

**NOMINATION HEARING:
GREGORY IBACH, TO BE
UNDER SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
FOR MARKETING AND REGULATORY
PROGRAMS, AND
WILLIAM NORTHEY, TO BE
UNDER SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
FOR FARM AND
FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICES**

**HEARING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
UNITED STATES SENATE**

**ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION**

OCTOBER 5, 2017

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CONTENTS

	Page
HEARING(S):	
Nomination Hearing: Gregory Ibach, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, and William Northey, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services	1

Thursday, October 5, 2017

STATEMENTS PRESENTED BY SENATORS

Roberts, Hon. Pat, U.S. Senator from the State of Kansas, Chairman, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry	1
Stabenow, Hon. Debbie, U.S. Senator from the State of Michigan	2
Fischer, Hon. Deb, U.S. Senator from the State of Nebraska	4
Sasse, Hon. Ben, U.S. Senator from the State of Nebraska	6
Grassley, Hon. Charles, U.S. Senator from the State of Iowa	7

Witnesses

Ibach, Gregory, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs	8
Northey, William, to be Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services	10

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS:	
Ibach, Gregory	26
Northey, William	32
DOCUMENT(S) SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:	
Roberts, Hon. Pat:	
Former Chiefs of the Soil Conservation Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, letter of support	38
Growth Energy, letter of support	39
Nebraska Cattlemen, letter of support	40
Iowa Corn Growers Association, letter of support	41
National Cattlemen's Beef Association, letter of support	42
Agriculture Coalition, letter of support	44
Nebraska Soybean Association	46
Sand County Foundation	47
5-day letter, Committee questionnaire and Office of Government Ethics Executive Branch Personnel Public Financial Disclosure Report filed by Gregory Ibach	49
5-day letter, Committee questionnaire and Office of Government Ethics Executive Branch Personnel Public Financial Disclosure Report filed by William Northey	79
QUESTION AND ANSWER:	
Ibach, Gregory:	
Written response to questions from Hon. Pat Roberts	110
Written response to questions from Hon. Debbie Stabenow	113
Written response to questions from Hon. Joni Ernst	121
Written response to questions from Hon. Steve Daines	122

IV

	Page
Ibach, Gregory—Continued	
Written response to questions from Hon. Patrick J. Leahy	123
Written response to questions from Hon. Michael Bennet	128
Written response to questions from Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand	129
Written response to questions from Hon. Robert Casey, Jr.	131
Written response to questions from Hon. Chris Van Hollen	134
Northey, William:	
Written response to questions from Hon. Pat Roberts	135
Written response to questions from Hon. Debbie Stabenow	138
Written response to questions from Hon. John Boozman	147
Written response to questions from Hon. Joni Ernst	148
Written response to questions from Hon. Steve Daines	149
Written response to questions from Hon. Patrick J. Leahy	150
Written response to questions from Hon. Michael Bennet	157
Written response to questions from Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand	159
Written response to questions from Hon. Robert Casey, Jr.	160
Written response to questions from Hon. Chris Van Hollen	162

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Thursday, October 5, 2017

UNITED STATES SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY,
Washington, DC

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:33 a.m., in SR-328A, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Pat Roberts, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Roberts, Boozman, Hoeven, Ernst, Grassley, Thune, Stabenow, Brown, Klobuchar, Bennet, Gillibrand, Donnelly, Heitkamp, and Casey.

**STATEMENT OF HON. PAT ROBERTS, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE
STATE OF KANSAS, CHAIRMAN, U.S. COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY**

Chairman ROBERTS. I call this hearing of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee to order.

I thank my colleagues for joining me in reviewing the nominations of the individuals before us today, Mr. Gregory Ibach of Nebraska for the position of Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs and Mr. William Northey of Iowa for the position of Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services.

This Committee has been reviewing nominations expeditiously on a bipartisan basis. It is crucial to have leadership tending to these very important mission areas at the Department of Agriculture.

Secretary Perdue, the Department's 29 agencies and offices, and nearly 100,000 employees have been covering the bases. However, they need help in carrying out these missions on behalf of America's farmers, ranchers, growers, consumers, and businesses.

The Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, to which Mr. Ibach has been nominated, oversees key programs and offices at the Department. This Under Secretary leads activities related to plant health, animal care, veterinary services, wildlife

management, the promotion of U.S. commodities, regulation of biotech and its labeling on food, organics, and many other responsibilities. That is quite a job.

This diverse range of responsibilities requires an individual at the helm who has equally diverse skills and experience. Anyone familiar with Mr. Ibach and his background knows he is well suited to this role.

The position of Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, to which Mr. Northey has been nominated, oversees the commodity and producer lending and crop insurance—that is crop insurance, the most important mismanagement tool in the farmer’s toolbox. It is called “crop insurance.”

Senator STABENOW. Crop insurance?

Chairman ROBERTS. Crop insurance.

Senator STABENOW. Crop insurance. Okay.

Chairman ROBERTS. Especially for cherry trees.

[Laughter.]

Chairman ROBERTS. —conservation and disaster programs.

While the Committee is considering the nomination for the Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services role, the expectation is that subsequent legislation will officially change the name of the role to Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation.

Along with the Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency, Secretary Perdue’s proposed reorganization will also bring the Natural Resources Conservation Service into a producer-and customer-focused mission area.

Both Mr. Ibach and Mr. Northey have valuable boots-on-the-ground experience. They are both farmers. They know what weighs on the minds of farmers and ranchers, the challenges they face on daily basis, and the focus and drive that they put into their life’s work. Significantly, they are both dedicated public servants who have led their home State’s agriculture departments. That is unique. That is special.

I am pleased the Committee is considering your nominations today. Getting you both to work at the Department is critical because the roles to which you have each been nominated carry out functions related to the Department’s day-to-day interaction with farmers, ranchers, and growers that impact their daily lives.

These nominees have the support of more than 60 farm and conservation organizations. Without objection, I am entering the letters of support into the record at this point.

We have a good record to date, and it is my hope that the Committee consider and approve your nominations as quickly as possible so we can send them to the full Senate for consideration.

I look forward to your testimony. I now turn to my distinguished colleague, Senator Stabenow, for her opening remarks.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DEBBIE STABENOW, U.S. SENATOR
FROM THE STATE OF MICHIGAN**

Senator STABENOW. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I am very pleased to be here as well with colleagues to consider two more USDA nominees.

Mr. Northey and Mr. Ibach, congratulations to both of you. Welcome to your families. I enjoyed very much speaking with both of you.

As we have heard from farmers and ranchers all across the country, we know that American agriculture is facing tough times. Low commodity prices have pinched margins, and extreme weather has decimated crops from the High Plains to the Southeast.

I know that both of you are farmers. You understand these challenges and know that our farmers need leaders that will speak up for them when their voices are not being heard. Our farmers deserve strong and qualified leaders who will fight for all of American agriculture.

Mr. Northey and Mr. Ibach, with your Iowan and Nebraskan roots—and it is wonderful to have our Senate colleagues here with us today as well—I know you understand that production agriculture is an important component to our farm economy. However, the true strength of American agriculture is rooted in the diversity of what we grow.

My home State is very proud to have more crop diversity than any other State except California, and we are working on that. Driving down the road, you will see corn and soybeans and wheat on one side, and you can see apple orchards and asparagus and cherry trees on the other side.

However, past Farm Bills have been focused on commodities. For example, risk management programs were only available to traditional commodity farmers on one side of the road until we worked together in the last Farm Bill. But what you grow should not determine about whether or not your farm can be protected from losses.

All farmers deserve a safety net, which is why I am so pleased we are able to expand access to tools like crop insurance for specialty crop growers, and importantly, I believe we need to take that step for dairy farmers as well.

Mr. Northey, if confirmed to lead USDA's farm services and risk management agencies, we need your commitment to make crop insurance stronger and more accessible to every farmer, no matter who they are and what they grow.

You will also oversee the Natural Resource Conservation Service, which means you will have to balance a lot of responsibilities, which we talked about in my office.

I represent the Great Lake State. The Agriculture Committee also represents our Great Lakes system, and for me, no matter where you are in Michigan, you are no more than 6 miles away from a body of water. So protecting our rivers, lakes, and streams is incredibly important to me and to the people in Michigan. I know as well it is important to other Members of the Committee.

I know you personally understand that agriculture needs to be a part of the solution in addressing water quality issues, and if confirmed for this role, I urge you to continue to prioritize the protection of our land and our water.

Mr. Ibach, if confirmed, you will be overseeing a very large and diverse mission area as well. One minute, you will find yourself enforcing international trade agreements, safeguarding our agreements, and at the same time, you will be safeguarding the integrity of the National Organic Program abroad.

The next minute, you will be providing guidance to help farmers transition to organic production and tap into new markets at home.

At all times, you will be on call to defend our food system against some of the most pressing threats to animal and plant health. Specialty crops are particularly susceptible to invasive pests, and we have seen devastating impacts on cherries and other fruit and vegetables in my State.

Your portfolio would also put you in the driver's seat of many exciting opportunities for American agriculture. The growing demand for local food has created new ways for our farmers to connect to consumers, especially new and beginning farmers as well.

Back home, I see more and more Michigan-Made signs in grocery stores, and we like to see that. This is a trend that I hope will continue, and I hope you will commit to supporting our local food system economy.

Mr. Northey and Mr. Ibach, if confirmed, your work and leadership will have a tremendous impact on my State, on the States of the Members of this Committee, and all of American agriculture and, frankly, all of American families.

When Secretary Perdue came before this Committee earlier this year, he pledged to be a strong and tenacious advocate for American agriculture. Today, we ask that you join him in that commitment and fight for the resources that our farmers and ranchers need and deserve.

Thank you.

Chairman ROBERTS. As is our tradition in the Agriculture Committee, I would like to recognize the family and friends of the nominees who have gathered here today. Please stand and be recognized. Do not be bashful.

[Applause.]

Chairman ROBERTS. It is also a privilege to welcome Congressman Adrian Smith from Nebraska here to support his friend and colleague, Greg Ibach.

Congressman, if you would stand, please, and be recognized. Thank you for coming, sir.

[Applause.]

Chairman ROBERTS. I know it is tough to get up in the morning and figure out you have to come to the upper body.

[Laughter.]

Chairman ROBERTS. Sorry about that. I used to be over there.

Thank you all for joining us at this important hearing.

Greg Ibach will be introduced now by Senator Deb Fischer and Senator Ben Sasse.

Senator Fischer, it is an honor to have you with us today.

Senator Fischer is an honorary member of the Agriculture Committee, I would tell the Ranking Member, you know that. Thank you for taking the time to introduce Mr. Ibach. You are recognized at this particular time. Thank you, ma'am.

STATEMENT OF HON. DEB FISCHER, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF NEBRASKA

Senator FISCHER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Stabenow and to my colleagues here on this Committee. I thank you for inviting me here today.

I am honored to introduce my fellow Nebraskan and my good friend, Greg Ibach, the nominee to serve as Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

Greg is no stranger to agriculture. In the beef State, we are home to the Nation's top cattle producers and best Ag leaders.

Some of you may remember our great friend, Nebraskan and former Member of this Committee, Senator Mike Johanns. As a former Secretary of USDA, he knew a thing or two about agriculture. When Senator Johanns was Governor of our State, he appointed Greg to serve as assistant director for the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

Senator Johanns made an excellent choice because Greg went on to serve as Nebraska's director of agriculture, a position he has now held for the past 12 years. Every step of the way, Greg has demonstrated his dedication to the unsung heroes of the American dinner table—our farmers and ranchers.

I am also pleased to introduce Greg's wife, Teresa, and his daughter, Emily, who are with him here today. I thank both of them for sharing Greg with the State of Nebraska over the years.

I think everyone in this room today can agree our successes would not be possible without the sacrifices of our loved ones, so I thank them.

Growing up on his family's cow-calf and row-crop operation outside of Sumner, Nebraska, laid a strong foundation for Greg to serve his fellow agriculture producers. He understands the unique challenges our farmers and ranchers face because he is completely immersed in this industry.

As Nebraska's director of agriculture, Greg has worked tirelessly to promote common-sense policies that allow producers to do what they do best, to feed the world. This includes opening foreign markets for Nebraska's high-quality agriculture products and hosting international trade groups at Nebraska ranches, feed yards, and food manufacturers.

Under Greg's leadership, Nebraska gained market access in regions of the world that had previously been shut off to American producers. For example, Greg and I worked together to reopen the Israeli market to Nebraska beef for the first time in 13 years. Throughout this process, Greg demonstrated his unique capacity to work with many different stakeholders at the local, State, and national level to ensure that producers prospered. At the USDA, he will serve America's farmers and ranchers with the same knowledge, passion, and dedication.

The last few years have been tough for agriculture. To continue being global leaders in food, fiber, and fuel production, Nebraska's and America's producers need regulatory certainty. For too long, USDA has been encased in bureaucratic ambiguity. This does not garner confidence from those in rural America who earn their living off the land. But fortunately, under Secretary Perdue's leadership, that status quo is changing.

