

Substitute for House Resolution No. 187.

A resolution to urge the United States Department of Agriculture to keep open the Farm Service Agency office in Kalamazoo County.

Whereas, The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has proposed closing the Farm Service Agency (FSA) office in Kalamazoo County as part of a nationwide consolidation effort. The FSA administers federal programs that provide critical financial assistance to farmers; and

Whereas, Closing the Kalamazoo County FSA office makes little sense considering the importance of Kalamazoo County farmers to Michigan's agricultural economy. Kalamazoo County has more than 140,000 acres dedicated to agriculture, and the actual number of farms has increased in recent years. The county's diverse agricultural production, including dairy, greenhouse, livestock, corn, soybeans, and specialty crops, places it in the top 14 percent nationwide. Southwest Michigan accounts for nearly one-third of all agriculture sales in Michigan, with Kalamazoo County being the most populated county in this region. Kalamazoo County on its own ranks eighth in Michigan for the value of agricultural products sold, and second in the state and in the top 2 percent nationwide for nursery, greenhouse, and floriculture; and

Whereas, The closing of the Kalamazoo County FSA office would lead to a reduction in efficiency. The FSA office in Kalamazoo County coordinates closely with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field office at the same location. The NRCS office, which will remain open, has many of their services integrated with the FSA and shares technological resources. If Kalamazoo County FSA office is closed, farmers would no longer be able to receive vital services at the same office and would have to travel to two different offices in different counties to receive services. Consequently, farmers would be spending more time on the road and less time tending to their farms and crops; and

Whereas, Michigan is already one of our nation's leading agricultural states and now has a renewed focus on supporting agricultural producers as demonstrated by Governor Rick Snyder's backing of the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program. Closing the Kalamazoo County FSA office would be counterproductive to Michigan's efforts; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That we urge the United State Department of Agriculture to keep open the Farm Service Agency office in Kalamazoo County; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the administrator of the USDA Farm Service Agency and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.