

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 25, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

We write regarding recent reporting on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Deferred Resignation Program (DRP) and Reduction in Force (RIF) plans and their impact on staffing at the agency. While we support measures to increase the efficiency of the federal government, we are concerned over both how these actions are being undertaken and their effect on the Department's ability to fulfill its critical responsibilities to the American people.

Although USDA's RIF plan has yet to be implemented, when you take into account the number of employees who have already taken a buyout offer, we are already looking at a drastic reduction in the Department's workforce. According to a Government Executive article published on April 11th, at least 16,000 USDA employees have already taken a buyout offer, approximately 16 percent of USDA's workforce.¹ Additional reporting in Politico indicates the Department is aiming to cut a total of roughly 30,000, or 30 percent, of its employees through a combination of deferred resignation offers and firings through a RIF.²

Farm country is already facing an economic crisis, with net farm income at a historic low. People across the country rely on the services USDA provides to feed their loved ones and help their family farms survive during tough times. A robust workforce is critical for USDA to achieve its mission.

We are concerned that the Department's approach encourages the most experienced and knowledgeable employees at the USDA to leave earlier than they originally planned. When you allow for early retirement to the most senior employees, you risk incurring a brain drain that could have far reaching consequences across the country. Additionally, if the Department targets employees who have been on payroll for less than a year, you lose the diligent and productive employees responsible for doing the day-to-day work critical to the Department's core functions, like interacting with our constituents, that are essential to any productive organization. When you combine these staff reductions with the Administration's requirement that, going forward, an additional four federal employees must leave before the Department can even hire one new employee, we question how USDA will be able to continue to deliver services without deterioration.

¹ [Employees swarm to second "deferred resignation" offer, though some are receiving unexpected responses](#) - Government Executive. (2025). Govexec.com.

² [Lawmakers brace for farmer feedback](#) - Politico. (2025).

Additionally, a predecisional document from OMB proposes closing local USDA offices by consolidating local, county-based FSA, NRCS and Rural Development offices across the country.³ Not only are these the federal employees directly working with farmers on the ground, but these office closures are coming from programs that serve as a lifeline between the federal government and rural communities. We are extremely concerned that by consolidating offices for critical programs, you will be leaving farm families behind and risk not meeting the needs of rural America.

USDA offers critical services and benefits that need to be delivered. Before any staffing decisions are finalized, we encourage you to take this feedback into consideration and at minimum demonstrate that cuts of the reported magnitude will not adversely impact the Department's ability to carry out its duties. Thank you for your attention to this letter. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you to ensure we meet our shared goals of serving our nation's farmers and rural communities.

Sincerely,



Angie Craig
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee
on Agriculture



Shontel M. Brown
Vice Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress

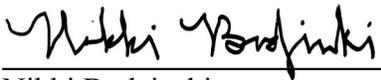


Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

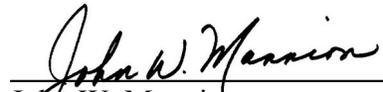


Kristen McDonald Rivet
Member of Congress

³ [White House pitches layoffs, local office closures and program eliminations at USDA](#) - Government Executive. (2025). Govexec.com.



Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress



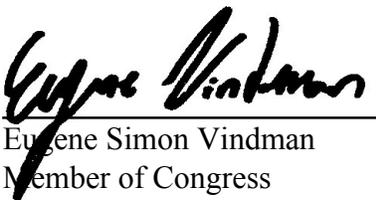
John W. Mannion
Member of Congress



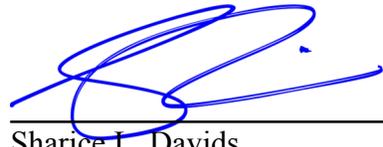
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