

<b>Bill number</b>	<b>S. 541</b>
<b>Title</b>	Rural Opportunities Act of 2007. A bill to amend the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 to promote local and regional support for sustainable bioenergy and biobased products, to support the future of farming, forestry, and land management, to develop and support local bioenergy, biobased products, and food systems, and for other purposes.
<b>Sponsor</b>	Sponsored by Sen. Russell Feingold (D-WI)
<b>Latest Development</b>	2/8/2007 Referred to Senate committee. Status: Read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.
<b>ACTION NEEDED</b>	<b>ENCOURAGE YOUR SENATORS TO CO-SPONSOR THIS IMPORTANT BILL.</b>

### **Background to S. 541:**

The Rural Opportunities Act of 2007 would support rural America by supporting local bioeconomies and food markets, encouraging local renewable fuels and biobased products, expanding broadband Internet service in rural areas, and helping develop the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

Feingold's Rural Opportunities Act of 2007 would:

- Help schools work in conjunction with local farmers to supply their cafeterias with locally produced products.
- Provide additional funds for existing USDA programs, which help develop local markets and help farmers develop and sell products at these markets.
- Boost funds to provide additional food vouchers for low-income seniors to purchase items at farmers markets.
- Offer more technical assistance and other efforts to ensure that the benefits of turning agricultural and forest products into fuel go back into local economies.
- Provide flexible federal matching funds for extension, education and applied research purposes, as well as boost funding to develop the next generation of biofuels.

- Build on energy independence initiatives, providing federal boosts to efforts that are already underway in Wisconsin and other states.
- Call for the digital divide affecting rural households and other underserved groups to be eliminated within a decade, with the ultimate goal of providing nationwide universal access to affordable broadband.
- Encourage improvements in existing broadband programs to increase Internet access and eventually bring rural areas universal affordable service.
- Improve existing federal programs to better serve beginning farmers and ranchers, giving them more resources, and target those resources toward developing agricultural methods appropriate for small farmers.