Written by Leroy Watson
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(Washington, D. C.) - The National Grange, the nation's oldest general farm and rural public interest organization, has developed a ten-point program to revitalize rural America and assure U.S. agricultural prosperity. The Grange has provided a grassroots voice for individuals, families, farmers, and rural communities since 1867. Today, Grange members affiliated with more than 2,700 local, county, and state Grange chapters across the nation are leaders in developing and advocating policies that benefit their communities.

The ten-point program includes building a solid foundation of prosperity for America's family farmers, ranchers, and foresters. The National Grange is supporting farm programs that make available credit, risk management, income support, and environmental stewardship for family farmers, ranchers and foresters, regardless of the crop or livestock they produce. "Maintaining a strong domestic agricultural industry is vital to national economic security," stated National Grange President Ed Luttrell.

Achieving energy security through domestic production of agriculturally derived renewable fuels is another top priority for the National Grange. "Renewable energy from our nation's farms and rural communities is grossly underutilized and faces government regulatory and monopolistically driven hurdles to further integration into our national energy mix," stated Luttrell. The Grange supports generating at least 25% of domestic energy needs from renewable resources derived from America's family farms such as biodiesel, ethanol, biomass, solar, and wind energies by January 1, 2025.

Public safety in rural communities is a National Grange priority. Bio-terrorism that could destroy the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of family farmers and ranchers is a real threat via the importation or domestic transportation of invasive pests and diseases. Additionally, consumers are at risk from imported food and manufactured products that often fail to meet the same strict scrutiny that domestically produced products face.

Other points discussed in the 2009 Blueprint for Rural America document are:

· Responding to the National Financial Crisis Sweeping Across Rural America
· Expanding Telecommunications Services in Rural Areas
· Improving the Quality and Availability of Rural Health Care
· Promoting Practical and Effective Immigration Reform

- Supporting Transportation Improvements that Protect the Freedom of Mobility
- Strengthening Civic Participation in Our Society
- Improving the Quality of Rural Education

Leroy Watson, National Grange Legislative Director concluded, “Our 300,000 members across the country believe these points need to be addressed for the betterment of rural America. By concentrating and acting on these fundamental issues, we will assure U.S. agricultural prosperity and strengthen our nation’s economy to protect our future.”

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The National Grange is the nation’s oldest agricultural and rural community organization, and has evolved to incorporate the interests of non-farm rural families and communities, as well as the traditional interests of family farmers and ranchers. It has more than 2,700 state, local, and grassroots chapters across 40 states. Additional information about the organization’s positions is available at: www.nationalgrange.org .