

Obama Administration Record for Rural America

“It’s about a rural community in Iowa or Alabama where farmers can monitor weather across the state and market across the globe. It’s about an entrepreneur on Main Street with a great idea she hopes to sell to the big city. It’s about every young person who no longer has to leave his hometown to seek new opportunity.”

- President Barack Obama, February 10, 2011

President Obama understands that America prospers when our whole country is in it together; when hard work pays off and responsibility is rewarded; and when everyone, from Main Street to Wall Street, does their fair share and plays by the same rules. To create true middle class security, we can’t just cut our way to prosperity. We must out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the world. Over the last three years, we have made historic investments in rural America designed to drive job growth and form the foundation of a rural economy that is built to last. We want to build a better future for the men and women who live, work and raise their families in rural communities – and to extend the promise of middle class jobs where hard work pays off and responsibility is rewarded. That’s why President Obama has focused on creating jobs and expanding opportunities in rural communities – making investments to strengthen rural businesses, support rural workers, and restore security for rural families. The Obama Administration’s record for Rural America includes:

- **Supporting Jobs and Economic Growth in Rural America:** While many sectors of the economy are running trade deficits, American agriculture has enjoyed a record high export level of \$137.4 billion in Fiscal Year 2011, supporting more than 1.15 million jobs. The Administration has worked diligently to spur economic growth and hiring in rural America.
 - **Helping Rural Businesses Grow, Supporting 250,000 Jobs:** Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and FY 2009 through FY 2011 appropriations, the Administration has invested more than \$6.2 billion in financing to help nearly 10,000 rural businesses expand, grow, and innovate – creating or saving over 250,000 jobs.
 - **Promoting Agricultural Exports, Supporting over 1.15 Million Jobs:** The Administration has expanded U.S. agricultural exports, supporting over 1.15 million jobs and \$23 billion in agricultural exports. Moreover, the signing of new trade agreements with Panama, Colombia, and South Korea will result in an estimated \$2.3 billion in additional agricultural trade in 2012 and beyond, and support nearly 20,000 domestic jobs.
 - **Providing Rural Businesses with Access to Capital:** Between 2009 and 2011, the Administration provided 103,000 loans to family farmers, totaling \$14.6 billion in total credit. Additionally, USDA has provided nearly \$5 billion in farm operating and ownership loans to help approximately 32,000 small- and medium-sized businesses. The Administration has provided grants and loans to assist over 50,000 rural small and mid-sized businesses in creating or saving 266,000 jobs.

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- **Mentoring and Training Rural Small Business Owners:** Through the Small Business Administration's network of Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, and SCORE Chapters, the Administration has mentored or trained over 1.5 million entrepreneurs and small business owners, including many in rural communities.
- **Supporting Jobs and Investment in Energy and Hydropower Development on Government-Owned Lands in Rural America:** Through conventional energy development and hydropower on Department of Interior-managed lands and waters, the Administration has supported more than 1.3 million jobs and \$246 billion in economic activity, with significant benefits to many rural areas.
- **Investing in Rural Infrastructure:** The Administration has made significant investments in rural infrastructure, creating the foundation for future growth and putting people back to work now.
 - **Connecting Rural Americans to the Electric Grid:** The Administration has financed over 416 loan guarantees to furnish or improve electric power service in 41 states, connecting nearly 800,000 new rural residents to the electric grid, including more than 130,000 Native Americans.
 - **Improving Rural Electric Infrastructure:** The Administration has helped modernize rural electric infrastructure for over 25 million rural residents and businesses with funding for 43,000 miles of new distribution line and 38,000 miles of upgraded line.
 - **Expanding Access to Broadband For Rural Communities:** Through the Recovery Act, the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce have expanded broadband access to over 7 million rural Americans, including 3 million rural households and over 350,000 rural businesses – lowering costs for businesses, bringing jobs back to rural communities, and spurring long-term economic growth.
 - **Investing in Rural Road and Bridge Projects:** Through the TIGER Discretionary Grant Program, the Administration has invested more than \$220 million in rural areas to build or rehabilitate 24 key infrastructure projects.
 - **Improving Water and Sewer Systems throughout Rural America:** The Administration has provided nearly 9 million rural residents access to safe water supply and sanitary sewer systems, and over 3.7 million rural residents access to new or improved systems that will deliver safe, clean drinking water. Also, the Administration invested in 5,100 water and waste water community infrastructure projects to help safeguard the health of 18 million rural residents and create or save 135,000 jobs.

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- **Fixing America's Lowest-Performing Schools:** The Administration has invested \$3.5 billion in 2010 and \$535 million in 2011 in School Improvement Grants to help turn around the nation's lowest-performing schools. For the 2010 funds, 18% of all awards were made to schools in rural areas.
- **Creating Opportunities via Distance Learning and Telemedicine:** Since 2009, 1,440 schools and 3,925 medical facilities were improved or built through the dedicated investments made by the Administration through the Department of Agriculture, increasing the availability of quality healthcare and education in rural America.
- **Increasing Access to Healthcare in Rural Communities:** One-fourth of America's population lives in rural areas, but only ten percent of physicians practice there. But thanks to investments by both the Recovery Act and the Affordable Care Act, more doctors and nurse practitioners will practice in rural communities through additional scholarships, loan repayments, and Medicare payment incentives.
 - **Providing Support for Rural Healthcare Providers:** Specifically, this includes billions in Medicare support for rural providers, funding for Health Centers which serve millions of people living in rural areas, and more resources for the National Health Service Corps which has more than doubled in size since 2008. Additionally, in August 2011, we announced that the National Health Service Corps loan repayment program would be expanded to include certain Critical Access Hospitals, which are commonly found in rural areas, and that rural hospitals and clinicians would be linked to capital loan programs to help them implement health information technology.
- **Supporting Veterans in Rural Communities:** The Administration has provided education benefits to over 215,000 veteran students in rural areas under the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill. The Administration also has invested in more than 500 projects across the VA health care system in support of rural health care, including 404 community-based outpatient clinics and 48 outreach clinics in rural areas, to provide primary health care access to nearly 3.3 million veterans. And through the veterans' home loan guarantee program, the Administration has helped over 300,000 rural veterans and service members purchase a home or refinance an existing mortgage.
- **Helping Rural America Recover from Disasters:** The Administration has helped more than 100,000 farmers and ranchers recover from natural disasters through \$3 billion in USDA disaster assistance. Natural disasters have dire consequences on the ability of farmers and ranchers to bring vital food and products to consumers. The Administration has aggressively implemented disaster assistance authorities and requested the extension of disaster assistance authorities.
- **Created the White House Rural Council:** In June 2011, President Obama created the first-ever White House Rural Council, comprised of Cabinet members and other senior

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Administration officials. The President charged the Council with streamlining and improving the effectiveness of Federal programs serving rural America; engaging stakeholders on issues and solutions in rural communities; and promoting and coordinating public-private partnerships. In August 2011, in conjunction with the White House Rural Economic Forum hosted by President Obama, the White House Rural Council released a new report entitled *Jobs and Economic Security for Rural America*, which lays out the economic landscape rural Americans face today. Also in August 2011, President Obama announced a series of Federal agency actions facilitated by the Rural Council to help rural small businesses access capital, expand rural job search and training services, and increase rural access to health care workers and technology.