

The Rural Compact

A set of principles for building stronger rural communities and a stronger nation.

Here's what we believe:

Rural America is more than the land. It is a way we are connected in culture, heritage, and national enterprise. While it may be vast, it is far from empty. Sixty million of us live in the American countryside, and far more grew up there. Rural Americans reflect the full diversity of the country in who we are, what we do, and what we want to achieve.

When rural communities succeed, the nation does better, and cities and suburbs have more resources on which to build. Conversely, when rural communities falter, it drains the nation's prosperity and limits what we can accomplish together.

We now face the challenges of how we sustainably fuel, feed, and nurture both ourselves and a fragile world. A vital rural America has a contribution to make in this effort and the responsibility to take on that endeavor. We offer this compact as a set of principles on which to build the kind of rural America that is needed now and a rural America that is ready to face the challenges to come.

Quality in Education

Every child should have an equal chance to learn, excel, and help lead America to a better, brighter future. Education policy should recognize the distinctive challenges and opportunities for rural schools and reflect the unique needs of those students, families, and educators.

Stewardship of Natural Resources

Eighty percent of our country's land is rural. It is a heritage and a trust. We all have a responsibility to protect the environment and develop and sustain our natural resources in ways that strengthen rural communities for the long haul. Good environmental practices and responsive public land management provide the opportunity to promote energy independence, grow healthy food in a sustainable manner, mitigate climate change, and develop stronger natural-resource-based economies.

Health of Our People

All people in America deserve access to good, affordable healthcare. If we want small towns and rural communities to contribute to the well-being of the nation, we need rural healthcare systems that work. These should include preventive care, health education, and both community-based and high-tech delivery systems.

Investment in Our Communities

To fight poverty, create wealth, and build sustainable communities, everyone in America needs access to a safe and equitable system for saving, borrowing, and building capital. To fully participate in and contribute to the American economy, rural communities need public and private investment, access to philanthropic resources, and the tools to develop their own community-controlled assets.

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For more about the Rural Compact visit www.ruralcompact.org