

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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

March 4, 2025

Dear Secretary Rollins,

We write with deep concern regarding the impact of paused disbursements for Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funds, stemming from President Trump's recent Executive Order, on our nation's farmers and rural families.

As you are aware, President Trump's Executive Order 14154 paused the disbursement of funds appropriated in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). That bill provided \$19.5 billion in funding from the popular and effective Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), whose programs help farmers keep soil healthy, improve local water quality, and complete energy projects. This translates to bottom-line wins for farmers in the form of increased production, responsible land stewardship, and greater revenues. With over 156,485 applications for funds submitted to NRCS in 2024, demand vastly exceeded the supply of funds available. In short, farmers want to do these projects.

We are pleased to see that USDA has announced it will release approximately \$20 million in funding for previously approved contracts. However, this is only a fraction of the total program funding promised to farmers for 2025. While this change in policy is a small step in the right direction, USDA is still at risk of breaching thousands of contracts it made with farmers from every corner of the American agricultural industry.

In the last few weeks, we have heard countless stories of uncertainty and fear from farmers who have not received the NRCS funds that they were promised. Many have already spent money as part of the deal they made with USDA and now face the possibility of defaulting on monthly payments or even selling their farms. As farmers already face a year riddled with uncertainty—from rising input costs and labor shortages to low commodity prices and tariffs that could potentially trigger a trade war with major agricultural partners, broken promises from their government should not be another worry.

Finally, we are highly concerned that mass firings at NRCS will delay the disbursement of approved funds. We have already heard from farmers in our districts who are concerned that USDA no longer employs the NRCS staff responsible for reviewing and implementing their grants. Given that NRCS was understaffed in relation to the powerful demand from our communities for the IRA funds, we are concerned that a lack of local NRCS staff and technical

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support will be a significant barrier for farmers that wish to access funds or seek help from the agency.

A contract is a contract. USDA must uphold its legal obligations to farmers. Given our concerns, we would like to ask the following questions:

1. How many obligated NRCS contracts or reimbursements remain on hold?
2. Will all finalized NRCS contracts under IRA programs be fulfilled? If not, why not?
3. How will the Department evaluate which contracts to fulfill and which contracts to terminate? Please share a list of the Department's criteria.
4. Is the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) project involved in evaluating USDA contracts? If so, please share a list of DOGE's criteria.
5. You referred to the \$20 million in funding as a "first tranche" of IRA funding. When will the second tranche be released?
6. When can recipients of paused or terminated disbursements expect to hear from the Department about the status of their funding?
7. Does the Trump Administration plan to freeze, pause, or terminate any other disbursements or obligations under USDA? If so, please share a list of such obligations.
8. How many NRCS staff members have been terminated nationwide?
9. How many terminated NRCS probationary staff members had significant experience at the Department?
10. Has the Department considered farmers' need to make loan repayments to lenders when issuing the freeze as well as releasing some, but not all of the frozen funds?
11. Does USDA believe that it has upheld its NRCS contracts with farmers?

We strongly urge you to make good on the Department and Administration's promises to our constituents. Please respond to this letter by March 14, 2025. We appreciate your prompt attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

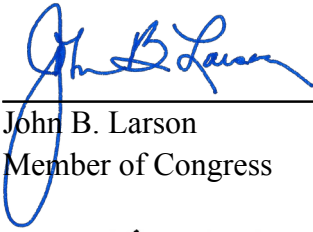


Eugene Simon Vindman
Member of Congress

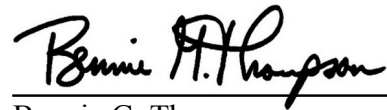


Ro Khanna
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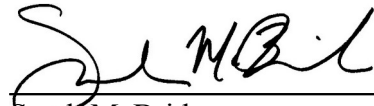
Troy A. Carter, Sr.
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Chris Pappas
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Patrick Ryan
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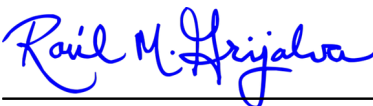
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Emanuel Cleaver, II
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
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Raúl M. Grijalva
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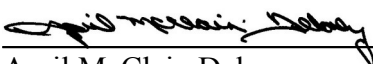
Jim Costa
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Kim Schrier, M.D.
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Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