As State Ag director, Greg was charged with regulatory responsibilities in the areas of animal and plant health, weights and measures, as well as food safety and consumer protection. He has an uncanny ability to build relationships by communicating with regulators and also with producers. This is a needed skill for the

next Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. I am confident that Greg's experience leading the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, coupled with his real-world, personal understanding of farm country, make him highly qualified to serve at the USDA.

There is much at stake for agriculture in America right now. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, I urge you and the Committee to quickly approve Greg's nomination and bring it to the floor of the Senate so that we can vote on this confirmation. Secretary Perdue needs his team in place to better serve our farmers and ranchers so that they can do their job of feeding the world, and Greg's role, if he is confirmed, is critically important in executing this mission.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROBERTS. Senator Fischer, thank you for that very fine introduction, and I will turn to Senator Sasse.

Senator Sasse, welcome back to the Committee. We have missed your pertinent, unique, and 35-cent word commentary, and we would like to—you might want to consider coming back. We welcome you now, sir, for any remarks you would like to make on behalf of Mr. Ibach.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BEN SASSE, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE
STATE OF NEBRASKA**

Senator SASSE. Thank you, sir. I feel like I need to do math around 35 cents times how much money I owe you for the notes you have slipped to me for words to work in today, but, Chairman, thank you, Ranking Member, Members of the Committee. It is great to be here, and it is a privilege to follow my senior Senator and be able to introduce Greg Ibach.

As you know, Greg has been nominated to be USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. Nobody outworks Nebraskans, and nobody knows this better than Greg Ibach. Greg has built his entire career and his whole life on honesty and on hustle. He is the man for the job, and Nebraskans could not be prouder of the President's selection.

A Nebraskan through and through, Greg has served our State and our agriculture community very well. As has been mentioned, he served three different governors in our State department of ag, and it is a confluence of his life's work, farming, ranching, and promoting Nebraska agriculture.

Nebraskans know that our State's agricultural trade has grown in the global marketplace partly because of Greg's tireless efforts to promote our commodities across the globe. Greg built and maintained stakeholder relationships and initiated strategies to promote Nebraska ag, both domestically and internationally, allowing us to become the breadbasket of the world.

Greg will bring a personal vigor to the USDA as he analyzes issues, develops strategies, and creates solutions for many of these global initiatives. Greg has a proven public service record that is defined by executing innovative strategies and consensus among broad and diversified and often competing constituencies and stakeholders.

Greg has empowered the employees that have worked with and for him at the Nebraska Department of Agriculture to achieve the

shared visionary goals that you have heard Secretary Perdue lay out before this Committee for the U.S. Department of Ag, both to promote more economic opportunity and to help rural America thrive.

Greg's unrelenting work has expanded youth involvement and leadership in agriculture as well. For years, he has brought high school juniors and seniors from around our State together to explore careers in Ag through the Nebraska Agriculture Youth Institute, an institute that is now 46 years old, the longest-running youth institute for agriculture in America, and Greg personally brings more than 200 students every year to Lincoln to explore careers in Ag across our State. Greg understands what the future of agriculture looks like, and his leadership at the USDA should bring comfort to hardworking producers and to hungry consumers across the country.

Again, Chairman and Ranking Member and Members of the Committee, it is a pleasure on behalf of the State of Nebraska to introduce Greg to you and his wife, Teresa, and I am absolutely confident that all of you will find it a great privilege and pleasure to be able to work with Greg.

Thanks for having us.

Chairman ROBERTS. Thank you, Senator.

It occurs to me with two Senators, Mr. Ibach, that perhaps you have enough significant influence to bring Nebraska back to the Big 12 where you belong.

[Laughter.]

Chairman ROBERTS. I now turn to Senator Grassley to introduce our next nominee, Bill Northey from Iowa.

Senator Grassley.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHUCK GRASSLEY, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF IOWA

Senator GRASSLEY. First of all, let me explain to the nominee and to the Committee that after I introduce him, I will not be back because I have all four of my committees meeting today and particularly the Budget Committee that will take hours and hours, so I hope you will understand that I do not think any less of your nomination because I am not here to hear everything you say, but I know you well.

Also, to the Members of the Committee, it is an honor for me to introduce Bill Northey, Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture, to this Committee. I consider him a friend as well as our Secretary of Agriculture, and let me explain to the Committee that this is a special honor for me to introduce him. It kind of returns a favor because his dad, 30 years ago, served on my Agriculture Committee for the campaign, my first campaign for the Senate, and you do not forget people like that because I was not the candidate of the Iowa Republican establishment at that particular time, and so I feel a great closeness to the Northey family.

Mr. Northey has been nominated to serve as Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation at our USDA, and he has been our Iowa Secretary of Agriculture since 2006. During his tenure, he has focused on soil conservation and helping develop a robust renewable energy industry that we have in Iowa. He was also in that

position when he had to deal with a very serious crisis that we had for chickens and turkeys with the high-path avian influenza outbreak, which occurred in 2015.

Secretary Northey understands agriculture. He is a fourth-generation farmer from Spirit Lake, Iowa, where he raises corn and soybeans. He appreciates the ins and outs of farming and what it is like to put your life savings on the line every year to grow a crop in rural America that will feed and fuel the world.

Secretary Northey has served on the Iowa Farm Service Agency Committee for his county and also for the State and was president of the National Corn Growers Association for the years '96 and '97.

He has also traveled the world visiting over 15 countries to promote U.S. agriculture.

Secretary Northey graduated from Iowa State in 1981 with a degree in Agribusiness and has an MBA from Southwest Minnesota State University.

Perhaps his most important quality is his vision that he has shown leading the Iowa Department of Agriculture. As an example, Bill was focused on water quality issues in Iowa years before many farmers and press outlets became engaged, and I say that and emphasize it for the benefit of my colleague from Michigan.

I cannot think of anyone better equipped to ensure our Nation's farm programs are properly administered than this Iowa Secretary Northey. We are lucky to have someone of his capability ready to lead the agencies he will be responsible for.

So, Secretary Northey, welcome to the Committee.

Chairman ROBERTS. Thank you, Senator. We appreciate your commentary.

As is the tradition and custom of the Committee before nominee witnesses are to provide their testimony, I must administer the oath. If both of you could please stand and raise your right hands.

First, do you swear that the testimony you are about to present is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. NORTHEY. I do.

Mr. IBACH. I do.

Chairman ROBERTS. Second, do you agree that if confirmed, you will appear before any duly constituted committee of Congress if asked to appear?

Mr. NORTHEY. I do.

Mr. IBACH. I do.

Chairman ROBERTS. Thank you.

We look forward to your testimony.

Mr. Ibach.

TESTIMONY OF GREGORY IBACH, NOMINEE TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE FOR MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS

Mr. IBACH. Good morning, Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss my desire to serve the American public as President's nominee—President Trump's nominee as the Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

I am honored to be nominated by the President and humbled by the trust and confidence that Secretary Perdue has shown in selecting me for this position.

I also want to thank Senator Fischer and Senator Sasse for their very kind introductions and their steadfast support of me throughout the nomination process.

I also want to thank Congressman Smith, who is here today, for his support of my nomination as well.

I am honored to have Steve Nelson, Craig Uden, and Lynn Crisp representing Nebraska's production agriculture community in attendance as well today.

I am joined today by my wife, Teresa. Her support and love for the last 29 years has provided me the opportunity to serve as the assistant director and director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture for almost 20 years.

We are the proud parents of triplets, who are 25 years old. Our daughter Emily, from Denver, is with us here today, and our son Evan, who lives in Minneapolis, and son Alec and his wife Meredith, who live in Carney, Nebraska, were unable to attend. I am proud that my children represent the fourth generation on my mother's side of the family and the fifth generation on my father's side of the family to farm and ranch in northeast Dawson County, Nebraska, near the small town of Sumner.

Our family farm consists of row-crop and cow-calf enterprises. As is the case with many farm operations in our country, our farm has weathered many difficult times because of persistence, communication, and teamwork. I look forward to bringing those same principles to USDA, if I am confirmed.

The principles of hard work and dedication that I learned working alongside my parents growing up nurtured a love of agriculture and led me to attend the University of Nebraska, where I majored in animal science and agricultural economics.

Following graduation from college in 1984 during the heart of the historic farm crisis, I spent 6 years working for the farm credit system in Iowa and Nebraska. I then returned to the farm to pursue my love of production agriculture, and with the assistance of my parents and grandparents, Teresa and I started our own family farming operation and raised our three children.

Those years also provided key opportunities to become involved in the organizations that represented our family's farm operation. I was involved in our county and State Farm Bureau; our county, State and national cattlemen's organizations, where I achieved leadership positions at both the State and national levels.

I was honored in 1999 to be asked by Governor Mike Johanns to serve as assistant director of Department of Agriculture and then by Governor Dave Heineman and Governor Pete Ricketts to serve as director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. During my tenure as director, I was also elected to serve as president of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

I have approached my tenure at the department with service to Nebraska's nearly 50,000 family farm and ranch families in mind. I believe my status as an active producer has been essential to my role within the department. That said, however, I also recognize

and have an appreciation for the structure of government and its role in protecting and serving all citizens.

The MRP mission area is comprised of many programs focused on improving market competitiveness for the overall benefit of consumers and producers of American agriculture. If honored to receive your confirmation, I will work faithfully to implement the authorities outlined by Congress.

Balancing two priorities—the first representing and promoting the interest of farmers and ranchers; and the second, overseeing entities that regulate them—can be a difficult task. However, the word “balance” is key to that equation.

By maintaining balance, MRP can achieve Secretary Perdue’s Department-wide goals of supporting job creating, prioritizing customer service, and ensuring our communities access to a safe and secure food supply.

I am also committed to promoting the market opportunities and protecting the integrity associated with the organic seal, while maintaining and preserving and protecting our natural resources.

I am also keenly aware of my responsibility to maintain plant and animal health and well-being as well.

Each day, my decisions will be tempered by two principles: How will regulatory programs and promotional activities improve the opportunities not only for my neighbors in Sumner but also Americans across the country? I recognize the weighty responsibility to maintain consumer confidence in the products produced and the production methods implemented.

If confirmed, I pledge to be available to listen to you, other Members of Congress, and the many diverse voices of agriculture who will have ideas and input for the programs under my supervision.

Thank you again for your attention and consideration of my nomination. I will be humbled to serve, if confirmed, and would look forward to working together to serve American agriculture.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ibach can be found on page 26 in the appendix.]

Chairman ROBERTS. We thank you, Greg.
Mr. Northey.

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM NORTHEY, NOMINEE TO BE UNDER SECRETARY FOR FARM AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICES

Mr. NORTHEY. Well, good morning, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Stabenow, and distinguished Members of the Committee. I am honored to appear before you today as the President’s nominee for USDA FFAS having responsibilities for the farm production and conservation mission area with responsibilities for Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency, and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

I thank the President for nominating me and appreciate Secretary Perdue’s support and trust in my ability to take on this new role.

I thank Senator Grassley for his kind words of introduction this morning and Senator Ernst for her support and encouragement. I am humbled.

I want to thank my wife, Cindy, and daughter, Katie, who are with me here today. Cindy, without your sacrifice and love, I would not be here today. I also want to thank our daughters, Jessica and Emily, their husbands, Thomas and Eric, our five grandkids. I thank you my parents as well, Wayne and Margaret Northey, my sister, Nancy, who are all sitting in front of their computers at home in Spirit Lake intently watching this hearing.

I am a corn and soybean farmer from Northwest Iowa. My farming roots go back several generations on both sides of my family. Cindy and I raised our three daughters on the farm my grandfather bought in the 1930s. On my mom's side of the family, a farm first bought by her great-grandfather celebrated its 150th year in our family and is now owned and operated by my mom's cousin.

I began serving in the Iowa Corn Growers boards of directors in the 1980s and eventually served as president of both the Iowa Corn Growers Association and the National Corn Growers Association.

I was involved in some of the early important work on ethanol, the development of an awful important industry to many of us in this room. I also worked on Farm Bill, trade and environmental policies while at Corn Growers.

I served 8 years on the local soil and water conservation district board and 5 years on the State Iowa Farm Service Agency Committee.

In 2006, I was elected president of the—or I was elected Iowa Secretary of Agriculture and reelected in 2010 and 2014 and still serve in that capacity today.

I have continued farming while serving as Secretary of Agriculture, getting most of my farming done on weekends and at nights.

Being Secretary has given me the opportunity to visit lots of parts of Iowa, including what we call the “full Grassley” in Iowa. That is visiting all 99 counties at least once every year. I have done it for 10 years. The Senator has done it for over 30 years. It is one of the best parts of the job to be able to understand and see the folks in the countryside.

But being Secretary has also given me the opportunity to be able to travel to many of your states and meet some of your producers, certainly develop friendships with other State Secretaries, directors, and commissioners of agriculture.

If confirmed, I look forward to being able to travel more and be able to better understand the needs of your producers, to be able to meet more of our great producers across this country.

You have heard Secretary Perdue and his goal for better customer service, and certainly, customer service improvements must be measurable. They will require better cooperation between agencies, and I believe housing NRCS, FSA, and RMA in the same mission area is a step in that right direction.

