

Helps Rural America Participate in Move to Energy Independence

Washington, DC – Today, the House passed legislation that included a Walz provision to ensure rural America has a role in our transition to energy independence.

Rep. Walz (MN-01) and Rep. Fortenberry (NE-1) partnered on a bipartisan amendment to the Agriculture Appropriations bill that restored funding for the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), that provides grants and loan guarantees to farmers, ranchers and small businesses to diversify their energy sources. It allows farmers and rural small businesses to help move our country to a cleaner energy future by building wind, solar, biomass, anaerobic digester, geothermal and other clean energy projects.

“Our transition to energy independence is going to happen because of the innovation happening right now in the heartland to move our country towards clean, homegrown technology,” said Walz. “Ensuring that farmers, ranchers and small business can continue helping with that transition is vital to reducing our dependence on foreign oil and having the ability to diversify their energy sources just makes good business sense.”

Ryan Wolf, a Minnesotan who built a wind farm in Rushmore, MN, said, “REAP allowed me to get a wind project up and running in Minnesota. We received partial funding for the project from REAP, which allowed us to attract an outside investor. It’s helped us take a part in energy production and diversify our family farm increasing our financial security.”

While Congressman Walz worked hard to include the REAP amendment, he will vote against the final agriculture appropriations bill because he believes it does not reflect the priorities of our farmers, ranchers and rural communities. It decimates Farm Bill conservation programs, cuts proven nutrition programs and strips the Community Futures Trading Commission of the critical resources it needs to regulate the kind of irresponsible financial practices that collapsed our economy and prevent oil speculation that manipulates energy and agriculture prices.

The legislation passed 217-203.

-30-