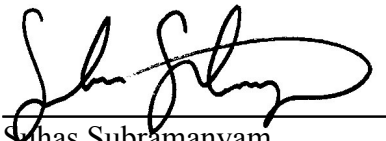


April McClain Delaney
Member of Congress

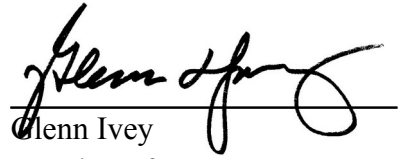


Valerie P. Foushee
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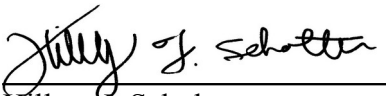
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Suhas Subramanyam
Member of Congress



Glenn Ivey
Member of Congress



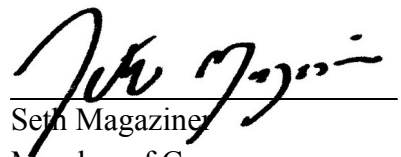
Hillary J. Scholten
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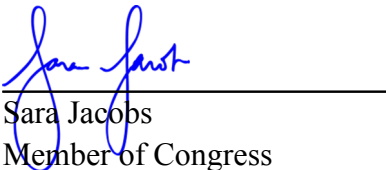
Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



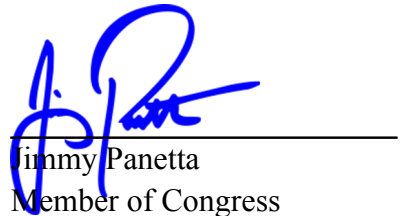
Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



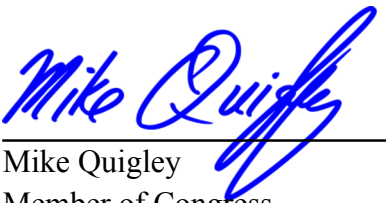
Seth Magaziner
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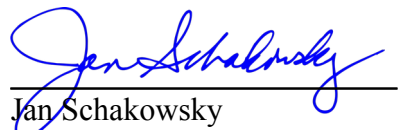
Sara Jacobs
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Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

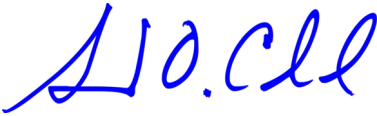


Mike Quigley
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Jan Schakowsky
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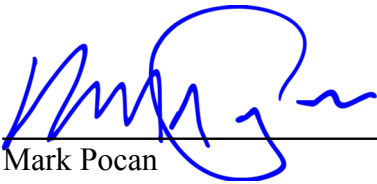
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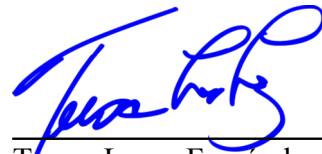
Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



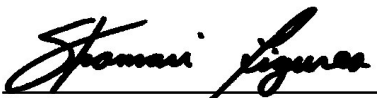
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, House
Natural Resources Committee



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



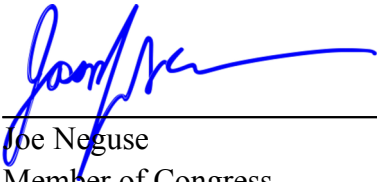
Teresa Leger Fernández
Member of Congress



Shomari Figures
Member of Congress



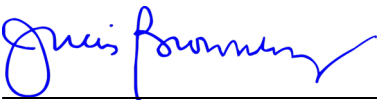
Sharice L. Davids
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Shri Thanedar
Member of Congress

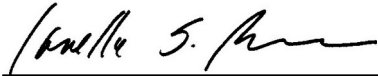


Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Eric Sorensen
Member of Congress

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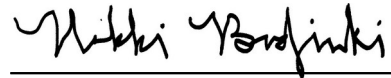
Janelle S. Bynum
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Becca Balint
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Nikki Budzinski
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