We also need to engage new technologies to be able to allow efficiencies and the responsiveness improvements that need to happen as well.

I thank you for the time and your staff's time in meeting and leading up to this hearing and sharing your thoughts and concerns about RMA, FSA, and NRCS. I heard strong support for NRCS and its mission and both concern and support for the combination of

NRCS with FSA and RMA. If given the opportunity to serve, I look forward to strengthening each of these agencies to ensuring that this move leads to better customer service and reporting back to this Committee on the progress of such efforts.

In our meetings, many of you commented on the operation of FSA disaster programs as well following the wildfires, droughts, and hurricanes, including the challenges faced by producers in Puerto Rico. While I have not been briefed on the efforts within USDA to address these issues, I believe certainly FSA, NRCS, and RMA have important roles to play, and if confirmed, ensuring our producers in these areas are getting all the support they need from USDA will be a top priority.

I will read it as I wrote it: Crop insurance is the most important part of the farm safety net, Mr. Chairman, and through RMA, we need to ensure that we maintain this vital tool for producers. While our farm safety net has worked for many, many producers, I do also hear that there are producers that are left out, and I am committed to this Committee to work with all of you to make sure that all producers have the risk management tools that they need.

So I will be an advocate within the administration for the producers in the countryside. I look forward to working with all of you, and I appreciate this tremendous opportunity to be involved and serve our country's producers.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Northey can be found on page 32 in the appendix.]

Chairman ROBERTS. We thank you, Mr. Northey.

Unfortunately, we have three votes that are scheduled. These are 15-minute votes, which means they are 30-minute votes, and we will do the best that we can here going to vote and coming back. I know also that several Members are on the Budget Committee. They have a very important meeting today as well, so we are going to get through this as best we can.

Mr. Ibach, foreign animal disease threats are a growing concern for producers and animal health experts. In recent years, outbreaks of disease such as avian influenza have demonstrated the vulnerability of animal agriculture to these threats. If confirmed, you will be leading the Department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, known as APHIS. Can you briefly describe some priorities you will pursue as Under Secretary that relate to safeguarding animal, agriculture, and our national security as a result?

Mr. IBACH. Yes. Thank you.

APHIS is perhaps maybe one of the most important roles that I will serve in USDA because if we are not able to keep diseases and pests that are not in the United States out of the United States or control and contain the ones that we do have, we put our Nation's farmers, ranchers, and producers at great risk.

So we will take that responsibility very seriously. I look forward to learning more about each and every program that addresses those concerns and issues and working with producers to implement proper biosecurity across the board to be able to help produce, protect, and safeguard our Nation's crops and livestock.

Thank you.

Chairman ROBERTS. I appreciate that.

The vote has been called. I am going to vote, but I am going to ask you one more question here and then come back and allow the distinguished Ranking Member to cast her vote as well.

While farmers and ranchers feel stifled by many government regulations, to say the least, every now and then, there are those regulations that actually help streamline business and can reduce burdens. One example is a proposed rule pertaining to APHIS, categorical exclusions from certain review processes. The effect of implementing this rule will be quicker development and deployment of important veterinary biologics, such as vaccines that are used in managing animal disease outbreaks. Can you commit to shepherding this rule through the Government review process?

Mr. IBACH. I was—thank you for that question. That is an important issue.

I must admit I am not fully briefed on that, and I realized during our conversation, you were—that was an important issue to you as well. I do pledge to become very informed on that issue and work with you and other Members of the Committee to understand your priorities and make the best decision possible, if confirmed.

Chairman ROBERTS. Mr. Northey, you have already—I think you have answered this question with regards to crop insurance, but basically, if confirmed as Under Secretary, will you protect crop insurance from attacks like premium subsidy reductions, caps, or adjusted gross income limits? How will you work to improve these risk management tools for producers across the country?

Mr. NORTHEY. I look forward to working with you, Mr. Chairman, the Committee as well, Members of the House to support the very important risk management tool that crop insurance is.

Chairman ROBERTS. As Iowa Secretary of Ag, you have direct experience working on conservation issues in your home State. If confirmed, you will be overseeing conservation programs nationwide administered by both the Farm Service Agency and the NRCS. How will you work to ensure that the USDA voluntary conservation programs—voluntary conservation programs, you have background in this—are administered in a balanced approach that meets natural resource needs?

Mr. NORTHEY. You know, I think it is—Mr. Chairman, so many partnerships are important to be able to deliver these programs.

So in the State of Iowa, we have been able to partner with NRCS, with private organizations, and be able to create watershed projects.

The voluntary nature of these programs is what engages producers, and so it is very important that these programs work well for producers, such that they are interested in participating. Part of that is being able to understand the relevance and making sure that these are working in all parts of the country.

I am very familiar with some of the issues within the Midwest. I need to do more homework and understand some of the issues in other places as well.

Chairman ROBERTS. Thank you for that.

Senator Stabenow.

Senator STABENOW. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

We know that you both understand that it is a busy day with a lot of things happening, and so we apologize for the comings and goings.

But I want to take a moment to talk about the budget. The President had originally proposed a huge cut to the Farm Bill, including a \$29 billion cut to crop insurance and \$6 billion to conservation. The Congress is rejecting that level of cut, but today, I am going to be going to the Budget Committee, where there is built into the baseline, a \$21 billion cut in farm programs. That does not count the cuts to nutrition programs, which are separate.

I am heartened by Chairman Roberts and Chairman Conway in the House indicating they believe there is some flexibility in that, but I am very concerned about what is going to be happening here. The fact that we in the last Farm Bill, if you count the direct cuts and the savings and the policy that we put in place, the budget office says we will have saved over 10 years about \$100 billion, which is unique to committees to be able to do that voluntarily.

Given what is happening with farm prices and the challenges that farmers have, I am very concerned that we should not be put in a position to be cutting more from supports for farmers and conservation and so on.

Let me just take a moment. I am going to ask just very quickly, to hear your position on the following issues. Mr. Northey, you have talked about crop insurance, we know you support crop insurance. But just yes or no, do you support opening up crop insurance to more crops so that more types of farmers can participate?

Mr. NORTHEY. Yes.

Senator STABENOW. Thank you.

Do you support working lands conservation programs?

Mr. NORTHEY. Yes.

Senator STABENOW. Thank you.

Do you support conservation partnerships that leverage Federal dollars with private dollars to help farmers address issues like water quality, drought, and wildlife habitat?

Mr. NORTHEY. Sure do. Yes.

Senator STABENOW. Thank you.

Mr. Ibach, do you support programs that help specialty crop growers access new markets, protect against pest and disease, and promote their products?

Mr. IBACH. I do.

Senator STABENOW. Thank you very much.

Do you support Farm Bill programs that promote direct-to-consumer markets, including farmers markets?

Mr. IBACH. Yes.

Senator STABENOW. Do you support continued development of local and regional food systems?

Mr. IBACH. Yes.

Senator STABENOW. Do you think Americans living in a food desert should have access to healthy, affordable food?

Mr. IBACH. Of course.

Senator STABENOW. So just to both of you, given the budget situation that we are in right now, will you each advocate strongly to the White House to protect the USDA's budget and commit to sup-

porting the programs that are authorized and appropriated by Congress?

Mr. IBACH?

Mr. IBACH. I commit to doing the best job with the resources that the Congress designates to my programs within MRP, and I also commit to looking for efficiencies moving forward that allow us to do more with less.

Senator STABENOW. We certainly want efficiencies, and we need strong advocacy as well, so thank you.

Mr. Northey?

Mr. NORTHEY. Yes. I look forward to certainly supporting Secretary Perdue's comments and be an advocate for agriculture in those needs in agriculture and working with this Committee and Members of the House as well and being able to make sure that we stretch that budget as far as we can, but we have the resources necessary as well.

Senator STABENOW. Thank you very much.

I have additional questions, and in the interest of time, so my colleagues can ask questions, I will submit them to the record.

I just want to indicate I have enjoyed very much having the opportunity to meet privately with you and to address issues in particular that are of concern to Michigan, and I look forward to supporting you as you move through this process.

Mr. NORTHEY. Thank you very much.

Senator STABENOW. I think Senator Thune is taking over from here. I am told to turn to Senator Thune—

Senator THUNE. [Presiding.] Okay.

Senator STABENOW. —and then to Senator Klobuchar. So, Senator Thune, I am passing the gavel to you.

Senator THUNE. Thank you, Senator Stabenow, and to you and the Chairman for holding this hearing, and thanks to our nominees for your willingness to serve. We are grateful for you brining your skills to bear on the important work of American agriculture.

Mr. Northey, you have worked at USDA now—with USDA, I should say, over three terms as the Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, and I am sure that you have been frustrated as I have over the bureaucratic processes that sometimes hamper achieving desired results.

As an example, during this past drought-stricken summer in the Northern Plains, extreme forage and grazing shortages forced many grazing livestock producers to reduce their herds.

CRP emergency haying and grazing was a critical source of feed, and I appreciate Secretary Perdue's cooperation in opening CRP for haying and grazing, yet it took weeks for approval to open up all reasonably available acres.

As one of your first priorities, I want to urge you to review administrative processes in the three mission areas under your jurisdiction and see what we might be able to do to expedite some of these administrative authorities when needed. Is that something you would commit to doing?

Mr. NORTHEY. I would. Yes, Senator.

Senator THUNE. Pending your confirmation—well, let me skip to this next question. Based on your experience as Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, would you agree that more flexibility in the manage-

ment of CRP, such as allowing CRP practices to be grazed on a limited basis or hayed one-third of each contract every year would enhance the productivity and simplify the management of the CRP program?

Mr. NORTHEY. Yeah. I think there is certainly—it is important to be able to understand the needs and opportunities for producers that provided some flexibility within the guidelines of the program, and so if confirmed, I am very interested in being able to talk about additional flexibilities and understand what the law allows and what would be beneficial to producers and to managing that natural resource.

Senator THUNE. Good, good.

Well, and to the degree that you have authority—and we think that you do—we have been trying for a long time to get greater flexibility in management, particularly as mid-contract management practices, which are just completely contrary to we think what is sound in terms of promoting not only good wildlife production but environmental practices and everything else that goes with it.

There are certain CRP practices that are designated as environmentally sensitive, and there appears to be an interim administrative action that USDA has imposed over the years, which limits the use of these so-called designated areas and management practice. Would you support removing these environmentally sensitive designations on CRP acres? These are practices that, again, have been applied in the past, but we do not think make a lot of sense and have been very hard to get freed up for emergency haying and grazing through the years when we have had circumstances that required it.

Mr. NORTHEY. I am not familiar with that issue. I would certainly look forward to being briefed. If confirmed, I would love to be able to work with you and your staff in understanding the needs of your producers, but I would need to do some homework on that issue.

Senator THUNE. Well, I would just point out that in 2012 and 2017, which were drought years, these environmentally sensitive acres, CRP contracts were opened up for emergency haying and grazing, without negative consequences that I am aware of. In fact, in most cases, we were able to get the wildlife groups in support of that, and I think that the record will show that was not something that had any adverse impact.

So, again, it is another one of those bureaucratic sort of administrative roadblocks that we think make it more difficult to meet the needs to producers out there who in drought conditions for sure are suffering and need some relief.

Let me just ask one more question. I am sorry I am asking—holding on to this side of the panel. But we have a substantial demand for CRP right now, both for general and continuous enrollment, and CRP plays a critical support role in our State for what is our world-class pheasant hunting. It is estimated to provide about almost \$300 million annually to South Dakota.

What plans do you have to reinstate CRP open enrollment for the next general signup, and does USDA support a higher acreage cap, as I do, as part of the 2018 Farm Bill? Just so you know, I

support raising it to 30 million acres. It is at 24 right now under the current Farm Bill.

Mr. NORTHEY. Well, I know there is a lot of conversation about the acreage cap going into the next Farm Bill. I certainly look forward to being a part of those conversations, if confirmed. I need to have conversations with our Secretary Perdue and be able to understand exactly what administration's support is, but CRP is an important program and answers many of the natural resource needs that are out there.

Certainly, continuous enrollment—I was one of the largest continuous enrollment CRP States across the country, and that has allowed us to address nutrient reduction wetlands, buffers, lots of other important areas. Hitting that cap potentially limits the ability to be able to add new acres.

So there is a challenge there, but it is a balance amongst lots of different points of view. We are glad to be a part of that conversation, if confirmed.

Senator THUNE. Well, we look forward to working with you. You have under your jurisdiction lots of farmers and ranchers in South Dakota between FSA and NRCS and RMA, so we will have an opportunity, I am sure, to ask additional questions in the future.

But I thank you both for your service.

My time has expired.

I am going to pass the gavel now to Senator Hoeven and then recognize—

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Senator Hoeven, I was just going to ask two questions before I have to go vote.

So thank you to both of you, and I know that you, Mr. Northey, went to Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall; is that right?

Mr. NORTHEY. I did, yes. Thank you.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. It is very important to add to your biography. I would suggest that.

[Laughter.]

