

# SOLAR BEER

## QUICK STATS

- ✘ **CONFERENCE:** Spending
- ✘ **TEAM:** Department of Agriculture
- **FUMBLE:** \$35,000
- **HOW TO RECOVER THE BALL:** Rural Energy Program grants should assist agriculture-related projects, not breweries

Throughout this football season, many tailgaters enjoyed the sun and perhaps an adult beverage. Last year, USDA took the association of sun and suds to an entirely new level. In 2014, USDA awarded a \$35,000 grant to install solar panels at a brewery in northern Michigan, which will support seven percent of their annual energy needs.<sup>188</sup> In 2015 a \$13,810 grant was awarded to a Wyoming brewery, also to install a solar panel.<sup>189</sup>

The grant for “solar-powered beer” is made possible through the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), which was created by the Farm Bill in 2002 to help expand renewable energy for farmers and businesses. The program was initiated with laudable intent, but it is doubtful taxpayer support for breweries is within anyone’s idea of the proper role of the federal government. This is especially true when the nation has an almost \$19 trillion

national debt, and families across the country have tightened their belts during tough times.

In an explosion of craft brewery facilities over the last decade, the industry has grown from 1,500 breweries in 2006 to more than 4,000 breweries this year.<sup>190</sup> In 2014 approximately two new breweries opened every day.<sup>191</sup> With a nearly \$20 billion market, the resurgence of the craft beer industry is a true American success story.<sup>192</sup> However, continued investment and financial success should be driven by customers not American tax dollars.

## **RECOVERY**

While federally supported beer production may sound reasonable to a few, it is simply not in the national interest. Congress needs to work with the USDA to ensure it remains focused on agriculture.

***For more information, please visit:***

[Taxpayers for Common Sense: Rural Energy for America Program Fact Sheet](#)

[USDA: USDA Invests \\$6.7 Million in 544 Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Projects Nationwide](#)