

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 1, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

We write to express our ongoing concerns that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to misuse small refinery hardship waivers under the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) to the detriment of farmers and rural communities. Farmers and rural communities are struggling with low prices, unstable weather conditions, and uncertainty with export markets. To help ensure that future waivers do not add to these challenges, we respectfully ask the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to conduct a study on the impact of the 85 small refinery waivers issued by EPA for 2016, 2017, and 2018 on farm income, commodity prices, and renewable fuel usage.

In August 2019, the EPA granted another 31 small refinery waivers, bringing the total number of waivers issued under the Trump Administration to 85. These waivers have reduced demand for over 4 billion gallons of biofuels. Every waiver granted negatively impacts the rural economy. Ethanol plants in states including Minnesota and Iowa have recently announced that they would temporarily close or reduce production, which has cost 2,500 rural jobs and impacted demand for more than 225 million bushels of corn¹.

In light of these deeply troubling trends, we are extremely concerned by an EPA spokesperson's recent statement that, "There is zero evidence that EPA's congressional mandated small refinery exemption program...has had any negative impact on domestic corn ethanol producers."²

We strongly disagree and believe that a study from USDA on the impact to farm income, commodity prices, and renewable fuel usage for the small refinery waivers granted by the EPA will help inform the decision making process when the EPA evaluates future waiver petitions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate



Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

¹ Cooper, G. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://ethanolrfa.org/renewable-fuel-standard/>

² <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-usa-ethanol-epa/trump-epa-says-zero-evidence-of-biofuel-waivers-hurting-ethanol-producers-idUKKCN1VA21X>