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Welcome, both of you. We are excited for you for your nominations. I will just ask some quick questions here.

Mr. Northey, 3,500 dairy farmers in Minnesota have been hit hard by the low milk prices, which have been compounded by new trade barriers in export markets and ongoing difficulties with the Margin Protection Program. Do you believe that dairy producers need additional insurance products to manage their risk, and can I count on you to help us with this problem?

Mr. NORTHEY. Certainly, if confirmed, I would be very interested in being able to work to see what kinds of programs could work better.

We heard many concerns from many Members about the lack of risk management tools for dairy producers and the challenges with the MPP.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you.

Mr. Ibach, Minnesota is number one for turkeys in the country, number two for hogs, second only to Iowa.

In Minnesota, we have faced some hardships, as was discussed earlier, due to disease with both these industries, some really horrible situations, and will you commit to working with me to help

APHIS better monitor and respond to diseases like avian influenza?

Mr. IBACH. Yes. I think that the reference that you are making to the outbreak that we had several years ago was a chance for not only producers to learn some opportunities that they have to improve biosecurity and protect themselves but also a wakeup call to States and the Federal Government to look into programs and systems to deliver those programs and benefits that are available in quicker and better ways.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you.

Mr. Northey, in Minnesota, CRP is an important voluntary conservation program, yet during the recent signup, only 149 of 1,367 offers were accepted, 90 percent rejection rate. I know that USDA must manage the program under the statutory cap of 24 million acres. We know there is substantial demand. What plans do you have to reinstate CRP open enrollment for the next general signup, if you are concerned?

Mr. NORTHEY. Well, I would certainly be interested in understanding the options that are available to USDA with the cap and the challenges with the acres that are out there.

Obviously, this Committee and Members of the House will spend a lot of time looking at what the next Farm Bill should have in it for funding and for a cap on CRP, and that is going to be an important conversation. I look forward to being a part of that conversation.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you.

I appreciated that you mention the renewable fuel standard. Pretty important in Minnesota as well.

Thank you, both of you, and I will go and vote and leave it in the able hands of my colleagues. Thank you.

Chairman ROBERTS. [Presiding.] Senator Hoeven.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Northey, do you agree that crop insurance is the most—one of the most, if not the most risk management tool for farmers?

Mr. NORTHEY. Absolutely.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay. So you will do everything you can to support it, strengthen it? You will do everything you can to support and strengthen it?

Mr. NORTHEY. Yes.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay. Also, the loan limits on FSA, I am working on legislation that would increase those lending limits on FSA on the direct from \$300,000 to \$600,000, on the guarantee for \$1.39 million to—what is it? We are going to about \$2.5 million. Do you support increasing those loan limits for FSA?

Mr. NORTHEY. I certainly look forward to working with you. That will be a prerogative of Congress in what is a part of that next Farm Bill.

I would be—I recognize the challenges to producers as the asset needs have gone up, and we are in a time right now when producers have a lot of financial challenges.

Senator HOEVEN. Yeah. Capital costs for agriculture going up, wouldn't you say?

Mr. NORTHEY. Right. Yes.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay. We have got drought. We have had drought out in our State of North Dakota, in Montana, South Dakota as well. Will you help me provide relief to our farmers and ranchers?

Mr. NORTHEY. Yes.

Senator HOEVEN. Okay. ARC and PLC are obviously the key components of counter-cyclical safety net. Of course, we are always very deferential to our Chairman on this Committee, but we are looking at strengthening those programs. Will you work with us to strengthen those programs?

Mr. NORTHEY. I would very interested in being able to do that, if confirmed.

Senator HOEVEN. What else are your priorities in the Farm Bill?

Mr. NORTHEY. Certainly, conservation is an important priority and making sure that our programs are flexible, that they are funded, and that they can work with many other partners from the States certainly to the farmers and to others that can bring some resources to the conservation and water quality and even soil health effort that is going on across our country.

Senator HOEVEN. Do you support more CRP acreage?

Mr. NORTHEY. I am very interested in what the opportunities are, and that takes financial resources. This Committee and the rest of the Members of the Senate and the rest of the Members of the House will have a lot to say in what that number is. I am very interested in being able to provide the information that can help inform that decision, if confirmed.

Senator HOEVEN. I am not sure what that answer was.

[Laughter.]

Senator HOEVEN. But we are down to 24 million acres, and there is a pretty strong demand out there for it, particularly with the current lower commodity prices and so forth.

Mr. NORTHEY. There was an impact by hitting the cap this last year. So I am not close enough to have been a part of the conversations within USDA, and so not been briefed on those pieces, but within the countryside of Iowa, there were some folks that would have liked to have been able to get their acreage into CRP. We have hit the cap on some of the continuous enrollments at CRP as well. Recognize there are constraints as far as the acreage cap, as far as the dollars for the program, certainly would be very interested in working with you, as those are policy decisions that you all are a part of, and deciding what that will be, we are going to implement the decisions that Congress gives us, the direction that you all provide for us.

Senator HOEVEN. Well, again, I am not exactly sure what you said, but the readout I am getting from farmers out there is they want to see an increase in CRP. It is something that I will be working on and look forward to working with you on.

I am teasing you a little bit. I know you are saying you will work with us on it, and I appreciate that very much.

Mr. NORTHEY. Thank you, Senator.

Senator HOEVEN. Then, Mr. Ibach, obviously, APHIS is very important in terms of managing the interface between agriculture and wildlife and so forth. In our State, we have great hunting and

fishing, and we have even greater agriculture. So we work with this all the time.

One of the problems we are running into in a big way—we have in years past, but we certainly are this year again, is blackbirds, huge—millions and millions of dollars. If you ever come out there, I mean, it is like Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds." You know, it is scary if you are out there by yourself. I am kidding, but there is a lot of them. Any ideas on how we can better control the blackbirds, but using that as an example of managing this interface in an effective way?

Mr. IBACH. We also in Nebraska have seen high populations of blackbirds as well, so I understand exactly what you are talking about from my experience as a farmer and rancher and director in the Department of Agriculture in Nebraska.

But speaking more broadly about looking for solutions to interface with wildlife, to, of course, be able to preserve and protect them, when appropriate, but also being able to look out for the needs of our farmers and ranchers that face the greater possibility of disease coming into their operations as well as the damage that wildlife can wreak on livestock as well as crops, we would need to look at a balanced approach. I used the word "balance" in my opening comments and would look forward to working together with producer groups and organizations to find solutions that can have broad support.

Senator HOEVEN. Well, I am an avid hunter, and I like to fish, although my wife is a much better fisher person than I am.

Mr. IBACH. Last time we went fishing, my wife caught the bigger fish, too. So it is a bad deal.

Senator HOEVEN. Yes, she is a lot better.

But farmer-friendly policies actually work for sportsman.

Mr. IBACH. That is right.

Senator HOEVEN. Do you follow me?

Mr. IBACH. That is right.

Senator HOEVEN. Because the farmers and ranchers are out there every single day, and if you want to get permission to—not so much fish, but certainly to hunt, you have to work with the farmers. So farmer-friendly policies actually benefit sportsmen done right, so—

Mr. IBACH. Yeah. I understand that, and over the course of the last few years across many States, we have seen the conservation programs that farmers are participating in on a voluntary basis have increased wildlife not only in Nebraska but in many States.

Senator HOEVEN. Yeah. With creativity, there is a lot we can do. Thank you very much to both of you.

Mr. NORTHEY. Thank you.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROBERTS. Senator Ernst.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, I would like to welcome you here today.

Mr. IBACH, it was wonderful visiting with you.

Mr. IBACH. Thank you very much.

Senator ERNST. Mr. Northey, it has been wonderful to see you as well.

I just want to make my commendations for Mr. Northey to the Committee. It is a pleasure to know you as a colleague back in the State of Iowa working with the Department of Agriculture in your capacity there but also as a friend. Thank you so much. You and your wife, Cindy, are wonderful farmers, conservationists, and stewards of our land, and we thank you for your years and years of service to the great State of Iowa.

Mr. Northey—since its inception in 2013, you have been a stalwart leader and a champion of the Iowa nutrient reduction strategy, and we have seen the positive impact of this relatively young program already. We know that continuing our efforts to promote voluntary incentive-based conservation are going to yield results in soil health and water quality.

If you could just give us an overview on how has your work in implementing this program prepared you for taking on the reins at the NRCS?

Mr. NORTHEY. Thank you, Senator.

It certainly has been a big part of our work at the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship the last 5 or 7 years. Prior to that, we have always been very active in the soil conservation effort, but as we saw some issues developing, whether it is Chesapeake Bay, whether it is challenges in the Great Lakes, certainly the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico, and then water quality issues within Iowa as well, we decided we needed to be able to be more proactive looking at water quality issues. This is reducing nitrate and phosphorus in our rivers, lakes, or streams, certainly the loss from our farms but also our urban areas.

So I serve on the Hypoxia Task Force, which is a dozen States up and down the Mississippi River. It is five Federal agencies as well that are a part of that. We meet to coordinate conversations about what we are each doing in our States.

One of the things we agreed to do was put together a nutrient reduction strategy within each State, and Iowa was one of the early ones to put that strategy together. Ours is built on a non-regulatory, proactive conservation water quality effort.

So since that time, the State of Iowa has caught the vision as well, and now this year is up to \$10.5 million direct investment in our water quality initiative in Iowa, which has allowed us to partner with farmers to grow cover crops. At the time the nutrient reduction strategy was begun, we had less than 100,000 acres of cover crops in the State of Iowa. This last year, we were over 600,000 acres. One of our cost-share programs this year is to offer 50 percent cost share to farmers that are interested in adding cover crops, and we had 1,000 farmers sign up for their first year of trying cover crops on their farms.

We have also had added nutrient reduction wetlands. We have 80 of those now. We have bioreactors and saturated buffers. So the momentum is really growing.

We have a long ways to go? Absolutely. We have lots more that needs to get done, but what I am excited about is the momentum, both in the interest of farmers and in bringing lots of outside groups, leveraging those State dollars, partnering with our Federal partners, and bringing in lots of other organizations.

So to me, that has been one of my pride and joys to be a part of. It certainly has taught me the value of working across borders. We took farmers down to Mississippi to see what farmers were doing there. We have been very engaged in different ways, and I look forward to taking that experience to NRCS, if confirmed.

Senator ERNST. Fantastic.

I have had the opportunity to go out on watershed tours with you as well, Mr. Northey, and so we have seen what IDALS, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and what the NRCS, our local farmers, our communities have been able to do through a number of those projects that you have just described.

But what role has the RCPP, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, played in some of those water quality initiatives as well?

Mr. NORTHEY. It has been very important. So the RCPP really helps organize folks, brings some Federal dollars, into partnerships. It creates partnerships because we will get together, and to have a good, effective application, you need many partners, some matching dollars. We have several RCPPs, including our last largest RCPP—is \$9.5 million of Federal dollars along with \$30 million worth of match and about 50 organizations that are a part of that, so local soil and water conservation districts, watershed projects, private organizations as well. So it is a great way to leverage tools.

You put folks together in the same room; Sometimes they come even with slightly different priorities. But you find out that you can leverage and get more done by working together, and it has been an important part of that effort.

Senator ERNST. Absolutely. I want to thank you for that because you really have been a true leader on those water quality initiatives, and I know that when Iowa came up with their nutrient management strategy, the EPA even was very complimentary of the voluntary process and the engagement that we had throughout Iowa. So I want to compliment you on that.

I know my time has expired, but I look forward to looking with both of you gentlemen. Thank you so much for your service. I appreciate it. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman ROBERTS. Thank you, Senator Ernst. Very good questions.

That will conclude our hearing today. I thank both nominees for their thoughtful comments and their engagement with the Members of this Committee. I also want to thank you for your willingness to advocate for America's farmers, ranchers, and growers at the people's Department.

The answers you have provided today will be considered as we move to approve your nominations in the near future. We are going to do that as expeditiously as we possibly can. Expeditious in Senate, perhaps an oxymoron, but we will try to do that just as soon as we possibly can.

To that end, I would request that if my fellow members have any additional questions for the record, they be submitted to the Committee Clerk by 5:00 p.m., tomorrow, Friday, October 6th.

We look forward to receiving your responses, and to further considering your nominations.

The Committee is adjourned. Thank you, gentlemen.
[Whereupon, at 10:41 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX
OCTOBER 5, 2017

**Testimony of Gregory Ibach
USDA Under Secretary of Agriculture
For Marketing and Regulatory Programs
before the
United States Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition &
Forestry
October 5, 2017**

Good Morning, Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss my desire to serve the American public as President Trump's nominee as Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I am honored to be nominated by the President and humbled by the trust and confidence that Secretary Perdue has shown in selecting me for this position. I also want to thank Senator Fischer for her kind introduction and steadfast support throughout the nomination process.

