

Dear Member of Congress:

Bullsugar.org is a non-profit organization dedicated to solving Florida's water management crisis through research and public outreach. As a founding member of the Now or Neverglades movement, we are in touch with hundreds of thousands of Floridians and Americans interested in protecting our public lands and national parks.

Our goal is to re-establish fresh water flows south from Lake Okeechobee into Florida's Everglades and estuaries, and to end Big Sugar's nutrient and chemical pollution from more than 500,000 acres of sugarcane grown in South Florida. Accomplishing this would help stop the harmful Lake Okeechobee discharges to our coasts that caused the 2016 toxic algae blooms, a recurring man-made human health hazard and ongoing economic blight to our coastal communities.

The health of Florida citizens and the state's tourism-based economy depend on clean drinking water and vibrant waterways, including several of America's most threatened national parks. These are directly threatened by a subsidy that rains profits to polluters – the antiquated Sugar Program.

We strongly support much-needed bipartisan reforms to the sugar program in the Farm Bill.

The Heritage Foundation has called the sugar program “tantamount to a fraud on the public,” which we believe does not go far enough. The CBO assesses the cost of the sugar subsidy to consumers of at least \$3.5 billion per year and hundreds of thousands of American jobs. A true accounting would also include the dollars committed by taxpayers to restoration of the Everglades and Florida's damaged estuaries: totaling more than \$20 billion and counting.

The sugar subsidy pays Big Sugar to do major environmental harm to public lands and waterways. It reinforces unethical water management practices at both the state and federal levels that consistently put sugar first in line, ahead of all other stakeholders. Thanks to the sugar program, Big Sugar can distort the assessment of science and fact as a cost of doing business, like it has done with mercury contamination in the Everglades, whose local population of bottlenose dolphins has the distinction of the highest mercury concentrations of any on the planet.

The sugar program is nothing more than a wealth recycling machine that chews up political principles and spits out massive environmental damage. **We encourage members of Congress to consider that Big Sugar uses this out of date federal program to continue the systematic environmental destruction currently occurring across the southern half of Florida, including the Everglades, Florida Bay and the Florida Keys, our coastal estuaries and communities, and the drinking water supply for 8 million citizens.**

Earthjustice attorney David Guest states it perfectly: "These people are not farmers. These are the ultimate welfare corporations. And those people in the sugar

industry of Florida are ... [living] on subsidies.” And they are not just living on the sugar program, but are getting richer on the backs of taxpayers and consumers.

It is time for Congress to act. It is time for Congress to reform the sugar program. It is time for Congress to end one of the worst corporate welfare schemes that only benefits some of America’s wealthiest families; one that is rewarding them for the destruction of a national treasure, the Florida Everglades.

We urge you to support bipartisan common-sense sugar reform as Congress reauthorizes the Farm Bill in 2018.