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Hastings Responds to Vilsack Letter Regarding “Stimulus” Spending *Pushes for Specific Response to Unanswered Questions*

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Doc Hastings (WA-04) [responded](#) to a letter from Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack regarding the Forest Service’s use of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. In his response, Hastings requests specific information to his unanswered questions regarding the use of taxpayer dollars, the effectiveness of the ARRA and the project selection process.

“Since Recovery.gov promises that ‘taxpayer dollars spent under the Recovery Act will be subject to unprecedented transparency and accountability,’ I hope that you will provide more informative and specific answers to the following questions,” wrote Hastings. *“With a \$1.4 trillion deficit and an almost 10 percent unemployment rate, it is more important than ever that we spend taxpayer dollars wisely and work to help the private sector create lasting employment opportunities for people across our country.”*

Hastings’ ongoing requests include:

1. A complete list of proposed Forest Service stimulus projects (which Secretary Vilsack failed to include in his response)
2. An explanation of why funding projects for Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, and the District of Columbia (all which contain no National Forest lands) ranked higher than projects in states with National Forests.
3. An explanation of why the Forest Service no longer uses the words “private sector” when it predicts AARA job creation.

BACKGROUND

On August 17, 2009, Ranking Member Hastings sent a [letter](#) to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack regarding the Departments’ use of ARRA funds.

On October 19, 2009, Secretary Vilsack responded in [letter](#) to Ranking Member Hastings.

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar has yet to respond.

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