I am joined today by my wife Teresa. Her support and love for the last 29 years have provided me the opportunity to serve the citizens of Nebraska as Assistant Director and Director of the state Department of

Agriculture for almost 20 years. We are the incredibly proud parents of triplets, who are age 25, and our daughter Emily, from Denver, is with me today. Our son Evan, who lives in Minneapolis, and our son Alec and his wife Meredith, who live in Nebraska, were unable to join us due to work obligations. Finally, I am honored to have Steve Nelson, President of the Nebraska Farm Bureau, Craig Uden, current President of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, here representing our Nebraska Cattlemen, and Lynn Crisp, representing Nebraska Corn Growers, and President-Elect of National Corn Growers supporting my nomination proceedings today.

I am proud that my children represent the fifth generation of my mother's family and the sixth generation of my father's family to farm and ranch in northeast Dawson County Nebraska, near the small town of Sumner.

Our family farm consists of row crop and cow-calf enterprises. As is the case with many farm operations around the country, ours weathered difficult times because of persistence, communication, and teamwork. I applied those traits as the foundation of my work ethic and I look forward to bringing these same principles to USDA, if confirmed.

Working on my parents' farm defined who I was and what I have become. That daily participation led me logically to our county's 4-H program. And from there, I made the obvious decision to attend the University of Nebraska and majored in animal science and agricultural economics.

Following college, during the heart of the historic farm crisis, I spent six years working in the Farm Credit System in Nebraska and Iowa in the latter part of the 1980s. I returned to the farm to pursue my love of production agriculture and joined my grandparents, who assisted Teresa and me as we started our own family farm and raised our three children.

Those years also provided key opportunities to become involved in the organizations that represented our family's farm endeavors. I was involved in our county and state Farm Bureau and county, state and national cattlemen's organizations, securing leadership positions at both the state and national levels.

I was honored in 1999 to be asked by Governor Mike Johanns to serve as Assistant Director of Agriculture, and then, by Governor Dave Heineman and Governor Pete Ricketts, to serve as Director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. During my tenure as Director, I

was also elected to serve as the President of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

I have approached my tenure at the department with service to Nebraska's nearly 50,000 farm and ranch families in mind. I believe my status as an active producer has been essential to my leadership role within the department, providing me the best perspective from which to serve my fellow farmers and ranchers. That said, I recognize and have an appreciation for the structure of government and its role in protecting and serving all citizens.

The MRP mission area is comprised of many programs focused on improving market competitiveness for the overall benefit of consumers and producers of American agriculture. If honored to receive your confirmation, I will work to faithfully implement the authorities outlined by Congress.

The balancing act between the two programs: the first representing and promoting the interests of farmers and ranchers and the second, overseeing some of the entities that regulate them – can be a difficult task. However, the word ‘balance’ is the key to that equation.

By achieving balance, MRP can achieve Secretary Perdue's Department-wide goals of supporting job creation, prioritizing customer service and ensuring our customers access a safe and secure food supply. I am committed to promoting the market opportunities and protecting the integrity associated with the organic seal, and preserving and protecting our natural resources and plant and animal health and well-being.

If confirmed, I will help the Secretary achieve his goals through ensuring sensible and effective regulations, responding to our customers in a timely and straight forward manner, focusing on plant and animal health program effectiveness, and fostering safe innovation that is farmer, consumer and environmentally sound.

To achieve realistic and meaningful balance has guided my decisions throughout my governmental leadership career. My thought process regarding regulatory programs and promotional activities will improve the opportunities not only for my neighbors in Sumner, Nebraska but Americans across the country. While doing so, I recognize the weighty responsibility to maintain consumer confidence in the products produced and the production methods followed.

If confirmed, I intend to bring this same thought process and philosophy to Washington, DC. I will be guided by the desire to serve agriculture

and the hard-working families that strive every day to produce the food, feed, fiber and fuel for families not only here in the United States but for families around the world.

If confirmed, I pledge to be available to listen to you, other Members of Congress, and to the many diverse voices in agriculture who will have ideas and input for the programs under my supervision.

Thank you again for your attention and consideration of my nomination. I will be humbled to serve if confirmed and would look forward to working together to serve American Agriculture.

Testimony of William Northey
USDA Under Secretary of Agriculture
for
Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Nominee
before the
United States Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
October 5, 2017

Good morning Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow and distinguished members of the Committee. I am honored to appear before you today as the President's nominee for Under Secretary of Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services having responsibility to lead the Farm Production and Conservation mission area consisting of the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Risk Management Agency (RMA), and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). I thank the President of the United States for nominating me and appreciate Secretary Perdue's leadership and trust in my ability to take on this new role, if confirmed, and I thank Senator Grassley for his kind words of introduction this morning and Senator Ernst for her support and encouragement. I am humbled.

I want to thank my wife Cindy, and daughter Katie, who are here with me today, our daughters, Jessica and Emily, their husbands, Thomas and Eric, and our five grandchildren who were unable to attend, also for their support. Cindy, without your sacrifice and love, I wouldn't be here today. I thank my parents, Wayne and Margaret Northey, and my sister, Nancy Pringnitz, who are sitting in front of their computer in their homes in Spirit Lake watching this hearing live.

I'm a corn and soybean farmer from Northwest Iowa. My farming roots go back several generations on both sides of my family. Cindy and I raised our three daughters on the farm my father's father bought in the 1930s. My sister and I were

raised by my father and mother on their farm only a couple of miles away. On my mom's side of the family, a farm first bought by her great-grandfather recently celebrated its 150th year in the family, and is now owned by my mother's cousin.

I began serving on the Iowa Corn Growers Board of Directors in the 1980s and eventually served as President of both the Iowa Corn Growers Association and of the National Corn Growers Association. I was involved during some of the important early years of the establishment of the ethanol industry. We also worked on farm bill issues, including trade and environmental policy. I served eight years as a local county soil and water conservation district commissioner and spent five years on the Iowa State FSA Committee.

In 2006, I was first elected to serve as Iowa Secretary of Agriculture and was re-elected in 2010 and 2014, and still serve in that capacity today. I have continued farming while serving as Secretary - doing much of my field work on nights and weekends.

Being Secretary has given me the opportunity to visit farmers all over the state of Iowa doing what we call the "full-Grassley". That is visiting all of Iowa's 99 counties at least once a year. Being Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture has also given me the opportunity to visit some of your states, which has given me a taste of the breadth of agriculture throughout our great country. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to travel and meeting the great producers of this country's agriculture.

Throughout my time as Iowa Secretary of Agriculture and through these visits with producers I gained invaluable perspective on USDA. As you have shared, and the Secretary has stated, it will be critical at FPAC to improve customer service in three of the most farmer facing agencies in the USDA, improve USDA's already positive impact on helping farmers and landowners care for their natural resources, and implement the farm programs as directed by Congress. Further I want to share the great stories to urban customers of the efforts by farmers that benefit all Americans through their stewardship and their production of food, fiber, and fuel.

I want to briefly touch on my vision as to how we can improve customer service at USDA. Customer service improvements must be measurable and improved customer service will require even better cooperation between agencies than in the past. I believe that housing NRCS, FSA, and RMA in a single mission area will accomplish this. We will also need to engage technologies that allow efficiencies and responsiveness improvements.

RMA, NRCS, and FSA must work with partners in other parts of USDA and with partners outside of USDA. That is certainly true of NRCS and its role in support of farmers and landowners caring for the natural resources. We will need to partner with other Departments in the federal government, with state conservation agencies, with farm groups, NGOs, and with private businesses to bring more resources to the important work of our farmer customers.

I look forward to help support the farm families across this country working alongside the great USDA staff at FSA, RMA, and NRCS to improve how we serve them.

Iowa has had a long history of state support of soil conservation efforts and it is central to the Iowan farming philosophy. As Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture, we have significantly increased our efforts in improving water quality, and increased our focus on soil health. If confirmed, I will assist Secretary Perdue to ensure that our farmers and ranchers are empowered to do their part in terms of conservation efforts.

I would like to thank you for your time and your staff's time in meeting with me leading up to this hearing and sharing your thoughts and concerns about the RMA, FSA, and NRCS.

I heard strong support for NRCS and both support for and concern about its combination with FSA and RMA. If given the opportunity, I look forward to strengthening each of these agencies, ensuring that this move leads to better customer service, and reporting back to this Committee on the progress of such efforts.

In our meetings, many of you commented on the operation of FSA disaster programs following wildfires, drought, and hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, including the challenges faced by farmers in Puerto Rico. While I have not been briefed on these efforts, I believe that in many of these areas FSA has a large role to play in our relief efforts. If confirmed, ensuring our producers in these areas are getting all the support they need from USDA will be a top priority.

Crop insurance is the most important part of the farm safety net and through RMA, we need to ensure that we maintain this vital tool for producers. While our farm safety net has worked well for many commodities and producers I have heard from some members of the Committee that many producers are still struggling. If confirmed, I pledge to work with the Committee to ensure that we find workable solutions for all producers. I will be an advocate within the Administration for these programs and others.

Thank you for your time and for this tremendous opportunity. I look forward to your questions, and hopefully working with you, your staff, and your constituents.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

OCTOBER 5, 2017

October 2, 2017

The Honorable Sen. Pat Roberts, Chairman
The Honorable Sen. Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

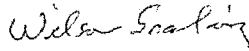
As former Chiefs of the Soil Conservation Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, we are writing to share our strong support for the nomination of Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey as the Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation.

Bill is a widely respected leader in agriculture and is well known for his commitment to conserving our natural resources. Even in his first campaign for the Iowa Secretary of Agriculture he made conservation part of his platform. Throughout both his personal and professional career, he has worked in a bi-partisan manner to advance voluntary, incentive-based private land conservation and has an exceptional grasp of the issues facing production agriculture and the environment.

It would be difficult to find another individual with Bill's on-farm knowledge, professional expertise, and conservation commitment. We wholeheartedly recommend his favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

Wilson Scaling
SCS Chief 1985-1990



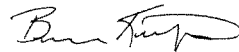
William J. Richards
SCS Chief 1990-1993



Paul W. Johnson
NRCS Chief 1994-1997



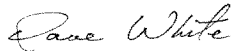
Bruce I. Knight
NRCS Chief 2002-2006



Arlen L. Lancaster
NRCS Chief 2006-2009



Dave White
NRCS Chief 2009-2012



Jason Weller
NRCS Chief 2012-2017





701 8th Street, NW, Suite 450, Washington, D.C. 20001
 PHONE 202.545.4000 FAX 202.545.4001

GrowthEnergy.org

October 4, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts
 Chairman
 Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
 and Forestry
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
 Ranking Member
 Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition
 and Forestry
 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

I write today in support of the nomination of William Northey as Undersecretary of Farm Production and Conservation at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). On behalf of Growth Energy's Board of Directors and our members, America's ethanol industry strongly endorses Mr. Northey's nomination.

Mr. Northey understands the vital role that America's biofuels industry plays in driving the advancement and growth of America's rural economy. Having served as the Secretary of Agriculture for Iowa, Mr. Northey has first-hand experience and knowledge of how the rapid and successful integration of biofuels into both domestic and international fuel markets has positively impacted and improved the farming economy in America.

Additionally, Mr. Northey is a fourth-generation corn and soybean farmer, giving him the ability to not only understand the issues and policies affecting American agriculture, but also utilize his own personal experiences to help improve farm production and conservation across the nation.

Mr. Northey is more than qualified for this position, and that is why I recommend that he be quickly confirmed to his post so he may begin representing America's agriculture industry here in Washington.

Sincerely,

Emily Skor, CEO
 Growth Energy



"Working for Nebraska beef producers - pasture to plate."

September 11, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts, Chairman
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Senator Stabenow:

The membership of Nebraska Cattlemen would like to lend our full support to the nomination of Greg Ibach to be confirmed as United States Department of Agriculture's Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. Director Ibach is uniquely qualified for and has vast experience that will allow him to manage the programs in Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration, and Agricultural Marketing Services from his first day as Undersecretary.

As the Director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Ibach has been a visionary leader for Nebraska's agriculture community by effectively supervising Nebraska's plant and animal health regulatory functions. He has also been actively involved in foreign and domestic marketing and development activities. During the twelve years Director Ibach has served, nearly every sector of Nebraska agriculture has seen growth and expansion. He possesses an innate ability to analyze issues, develop strategies and create solutions for domestic and global initiatives.

Ibach's passion for advocating for agriculture at the national level was evident in his many roles with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), serving as chair of the marketing and international trade committee, vice president, and most recently, president of the organization. As NASDA president, Ibach took an active role in national policy discussions including agriculture education, expanding markets and international trade issues, food safety, and a host of additional economic and regulatory issues. Ibach has always encouraged programs and policies that support generations of family farm operations, provide opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers, and support careers for youth in the agriculture industry both at the farm and agribusiness levels.

Director Ibach is a true citizen-servant as he still maintains an active family farm and ranch operation in central Nebraska. He approaches his regulatory responsibilities with a common sense perspective that production agriculture sincerely appreciates. Ibach is a dedicated advocate who meets challenging issues head on. His leadership, knowledge and influence have taken Nebraska agriculture beyond the state and national level and onto international success.

We respectfully ask the United States Senate expedite his hearing and confirm his appointment.

