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CONTACT: Susan Sullam, 410-962-4436 or  
410-960-2440 (cell)

April 2, 2008

***CARDIN, MIKULSKI SIGN LETTER TO REID URGING  
FULL FUNDING FOR CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAMS  
IN FINAL FARM BILL***

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators **Benjamin L. Cardin** and **Barbara A. Mikulski** (both D-MD), have signed a letter to Majority Leader Harry Reid applauding the inclusion of \$4.95 billion in new funding for conservation programs in the farm bill by House and Senate Conferees. The letter urges the Majority Leader to ensure that the final version of the bill contains the full funding recommended by the conferees.

Last year, Senators Cardin and Mikulski introduced legislation to dramatically boost federal funding for the Chesapeake Bay clean-up effort. *The Chesapeake's Healthy and Environmentally Sound Stewardship of Energy and Agriculture Act* (CHESSEA) calls for allocating funding in the upcoming multi-year agriculture reauthorization bill (farm bill) for water quality improvement and farm viability in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

“Healthy farms are essential for a healthy Chesapeake Bay,” said Senator Cardin, a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. “We must ensure full funding for conservation projects in the farm bill so that our nation’s farmers have the resources they need to institute agricultural conservation programs while also remaining economically viable.”

“I’ve pledged to do everything I can to restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay. This bill must retain its critical funding for the farmers and families who rely on the Bay,” said Senator Mikulski. “The Chesapeake Bay is not only Maryland’s greatest natural resource, it’s part of who we are as Marylanders – our heritage and our culture. Maryland communities want to do right by the Bay, but they can’t do it on their own - we know the critical role the federal government must have in this process.”

A copy of letter to Senator Reid is below:

April 2, 2008

Senator Harry Reid  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate

Dear Majority Leader Reid:

We applaud the Chairs and Ranking Members of the Senate and House Agriculture Committees for including \$4.95 billion in new funding for the conservation title in the framework for Farm Bill spending issued on March 18. This is a critical step in the right direction, and we urge you to ensure that this level of funding for the conservation title is retained in the final version of the bill.

The voluntary conservation programs in the farm bill are vitally important to our states, because they help our farmers provide cleaner water and air, create wildlife habitat, and protect open space. Unfortunately, Congress routinely cuts funding for these programs. Since passage of the 2002 Farm Bill, net cuts to conservation programs have totaled almost \$4.5 billion. Currently two out of every three farmers who apply to participate in farm bill conservation programs are turned away due to insufficient funding.

The new spending on the conservation title in the Farm Bill Framework represents the minimum amount needed to ensure that more farmers in our states are able to participate in efforts to ensure a healthier environment. We would strongly oppose any efforts to reduce the level of spending on conservation in the final bill below \$4.95 billion in order to fund other sections of the bill.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to working with you to maintain this critical increase in funding for the conservation title in the final version of the bill.

Sincerely,

Senator Barbara Boxer  
Senator John F. Kerry  
Senator Robert Menendez  
Senator Joe Lieberman  
Senator Frank Lautenberg  
Senator Ron Wyden  
Senator Ted Kennedy  
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse  
Senator Jack Reed  
Senator Russell Feingold  
Senator Carl Levin  
Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Senator Barbara Mikulski  
Senator Ben Cardin  
Senator Bill Nelson  
Senator Charles E. Schumer  
Senator Joseph R. Biden