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LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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CRAIG OFFERS EMINENT DOMAIN SAFEGUARD

Amendment to Farm Bill would bolster farmers' and ranchers' property rights

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Larry Craig offered an amendment today to the 2007 Farm Bill that seeks to preserve the private property rights of the nation's farmers and ranchers. The amendment, cosponsored by Senator Brownback (R-Kan.) and Senator Allard (R-Colo.), would deter States and local governments from using eminent domain proceedings to take working agricultural land for parks, open space, or conservation areas. The amendment includes exceptions for traditional eminent domain uses for projects to benefit the public good, such as power lines, roads, schools, or other similar projects.

“Private property rights are one of the most basic pillars of our free society,” Craig said. “If cities, counties or states want to preserve open space, they should find a willing seller. Unfortunately, in the wake of the Supreme Court's Kelo vs. New London decision, governments all across the country are being tempted to abuse eminent domain to seize private land for uses the Founding Fathers never intended. I think this amendment strikes a balance, allowing State and local governments to continue using an effective tool to benefit the public, while preserving farmers' and ranchers' land rights.”

While the amendment does not prohibit the use of eminent domain to convert farm or ranchland into parks or open space, it creates financial disincentives for State or local governments to do so. Farmers and ranchers could continue to sell private land for parks or conservation purposes, if they so choose. This amendment has the support of American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the Public Lands Council.