Sincerely,

Troy Stowater
NC President

Pete McClymont
NC Executive Vice President



September 11, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
328-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow Committee on
Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
United States Senate
328-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

I write today to strongly support the confirmation of Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey as Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The mission of the Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation is to focus on domestic agricultural issues – overseeing programs such as the Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, all key agencies for Iowa producers. Secretary Northey is an ideal candidate to oversee this position due to his experience both as a farmer and as Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture.

Throughout his distinguished tenure as Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary Northey has been a tireless advocate for Iowa's farmers. Northey is a fourth-generation Iowa farmer who grows corn and soybeans on his farm near Spirit Lake, Iowa. In his three-terms as Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, he has promoted science and technology-based solutions to better conserve our soil, water, and air, helped to expand ethanol infrastructure in our state, and told the story of Iowa agriculture across the world.

Secretary Northey has not only served his home state with distinction, he's also served the corn farmer. As past President of both the Iowa Corn Growers Association and the National Corn Growers Association he has championed the causes that farmers care about – and we look forward to working with him on additional key issues including new markets for agricultural exports, expanding the role of higher blends of ethanol in our nation's fuel supply, preserving funding for risk management and conservation programs in the 2018 Farm Bill and the roll out of the GMO labeling standard.

In summary, Bill Northey is a qualified, objective nominee who has dedicated his life to agriculture. On behalf of the Iowa Corn Growers Association, I write in strong support of his nomination to the Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation. We urge the Committee to take up his nomination consideration as expeditiously as possible. Rural America needs his leadership now more than ever. Thank you for your time and consideration of Mr. Northey.

Sincerely,

Mark Recker
President, Iowa Corn Growers Association

Craig Floss
CEO, Iowa Corn Growers Association

cc. The honorable Chuck Grassley and the honorable Joni Ernst



National Cattlemen's
Beef Association

September 13, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Senator Stabenow:

On behalf of America's cattle community, we write to support the nomination of Greg Ibach to be Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs at USDA. We urge you to consider his nomination during your September 19th hearing, and then vote his nomination out of committee as soon as possible.

The Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP) oversees agencies that have a tremendous influence on cattle producers. Providing strong leadership and direction to the MRP agencies is important to the success of cattlemen and women across the country. We need this position filled immediately given the amount of work which needs to be done. From protecting our herd from animal diseases, to enforcing the Packers and Stockyards Act, to administering programs such as Mandatory Price Reporting, we need a dedicated, knowledgeable professional in this role who can make decisions in support of cattle producers.

Greg Ibach is the ideal nominee for this position. As a cattle producer, he understands the challenges we all face. He has demonstrated his commitment to agriculture, and the future of agriculture, through his involvement with FFA, 4-H, the Nebraska Agricultural Youth Council and Nebraska Agricultural Youth Institute. He has received Farm Bureau Outstanding Young Farmer Awards, and has been active in many producer-driven associations. As Director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, he understands the role of government and service to his country. In addition, his service as a past president of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture gave him exposure to the regional differences found in American agriculture. Director Ibach's experience and service shows he knows agriculture and is willing to fight for all producers.

With the Secretary's reorganization changes, coupled with the needs of America's farmers and ranchers, it is imperative that Director Ibach be sent to work as soon as possible. Again, we urge you to hold his hearing and vote on his confirmation. We can't afford to wait any longer.

Sincerely,

National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Nebraska Cattlemen

Alabama Cattlemen's Association
American National CattleWomen
Arizona Cattle Feeders' Association
Arizona Cattle Growers' Association
California Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Livestock Association
Florida Cattlemen's Association
Georgia Cattlemen's Association
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Illinois Beef Association
Indiana Beef Cattle Association
Iowa Cattlemen's Association
Kansas Livestock Association
Michigan Cattlemen's Association
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association
Mississippi Cattlemen's Association
Montana Stockgrowers Association
North Carolina Cattlemen's Association
North Dakota Stockmen's Association
Ohio Cattlemen's Association
Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association
Oregon Cattlemen's Association
Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association
South Dakota Cattlemen's Association
Tennessee Cattlemen's Association
Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association
Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Utah Cattlemen's Association
Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Washington Cattlemen's Association
Washington Cattle Feeders Association
Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association
Wyoming Stock Growers Association

September 14, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, and Members of the Committee:

The undersigned members of the production agriculture community endorse both Bill Northey for USDA Undersecretary of Farm Production and Conservation and Gregory Ibach as USDA Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

Bill began farming with his grandfather after graduating from Iowa State University with a degree in Agricultural Business. As Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, Bill committed to traveling to each of Iowa's counties to speak with the rural and urban communities. He is a fourth generation farmer, giving him unique insights into the needs of farmers across the country and making him a particularly worthy candidate for this post.

Greg holds a degree in agricultural economics and animal sciences from the University of Nebraska. He is the director and operator of a cow, calf, and grain operation as well as the Nebraska Director of Agriculture. The agencies within the Marketing and Regulatory Programs mission area are critically important to ensuring effective marketing and oversight of agricultural products, and Greg's background will enable him to be an effective leader of those agencies.

We respectfully request that you expeditiously consider these nominations and advance them to the full Senate for consideration.

Sincerely,

American Association of Crop Insurers
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
CropLife America
Crop Insurance and Reinsurance Bureau
Crop Insurance Professionals Association
National Association of Professional Insurance Agents
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives

National Farmers Union
 National Milk Producers Federation
 National Peach Council
 National Pork Producers Council
 National Potato Council
 National Sorghum Producers
 National Sunflower Association
 Panhandle Peanut Growers Association
 Rural & Agriculture Council of America
 Society for Range Management
 Southern Peanut Farmers Federation
 Southwest Council of Agribusiness
 The Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America
 USA Rice
 U.S. Apple Association
 U.S. Canola Association
 U.S. Cattlemen's Association
 U.S. Dry Bean Council
 U.S. Sweet Potato Council
 Western Growers
 Western Peanut Growers Association

CC: Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry



Nebraska Soybean Association

1111 Lincoln Mall, Suite 308 • Lincoln, NE 68508 • Phone: (402) 441-3239

September 25, 2017

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
Chairman Senator Pat Roberts
Ranking Member Senator Debbie Stabenow

Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow and members of the Committee:

The Nebraska Soybean Association board of directors extends their support of Nebraska Director of Agriculture Greg Ibach as Under Secretary of Marketing and Regulatory Programs at the USDA.

Greg is a person that understands very well how different agricultural issues connect -- how row crop farmers rely on the livestock industry and how everyone in agriculture depends on consumers, both at home and abroad. That understanding will serve him and all of us very well.

During his twelve years as Nebraska Director of Agriculture Greg has been a tremendous asset for developing International trade partners for our products. He has traveled on numerous Trade Missions with the Nebraska Governor and industry leaders while at the NE Department of Agriculture. These trade missions built relations with our trading partners which are important for both the animal and crop production industries. These experiences will be a great asset for the Under Secretary or Marketing and Regulatory programs at USDA. We fully support and urge the confirmation of Greg Ibach as Under Secretary of Marketing and Regulatory Programs at the USDA.

Sincerely,

Dennis Fujan, President
Nebraska Soybean Association

September 28, 2017

The Honorable Sen. Pat Roberts, Chairman
 The Honorable Sen. Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member
 U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
 328A Russell Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Senators:

As leaders in conservation, we applaud the nomination of Bill Northey to be the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation and strongly support his confirmation.

Bill Northey is a fourth-generation Iowa farmer who personifies a personal land ethic, embraces conservation, and believes that technology and innovation will continue to make America the world's leading producer of food and fiber while protecting our wildlife and other natural resources. The people of Iowa elected Northey to be Secretary of Agriculture in November of 2006 and reelected him in 2010 and 2014. Northey ran on a platform of expanding opportunities in renewable energy, promoting science and technology to better conserve our air, soil and water, and telling the story of Iowa agriculture.

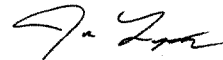
Bill Northey understands the need to balance farm profitability with conservation. Throughout his career in agriculture, Northey has been a leader in a variety of farm groups. From 1995-96, he served as President of the National Corn Growers Association and served as Chairman in 1996-97. He has been the long serving Co-Chair of the Hypoxia Task Force and a leader in advancing strategies to improve water quality. He has been key to advancing conservation throughout his career.

In conclusion, we are at a point in the arc of U.S. agricultural history that demands the very best leadership. We must dramatically increase productivity to help feed the world while at the same time protecting and improving our wildlife, land and water. Bill Northey will provide the leadership needed to ensure the U.S. Department of Agriculture succeeds in these historic and vital goals.

Sincerely,



John Larson
 American Farmland Trust



Jim Lyon
 National Wildlife Federation



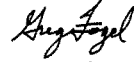
Kevin McAleese
 Sand County Foundation



James Cummings
 Mississippi Wildlife Federation



Kelly Moss
Ducks Unlimited



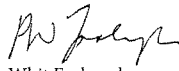
Greg Fogel
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition



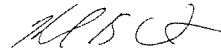
Steve Roe
Panora Conservation



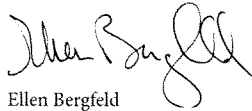
Tracy Mehan
American Water Works Association



Whit Fosburgh
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership



Howard Vincent
Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever



Ellen Bergfeld
American Society of Agronomy
Soil Science Society of America
Crop Science Society of America



Brent Van Dyke
National Association of
Conservation Districts

Executive Branch Personnel

Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE Form 278e)

Filer's Information

Ibach, Gregory Alan

Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Department of Agriculture

Other Federal Government Positions Held During the Preceding 12 Months:
None

Names of Congressional Committees Considering Nomination:

- **Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry**

Electronic Signature - I certify that the statements I have made in this form are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge.

/s/ Ibach, Gregory Alan [electronically signed on 06/09/2017 by Ibach, Gregory Alan in Integrity.gov]

Agency Ethics Official's Opinion - On the basis of information contained in this report, I conclude that the filer is in compliance with applicable laws and regulation: (subject to any comments below).

/s/ Bender, Stuart, Certifying Official [electronically signed on 09/06/2017 by Bender, Stuart in Integrity.gov]

Other review conducted by

U.S. Office of Government Ethics Certification

/s/ Apol, David, Certifying Official [electronically signed on 09/08/2017 by Apol, David in Integrity.gov]

1. Filer's Positions Held Outside United States Government

#	ORGANIZATION NAME		CITY, STATE	ORGANIZATION TYPE	POSITION HELD	FROM	TO
1	State of Nebraska		Lincoln, Nebraska	State Government	Director of Agriculture	6/2005	Present
2	National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA)		Arlington, Virginia	Non-Profit	President	9/2015	9/2016
3	National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA)	See Endnote	Arlington, Virginia	Non-Profit	Past President	9/2016	Present
4	Family Trust	See Endnote	Lexington, Nebraska	Trust	Trustee	3/2000	Present
5	GTI INC.		Dawson County and Thomas County, Nebraska	Corporation	President	1/2001	Present

2. Filer's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	State of Nebraska	N/A		Salary	\$169,047
2	State of Nebraska Employees Retirement Plan - cash balance pension plan	N/A	\$250,001 - \$500,000	Interest	\$5,001 - \$15,000
3	Rollover IRA				
3.1	Franklin Growth Fund - Class A	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		\$2,501 - \$5,000
3.2	Franklin Mutual Shares Fund - Class A	Yes	\$50,001 - \$100,000		\$2,501 - \$5,000
3.3	Franklin Small-Mid Gap Growth Fund - Class A	Yes	\$50,001 - \$100,000		\$2,501 - \$5,000
3.4	Franklin Biotechnology Discovery Fund - Class A	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		\$201 - \$1,000

#	DESCRIPTION		EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
3.5	Franklin Income Fund - Class A		Yes	\$100,001 - \$250,000		\$1,001 - \$2,500
4	GTI INC (Agricultural Production - Crops and Livestock)(Dawson County and Thomas County, NE)	See Endnote	N/A	\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	Farm rental income	\$78,488

3. Filer's Employment Agreements and Arrangements

#	EMPLOYER OR PARTY	CITY, STATE	STATUS AND TERMS	DATE
1	State of Nebraska	Lincoln, Nebraska	I will continue to participate in this cash balance pension plan. The plan sponsor will not make further contributions after my separation.	1/1999

4. Filer's Sources of Compensation Exceeding \$5,000 in a Year

#	SOURCE NAME	CITY, STATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES
1	State of Nebraska	Lincoln, Nebraska	Serve as Director of Agriculture for the State of Nebraska. In that capacity, I oversee the Department of Agriculture, whose mission is to regulate industries, as prescribed by statute, and to encourage and promote the interests of agriculture through advocacy and education.
2	GTI INC.	Dawson County and Thomas County, Nebraska	Management services as the joint owner of this cow, calf, corn and soybean farming operation.

