
American Society for Microbiology  
American Society for Nutrition  
The American Society of Plant Biologists

American Veterinary Medical Association  
Crop Science Society of America  
Federation of Animal Science Societies  
Genetics Society of America  
Institute of Food Technologists  
National Association of Plant Breeders  
North Central Weed Science Society  
Poultry Science Association  
Society for American Foresters  
Society for Range Management  
Soil Science Society of America  
Southern Weed Science Society  
Weed Science Society of America  
Western Society of Weed Science  
The Wildlife Society