

119TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 8389

To establish a uniform definition of “rural area” for all rural development programs administered by the Department of Agriculture.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 20, 2026

Mr. RUIZ introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture, and in addition to the Committee on Financial Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To establish a uniform definition of “rural area” for all rural development programs administered by the Department of Agriculture.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Rural Area Population
5 Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. UNIFORM DEFINITION OF “RURAL AREA” FOR USDA**
2 **RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 343(a)(13) of the Consoli-
4 dated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C.
5 1991(a)(13)) is amended—

6 (1) in subparagraph (A)(ii), by striking “urban-
7 ized” and insert “urban”;

8 (2) by striking subparagraphs (B) and (C);

9 (3) in subparagraph (D)—

10 (A) by striking “(F)” each place it appears
11 and inserting “(D)”; and

12 (B) in clause (i), by striking “urbanized”
13 each place it appears and inserting “urban”;

14 (4) in subparagraph (E), by striking “urban-
15 ized” and inserting “urban”;

16 (5) in subparagraph (F)—

17 (A) in clause (i)(II), by striking “urban-
18 ized” and inserting “urban”; and

19 (B) in clause (ii), by striking “consider—
20 ” and all that follows and inserting “consider
21 an area described in clause (i)(I) not to be a
22 rural area for purposes of subparagraph (A).”;
23 and

24 (6) by redesignating subparagraphs (D)
25 through (I) as subparagraphs (B) through (G), re-
26 spectively.

1 (b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS TO THE RURAL
2 ELECTRIFICATION ACT OF 1936.—

3 (1) Section 13(3) of the Rural Electrification
4 Act of 1936 (7 U.S.C. 913(3)) is amended—

5 (A) in subparagraph (A), by striking “(C)”
6 each place it appears and inserting “(A)”; and

7 (B) in subparagraph (B), by striking
8 “loan” and inserting “loan, or has had a loan,”
9 before “made under”.

10 (2) Section 203(b) of such Act (7 U.S.C.
11 924(b)) is amended to read as follows:

12 “(b) In this title, the term ‘rural area’ shall have the
13 meaning given the term in 343(a)(13)(A) of the Consoli-
14 dated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C.
15 1991(a)(13)(A)).”.

16 (3) Section 601(b)(3) of such Act (7 U.S.C.
17 950bb(b)(3)) is amended to read as follows:

18 “(3) RURAL AREA.—The term ‘rural area’ shall
19 have the meaning given the term in 343(a)(13)(A)
20 of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development
21 Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)(A)).”.

22 (4) Section 604(a)(4) of such Act (7 U.S.C.
23 950bb–3(a)(4)) is amended to read as follows:

24 “(4) RURAL AREA.—The term ‘rural area’ shall
25 have the meaning given the term in 343(a)(13)(A)

1 of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development
2 Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)(A)).”.

3 (c) HOUSING PROVISIONS.—Section 520 of the Hous-
4 ing Act of 1949 (42 U.S.C. 1490) is amended—

5 (1) by striking the first sentence and inserting
6 the following: “(a) IN GENERAL.—As used in this
7 title, the term ‘rural area’ shall have the meaning
8 given the term in 343(a)(13)(A) of the Consolidated
9 Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C.
10 1991(a)(13)(A)).”;

11 (2) by striking “For purposes of this title” and
12 inserting the following:

13 “(b) LEGACY AREAS.—For purposes of this title”;

14 (3) by striking “, and the city” and all that fol-
15 lows through “year 2000”; and

16 (4) by adding at the end the following:

17 “(c) RURAL DEFINED.—As used in this title, the
18 term ‘rural’ shall have the meaning given the term ‘rural
19 area’ in subsection (a).”.

20 **SEC. 3. EXPANSION OF “RURAL IN CHARACTER” AUTHOR-**
21 **ITY.**

22 Section 343(a)(13) of the Consolidated Farm and
23 Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)) is amend-
24 ed by adding at the end the following:

1 “(J) AUTHORITY TO DESIGNATE AREAS
2 WITH PERSISTENT POVERTY, HIGH CONCENTRA-
3 TION OF FARMWORKER HOUSEHOLDS, OR SIG-
4 NIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE GAPS AS RURAL
5 AREAS.—

6 “(i) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary, in
7 consultation with the Director of the Bu-
8 reau of the Census, may designate an area
9 that is a census tract, or a census-des-
10 ignated place or an unincorporated area
11 recognized by a local or tribal government
12 with fewer than 35,000 inhabitants, as a
13 rural area for purposes of this paragraph,
14 regardless of whether the area is within an
15 urban area, if the area exhibits persistent
16 poverty, a high concentration of farm-
17 worker households, or a significant infra-
18 structure gap.

19 “(ii) DEFINITIONS.—In this subpara-
20 graph:

21 “(I) PERSISTENT POVERTY.—

22 The term ‘persistent poverty’ means,
23 with respect to an area referred to in
24 clause (i), that the income of at least
25 20 percent of the population of the

1 area was below the poverty line (with-
2 in the meaning of section 673(2) of
3 the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation
4 Act of 1981, including any revision re-
5 quired by such section applicable to a
6 family of the size involved), as meas-
7 ured by the 1990, 2000, and 2010 de-
8 cennial censuses.

9 “(II) HIGH CONCENTRATION.—

10 The term ‘high concentration’ means
11 a percentage that significantly exceeds
12 the percentage of farmworker house-
13 holds in the United States or in the
14 State involved, as determined by the
15 Secretary.

16 “(III) SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUC-

17 TURE GAP.—The term ‘significant in-
18 frastructure gap’ means, with respect
19 to an area referred to in clause (i),
20 that the area lacks access to potable
21 water, wastewater treatment, or reli-
22 able electricity that meets Federal
23 standards, as determined by the rel-
24 evant State or local health department

1 and the relevant USDA Rural Devel-
2 opment field office.”.

3 **SEC. 4. DESIGNATION OF HIGH-NEED RURAL POCKETS AS**
4 **RURAL AREAS.**

5 Section 343(a)(13) of the Consolidated Farm and
6 Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13)) is amend-
7 ed by adding at the end the following:

8 “(K) HIGH-NEED RURAL POCKETS.—

9 “(i) IN GENERAL.—In making deter-
10 minations under this paragraph, the Sec-
11 retary shall use indicators (such as Rural-
12 Urban Commuting Area codes) at the cen-
13 sus tract level to prioritize and maintain
14 eligibility for small, geographically distinct
15 settlements (whether or not incorporated)
16 that are surrounded by an urban area but
17 lack urban services and have a poverty rate
18 of at least 20 percent, including tribal
19 lands and farmworker settlements, to be
20 designated as rural areas.

21 “(ii) FARMWORKER SETTLEMENT.—
22 In this subparagraph, the term ‘farm-
23 worker settlement’ means an area in which
24 more than 50 percent of the households
25 derive their primary income from agricul-

1 tural labor or are headed by an individual
2 who is or recently was employed in agri-
3 culture, as verified using American Com-
4 munity Survey data on industry and occu-
5 pation and local data provided by State or
6 tribal labor agencies.”.

7 **SEC. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

8 The amendments made by this Act shall take effect
9 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

10 **SEC. 6. RULEMAKING.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture shall
12 prescribe such rules as are necessary with respect to im-
13 plementing the amendments made by this Act.

14 (b) GRANDFATHER PROVISION.—A rural area des-
15 ignation made under section 343(a)(13) of the Consoli-
16 dated Farm and Rural Development Act before the effec-
17 tive date of this Act shall not be changed by reason of
18 any amendment made by this Act, before data from the
19 2030 decennial census is available.

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