5. Spouse's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

#	DESCRIPTION		EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	GTI INC (Agricultural Production)	See Endnote			salary	
2	Dial Properties (401(k) Account)					

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
2.1	Vanguard Target Retirement 2030	Yes	\$100,001 - \$250,000		\$5,001 - \$15,000

6. Other Assets and Income

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	U.S. bank account (cash)	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000	Dividends	
2	Agricultural Real Estate (Dawson County, Nebraska)	See Endnote	\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	Rent or Royalties	\$15,001 - \$50,000
3	First Investors Special Situations Fund - A	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
4	GREEN PLAINS PARTNERS LP (common stock)	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000	Dividends	\$201 - \$1,000
5	Investment Account				
5.1	Fidelity Money Market Capital Reserves	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
5.2	ALTRIA GROUP INC	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
5.3	KRAFT HEINZ CO COM	N/A	None (or less than \$1,001)		None (or less than \$201)
5.4	MONDELEZ INTL INC COM	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
5.5	PHILIP MORRIS INTL INC COM	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000	Dividends	\$201 - \$1,000
6	Jackson National Life Insurance Co. (Whole Life Insurance)	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000	Interest	\$201 - \$1,000
7	Jackson National Life Insurance Co. (Whole Life Insurance)	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000	Interest	\$201 - \$1,000
8	Farm Bureau Financial Services (Universal Life Insurance)	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000	Interest	\$201 - \$1,000

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
9	Farm Bureau Financial Services (Universal Life Insurance)	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000	Interest	\$201 - \$1,000
10	Great American Insurance Group (Whole Life Insurance)	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000	Interest	\$201 - \$1,000

7. Transactions

(N/A) - Not required for this type of report

8. Liabilities

#	CREDITOR NAME	TYPE	AMOUNT	YEAR INCURRED	RATE	TERM
1	Farm Credit Services of America	Mortgage (investment/rental property)	\$500,001 - \$1,000,000	2015	4.34%	15 years
2	Wells Fargo	Mortgage on Personal Residence	\$100,001 - \$250,000	2007	3.25%	15 years

53

9. Gifts and Travel Reimbursements

(N/A) - Not required for this type of report

Endnotes

PART	#	ENDNOTE
1.	3	The position of Past President is an officer position on the NASDA Board of Directors.

PART	#	ENDNOTE
1.	4	I do not receive any compensation for my services as Trustee of this family trust.
2.	4	GTI INC is a cow, calf, corn and soybean farming operation that is active in Thomas County and Dawson County, Nebraska. My spouse and I own 100% of this C Corporation. The full valuation of farm is reflected in Part 2, line 4.
5.	1	GTI INC is a cow, calf, corn and soybean farming operation that is active in Thomas County and Dawson County, Nebraska. My spouse and I own 100% of this C Corporation. The full valuation of farm is reflected in Part 2, line 4.
6.	2	This land is rented out for agricultural production to GTI INC.

Summary of Contents

1. Filer's Positions Held Outside United States Government

Part 1 discloses positions that the filer held at any time during the reporting period (excluding positions with the United States Government). Positions are reported even if the filer did not receive compensation.

This section does not include the following: (1) positions with religious, social, fraternal, or political organizations; (2) positions solely of an honorary nature; (3) positions held as part of the filer's official duties with the United States Government; (4) mere membership in an organization; and (5) passive investment interests as a limited partner or non-managing member of a limited liability company.

2. Filer's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

Part 2 discloses the following:

- Sources of earned and other non-investment income of the filer totaling more than \$200 during the reporting period (e.g., salary, fees, partnership share, honoraria, scholarships, and prizes)
- Assets related to the filer's business, employment, or other income-generating activities that (1) ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) produced more than \$200 in income during the reporting period (e.g., equity in business or partnership, stock options, retirement plans/accounts and their underlying holdings as appropriate, deferred compensation, and intellectual property, such as book deals and patents)

This section does not include assets or income from United States Government employment or assets that were acquired separately from the filer's business, employment, or other income-generating activities (e.g., assets purchased through a brokerage account). Note: The type of income is not required if the amount of income is \$0 - \$200 or if the asset qualifies as an excepted investment fund (EIF).

3. Filer's Employment Agreements and Arrangements

Part 3 discloses agreements or arrangements that the filer had during the reporting period with an employer or former employer (except the United States Government), such as the following:

- Future employment
- Leave of absence
- Continuing payments from an employer, including severance and payments not yet received for previous work (excluding ordinary salary from a current employer)
- Continuing participation in an employee welfare, retirement, or other benefit plan, such as pensions or a deferred compensation plan
- Retention or disposition of employer-awarded equity, sharing in profits or carried interests (e.g., vested and unvested stock options, restricted stock, future share, or a company's profits, etc.)

4. Filer's Sources of Compensation Exceeding \$5,000 in a Year

Part 4 discloses sources (except the United States Government) that paid more than \$5,000 in a calendar year for the filer's services during any year of the reporting period.

The filer discloses payments both from employers and from any clients to whom the filer personally provided services. The filer discloses a source even if the source made its payment to the filer's employer and not to the filer. The filer does not disclose a client's payment to the filer's employer if the filer did not provide the service for which the client is paying.

5. Spouse's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

Part 5 discloses the following:

- Sources of earned income (excluding honoraria) for the filer's spouse totaling more than \$1,000 during the reporting period (e.g., salary, consulting fees, and partnership share)
- Sources of honoraria for the filer's spouse greater than \$200 during the reporting period
- Assets related to the filer's spouse's employment, business activities, other income-generating activities that (1) ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) produced more than \$200 in income during the reporting period (e.g., equity in business or partnership, stock options, retirement plans/accounts and their underlying holdings as appropriate, deferred compensation, and intellectual property, such as book deals and patents)

This section does not include assets or income from United States Government employment or assets that were acquired separately from the filer's spouse's business employment, or other income-generating activities (e.g., assets purchased through a brokerage account). Note: The type of income is not required if the amount of income is \$0 - \$200 or if the asset qualifies as an excepted investment fund (EIF). Amounts of income are not required for a spouse's earned income (excluding honoraria).

6. Other Assets and Income

Part 6 discloses each asset, not already reported, that (1) ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) produced more than \$200 in investment income during the reporting period. For purposes of the value and income thresholds, the filer aggregates the filer's interests with those of the filer's spouse and dependent children.

This section does not include the following types of assets: (1) a personal residence (unless it was rented out during the reporting period); (2) income or retirement benefits associated with United States Government employment (e.g., Thrift Savings Plan); and (3) cash accounts (e.g., checking, savings, money market accounts) in a single financial institution with a value of \$5,000 or less (unless more than \$200 of income was produced). Additional exceptions apply. Note: The type of income is not required if the amount of income is \$0 - \$200 or if the asset qualifies as an excepted investment fund (EIF).

7. Transactions

Part 7 discloses purchases, sales, or exchanges of real property or securities in excess of \$1,000 made on behalf of the filer, the filer's spouse or dependent child during the reporting period.

This section does not include transactions that concern the following: (1) a personal residence, unless rented out; (2) cash accounts (e.g., checking, savings, CDs, and money market accounts) and money market mutual funds; (3) Treasury bills, bonds, and notes; and (4) holdings within a federal Thrift Savings Plan account. Additional exceptions apply.

8. Liabilities

Part 8 discloses liabilities over \$10,000 that the filer, the filer's spouse or dependent child owed at any time during the reporting period.

This section does not include the following types of liabilities: (1) mortgages on a personal residence, unless rented out (limitations apply for PAS filers); (2) loans secured by a personal motor vehicle, household furniture, or appliances, unless the loan exceeds the item's purchase price; and (3) revolving charge accounts, such as credit card balances, if the outstanding liability did not exceed \$10,000 at the end of the reporting period. Additional exceptions apply.

9. Gifts and Travel Reimbursements

This section discloses:

- Gifts totaling more than \$375 that the filer, the filer's spouse, and dependent children received from any one source during the reporting period.
- Travel reimbursements totaling more than \$375 that the filer, the filer's spouse, and dependent children received from any one source during the reporting period.

For purposes of this section, the filer need not aggregate any gift or travel reimbursement with a value of \$150 or less. Regardless of the value, this section does not include the following items: (1) anything received from relatives; (2) anything received from the United States Government or from the District of Columbia, state, or local governments; (3) bequests and other forms of inheritance; (4) gifts and travel reimbursements given to the filer's agency in connection with the filer's official duties; (5) gifts of hospitality (food, lodging, entertainment) at the donor's residence or personal premises; and (6) anything received by the filer's spouse or dependent child totally independent of their relationship to the filer. Additional exceptions apply.

Privacy Act Statement

Title I of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, as amended (the Act), 5 U.S.C. app. § 101 et seq., as amended by the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge Act 2012 (Pub. L. 112-105) (STOCK Act), and 5 C.F.R. Part 2634 of the U. S. Office of Government Ethics regulations require the reporting of this information. The prima facie presumption of the information on this report is for review by Government officials to determine compliance with applicable Federal laws and regulations. This report may also be disclosed upon request to any requesting person in accordance with sections 105 and 402(b)(1) of the Act or as otherwise authorized by law. You may inspect and request copies of your own report and any information you provided in response to this report. Applications for public access of your own report may be made: (1) to any requesting person, subject to the limitation contained in section 208(d)(1) of title 18, any determination granting an exemption pursuant to sections 208(b)(1) and 208(b)(3) of title 18; (2) to a Federal, State, or local law enforcement agency if the disclosing agency becomes aware of violations or potential violations of law or regulation; (3) to another Federal agency, court or party in a court or Federal administrative proceeding when the Government is a party or in order to comply with a judge-issued subpoena; (4) to a source when necessary to obtain information relevant to a conflict of interest investigation or determination; (5) to the National Archives and Records Administration; (6) to the General Services Administration in records management inspections; (7) to the Office of Management and Budget during legislative coordination on private rulemaking; (8) to the Department of Justice or in certain legal proceedings when the disclosing agency, an employee of the disclosing agency, or the United States is a party to litigation or has an interest in the litigation and the use of such records is deemed relevant and necessary to the litigation; (9) to reviewing officials in a new office, department or agency when an employee transfers or is detailed from one covered position to another; (10) to a Member of Congress or a congressional office in response to an inquiry made on behalf of an individual who is the subject of the record; (11) to contractors and other non-Government employees working on a contract, service or assignment for the Federal Government when necessary to accomplish a function related to an OGE Government-wide system of records; and (12) on the OGE Website and to any person, department or agency, any written ethics agreement filed with OGE by an individual nominated by the President to a position requiring Senate confirmation. See also the OGE/GOVT-1 executive branch-wide Privacy Act system of records.

Public Burden Information

This collection of information is estimated to take an average of three hours per response, including time for reviewing the instructions, gathering the data needed to complete the form. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the Program Counsel, U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE), Suite 500, 1201 New York Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20005-3917.

Pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act, as amended, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and no person is required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number (that number, 3209-0001, is displayed here and at the top of the first page of this OGE Form 278e).

September 6, 2017

Mr. Stuart Bender
Designated Agency Ethics Official
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Bender:

The purpose of this letter is to describe the steps that I will take to avoid any actual or apparent conflict of interest in the event that I am confirmed for the position of Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

As required by 18 U.S.C. § 208(a), I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter in which I know that I have a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, or in which I know that a person whose interests are imputed to me has a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2). I understand that the interests of the following persons are imputed to me: any spouse or minor child of mine; any general partner of a partnership in which I am a limited or general partner; any organization in which I serve as officer, director, trustee, general partner or employee; and any person or organization with which I am negotiating or have an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

Upon confirmation, I will resign from my positions or affiliations with the following entities:

1. Department of Agriculture of the State of Nebraska
2. National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
3. Family Trust

For a period of one year after my resignation from each of these entities, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know that entity is a party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d).

I will divest my interests in the following entities within 90 days of my confirmation: Altria Group Inc., Kraft Heinz Company, Mondelez International Inc., and Philip Morris International Inc. With regard to each of these entities, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of the entity until I have divested it, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2).

I understand that I may be eligible to request a Certificate of Divestiture for qualifying assets and that a Certificate of Divestiture is effective only if obtained prior to divestiture. Regardless of whether I receive a Certificate of Divestiture, I will ensure that all divestitures discussed in this agreement occur within the agreed upon timeframes and that all proceeds are invested in non-conflicting assets.

My spouse and I are the sole owners of GTI, Inc. GTI participates in the USDA Conservation Stewardship Program and USDA commodity programs. Upon confirmation, I will resign from my position as President of GTI, Inc. I will continue to have a financial interest in this entity, but I will not provide services material to the production of income. Instead, I will receive only passive investment income from it. I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of GTI, Inc. unless I first obtain a written waiver pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

My spouse and I own real property in Dawson County, Nebraska. This property is leased out for farming on a fixed cash basis to GTI, Inc. During my tenure as Under Secretary, my spouse and I will maintain a fixed cash lease on the property. My spouse and I do not receive any other payments from this property. I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge will have a direct and predictable effect on my financial interest in this property unless I obtain a written waiver pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

If I rely on a de minimis exemption under 5 C.F.R. § 2640.201(b) with regard to any of my financial interests in sector mutual funds, I will monitor the value of those interests. If the aggregate value of my interests in sector mutual funds that concentrate in any one sector exceeds \$50,000, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of any holdings of the funds that are in the specific sector in which the funds concentrate, unless I first obtain a written waiver pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2).

