

# RURAL AMERICA SOLUTIONS GROUP



Co-Chairs: Rep. Frank Lucas (R-OK) Rep. Sam Graves (R-MO) Rep. Doc Hastings (R-WA)

## **Opening Statement**

**The Honorable Doc Hastings (R-WA)**

**Co-Chair, Rural America Solutions Group**

**Forum on *"The EPA's Assault on Rural America: How New Regulations and Proposed Legislation are Stifling Job Creation and Economic Growth"***

**September 29, 2010**

Today's Forum will serve as a much needed listening session on rural America's growing concerns over recent EPA policies. Under the cover of darkness, federal EPA bureaucrats are on the verge of killing thousands of rural jobs and communities through an arcane maze of rules and regulations that can only make sense to a lawyer in Washington, D.C.

The EPA's authority over rural communities has significantly expanded under the Obama Administration. Its current budget is more than \$10 billion - the highest it has ever been - and EPA employs more than 17,000 employees nationwide. According to CRS, from January 2009 to June 2010 there have been 653 finalized EPA rules and 463 proposed EPA rules. That's over 1100 new rules in just 17 months.

The House Democrat Majority has become complicit in this "death by a thousand cuts" strategy because there is little or no oversight of these activities. Proposed bills that would increase rural energy costs and regulate irrigation ditches would make the situation even worse. The real danger is that these bills could be resurrected after the election by the votes of defeated Members of Congress.

Proposed rules and bills that impose the federal government's reach on mud puddles, irrigation canals and driveways have left some wondering whether the EPA really stands for "Eliminate Private Agriculture." Today's event will help shine light on these job-killing policies and hopefully give some pause before the bus is driven over the cliff.

We graciously invited the EPA to appear before this forum, but no representative is attending. This is unfortunate since it is EPA's failure to listen and learn that got us here in the first place. Policies on a desk at EPA's headquarters or in the halls of Congress may look great on paper, but could have terrible and unnecessary consequences when implemented in the real world.

For this reason, it's time for EPA to ease its iron grip on rural America and start to listen to those who would be impacted. They may find out that what works in Washington, D.C. may

not work for practical irrigated agriculture in central Washington State and that these burdensome regulations come at enormous economic and social cost to hard-working rural families.

At a time when Republicans are focused on stabilizing the economy, these top-down policies will only kill long-term jobs and future economic development. Many rural communities are not asking for massive spending and handouts in times of a \$13 trillion debt; they are simply asking for the government to exercise some common sense and abandon its pursuit of higher taxes and more red tape. I hope today is a first step towards giving Congress the ability to have a vote on these regulations.

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