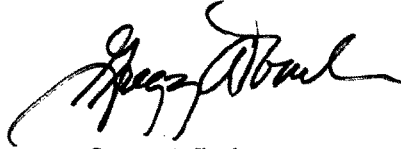
If I have a managed account or otherwise use the services of an investment professional during my appointment, I will ensure that the account manager or investment professional obtains my prior approval on a case-by-case basis for the purchase of any assets other than cash, cash equivalents, investment funds that qualify for the exemption at 5 C.F.R. § 2640.201(a), obligations of the United States, or municipal bonds.

I will meet in person with you during the first week of my service in the position of Under Secretary in order to complete the initial ethics briefing required under 5 C.F.R. § 2638.305. Within 90 days of my confirmation, I will also document my compliance with this ethics agreement by notifying you in writing when I have completed the steps described in this ethics agreement.

I understand that as an appointee I will be required to sign the Ethics Pledge (Exec. Order No. 13770) and that I will be bound by the requirements and restrictions therein in addition to the commitments I have made in this ethics agreement.

I have been advised that this ethics agreement will be posted publicly, consistent with 5 U.S.C. § 552, on the website of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics with ethics agreements of other Presidential nominees who file public financial disclosure reports.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gregory A. Ibach", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gregory A. Ibach

October 3, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts, Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Addendum to the Committee Questionnaire

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

During my interview with your staff counsels, we identified items that were inadvertently left off my original Committee Questionnaire submitted.

Please find below specific outline of periods of service and titles held for Federal Land Bank and State of Nebraska for #3 - Employment:

Non-Government	Federal Land Bank of Omaha	Loan Officer	Kearney, NE	6/84	1987
Non-Government	Federal Land Bank of Omaha	Assistant Vice President	Kearney, NE	1987	1989
Self-Employment	Self, GTI, Inc.	Owner/Manager	Sumner, NE	1984	Present
State Government	Nebraska Department of Agriculture	Assistant Director	Lincoln, NE	01/99	01/2005
State Government	Nebraska Department of Agriculture	Director	Lincoln, NE	01/2005	Present

Please find below a breakdown of NASDA membership, periods of service and corresponding titles for #5 – Memberships:

National Association of State Departments of Agriculture		President-2016 Vice President-2015 Second Vice President- 2014 Secretary-Treasurer- 2013
United Church of Sumner	1995-Present	Member

FarmHouse Fraternity	1980-Present	Chapter Association Board Member
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The following grid will clarify for whom yard signs were posted and when for #6(B) – Political Activity:

Deb Fischer for Senate	Yard Sign	N/A	2012
Pete Ricketts for Governor	Yard Sign	N/A	2014
Donald Trump for President	Yard Sign	N/A	2016
Adrian Smith for Congress	Yard Sign	N/A	Various
Romney for President	Yard Sign	N/A	2012
Matt Williams for Nebraska Legislature	Yard Sign	N/A	2014
Paul Kenney for Regent	Yard Sign	N/A	2016
Buffalo County Republican Party	Attended Lincoln Day Dinner	None	Feb. 2016

The listing below will update #7 – Publications as discussed in the interview held with staff:

Beef to China Announcement	Nebraska Department of Agriculture	06-14-17
LB 99 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-12-09
LB 99 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-12-09
LB 100 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-12-09
LB 100 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-12-09

LB 101 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-15-09
LB 585 Talking Points	Nebraska State Legislature	02-24-09
Testimony to Nebraska State Legislature Appropriations Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	03-09-09
LR 445 Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	08-27-10
LB 109 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-18-11
LB 109 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-18-11
LB 110 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-18-11
LB 110 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-18-11
LB 354 Oral Testimony (No written testimony given)	Nebraska State Legislature	02-16-11
LB 355 Oral Testimony(No written testimony given)	Nebraska State Legislature	02-16-11
LB 356 Oral Testimony(No written testimony given)	Nebraska State Legislature	02-18-11
LB 770 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-12-12
LB 770 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-12-12
LB 771 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-12-12
LB 771 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-12-12
LB 927 Letter to the Nebraska State Legislature Agriculture Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	02-14-12
Testimony to Nebraska State Legislature Appropriations Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	02-27-13

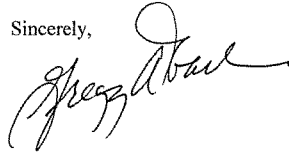
LB 67 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-21-13
LB 67 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-21-13
LB 68 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-28-13
LB 68 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-28-13
LB 69 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-28-13
LB 69 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-29-13
LB 884 Testimony (No written testimony given)	Nebraska State Legislature	01-28-14
LB 941 Letter to the Nebraska State Legislature Agriculture Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	02-18-14
Testimony to Nebraska State Legislature Appropriations Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	02-25-15
LB 91 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-20-15
LB 91 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-20-15
LB 92 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-20-15
LB 92 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-20-15
LB 93 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-20-15
LB 93 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-20-15
LB 175 Oral Testimony (No written testimony given)	Nebraska State Legislature	02-10-15
LB 176 Oral Testimony (No written testimony given)	Nebraska State Legislature	02-10-15

Confirmation Hearing Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-31-06
Confirmation Hearing Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-27-15
LB 360 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	02-17-15
LB 360 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	02-17-15
LB 393 Letter to the Nebraska State Legislature Agriculture Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	02-24-15
LB 711 Testimony (No written testimony given)	Nebraska State Legislature	02-18-16
LB 909 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-26-16
LB 909 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-26-16
LB 921 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-26-16
LB 921 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-26-16
LB 968 Testimony (No written testimony given)	Nebraska State Legislature	02-29-16
LB 977 Letter to the Nebraska State Legislature Transportation and Telecommunications Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	02-01-16
LB 378CA Testimony (No written testimony given)	Nebraska State Legislature	02-23-16
Testimony to Nebraska State Legislature Appropriations Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	02-23-17
LB 134 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-17-17
LB 134 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	01-17-17
LB 260 Letter to the Nebraska State Legislature Agriculture Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	02-06-17

LB 274 Oral Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	02-07-17
LB 274 Written Testimony	Nebraska State Legislature	02-07-17
LB 338 Oral Testimony (No written testimony given)	Nebraska State Legislature	02-08-17
LB 477 Letter to the Nebraska State Legislature Agriculture Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	01-31-17
LB 499 Letter to the Nebraska State Legislature Agriculture Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	02-14-17
LB 617 Letter to the Nebraska State Legislature Agriculture Committee	Nebraska State Legislature	02-21-17
NDA Updates	Nebraska Department of Agriculture	2017
Nebraska Ag and You	Nebraska Department of Agriculture	2013-2017
YourNDA	Nebraska Department of Agriculture	2016-2017

Finally, please be advised that I certify the information included in all of my nominee documents was accurate as of the day of execution through present day, including my official nomination on September 5, 2017.

Sincerely,



October 4, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts, Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

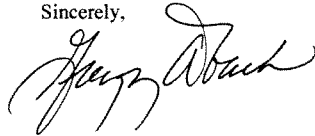
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

Please be advised that pursuant to section 101(b) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, as amended, I have informed the appropriate ethics officials that the information required by section 102(a)(1)(A) of the Act with respect to income and honoraria contained in OGE Form 278e (Executive Branch Public Financial Disclosure Report) executed by me on September 6, 2017 is correct.

This information is current as of Wednesday, October 4, 2017. This date is within five days prior to the date of the first hearing scheduled to consider my nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Abner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" and last name "Abner" clearly distinguishable.

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION & FORESTRY
Questions for Executive Nominees
115th Congress

1. Basic Biographical Information

Please provide the following information.

<i>Position to Which You Have Been Nominated</i>	
<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date of Nomination</u>
<u>Undersecretary for Marketing a Regulatory Programs USDA</u>	

<i>Current Legal Name</i>			
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>
Gregory	Alan	Ibach	

<i>Addresses</i>					
<u>Residential Address</u> (do not include street address)			<u>Office Address</u> (include street address)		
			Street: 301 Centennial Mall South		
City: Sumner	State: Nebraska	Zip: 68878	City: Lincoln	State: Nebraska	Zip: 68509

<i>Other Names Used</i>						
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<u>Check if Maiden Name</u>	<u>Name Used From</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
					Est ☐	Est ☐
					Est ☐	Est ☐

<i>Birth Year and Place</i>	
Year of Birth (Do not include month and day.)	Place of Birth
1962	Kearney, Nebraska

<i>Marital Status</i>					
Check All That Describe Your Current Situation:					
Never Married ☐	Married ☒	Separated ☐	Annulled ☐	Divorced ☐	Widowed ☐

<i>Spouse's Name</i> (current spouse only)			
<u>Spouse's First Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Middle Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Last Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Suffix</u>
Teresa	Janette	Ibach	

<i>Spouse's Other Names Used</i> (current spouse only)						
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<u>Check if Maiden Name</u>	<u>Name Used From</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
Teresa	Janette	Heusman		X	12/1961 Est ☐	6/1988 Est ☐
					Est ☐	Est ☐

<i>Children's Names (if over 18)</i>			
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Suffix
Evan	William	Ibach	
Emily	Claire	Ibach	
Alec	Andrew	Ibach	

2. Education

List all post-secondary schools attended.

<u>Name of School</u>	<u>Type of School</u> (vocational/technical/trade school, college/university/military college, correspondence/distance/extension/online school)	<u>Date Began School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Ended School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still in school)	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Date Awarded</u>
University of Nebraska	University	8/1980	5/1984 Est ☐ Present ☐	BS	5/1984
		Est ☐	Est ☐ Present ☐		
		Est ☐	Est ☐ Present ☐		
		Est ☐	Est ☐ Present ☐		

3. Employment

(A) List all of your employment activities, including unemployment and self-employment. If the employment activity was military duty, list separate employment activity periods to show each change of military duty station. Do not list employment before your 18th birthday unless to provide a minimum of two years of employment history.

<u>Type of Employment</u> (Active Military Duty Station, National Guard/Reserve, USPHS Commissioned Corps, Other Federal employment, State Government (Non-Federal Employment), Self-employment, Unemployment, Federal Contractor, Non-Government Employment (excluding self-employment), Other	<u>Name of Your Employer/Assigned Duty Station</u>	<u>Most Recent Position Title/Rank</u>	<u>Location</u> (City and State only)	<u>Date Employment Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Employment Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still employed)
Non-Government	Federal Land Bank Of Omaha, Various	Assistant Vice President, Acquired Property	Kearney NE	6/1984	3/1989 Est ☒
Self-Employment	Self, Sumner NE	Farmer	Sumner, NE	3/1989	Present
State Government	State of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE	Director, Nebraska Dept. of Agriculture	Lincoln, NE	1/1999	Present
				Est ☐	Est ☐
				Est ☐	Est ☐

(B) List any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions with federal, state, or local governments, not listed elsewhere.

<u>Name of Government Entity</u>	<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date Service Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Service Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still serving)
USTR	USTR Intergovernmental Policy Advisory Committee on Trade, Member	10/2015 Est ☒	Est ☐ Present ☒
USDA	U.S. Depart. of Agriculture's Agricultural Technical Advisory Committee, Member	2001 Est ☐	2006 Est ☐ Present ☐

USDA	USDA Secretary's Advisory Committee on Foreign Animal and Poultry Diseases, Member	2006	Est ☐	2008	Est ☐	Present ☐
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4. Honors and Awards

List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, civilian service citations, military medals, academic or professional honors, honorary society memberships and any other special recognition for outstanding service or achievement.

Nebraska Ag 40 (Invitation Only)
 Agriculture Builders of Nebraska (Invitation Only)
 Triumph of Agriculture Exposition Service to Agriculture Award, 2016
 NE Chapter of American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers Distinguished Service Award, 2016
 Nebraska Agribusiness Association, Government Official of the Year, 2012
 Honorary State FFA Degree, 2010
 University of Nebraska-Lincoln, College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Service to Agriculture Award, 2008
 Nebraska Corn Board Ag Achievement Award, 2008
 Nebraska Hall of Agricultural Achievement Inductee, 2007
 UNL Outstanding Young Alumnus, 1996
 American Farm Bureau Discussion Meet Semifinalist, 1998
 American Farm Bureau Outstanding Young Farmer and Rancher Achievement Winner, 1997

5. Memberships

List all memberships that you have held in professional, social, business, fraternal, scholarly, civic, or charitable organizations in the last 10 years.

Unless relevant to your nomination, you do NOT need to include memberships in charitable organizations available to the public as a result of a tax deductible donation of \$1,000 or less, Parent-Teacher Associations or other organizations connected to schools attended by your children, athletic clubs or teams, automobile support organizations (such as AAA), discounts clubs (such as Groupon or Sam's Club), or affinity memberships/consumer clubs (such as frequent flyer memberships).

<u>Name of Organization</u>	<u>Dates of Your Membership</u> (You may approximate.)	<u>Position(s) Held</u>
United Church of Sumner	1995-Present	Member
FarmHouse Fraternity	1980-Present	Chapter Association Board Member

6. Political Activity

(A) Have you ever been a candidate for or been elected or appointed to a political office?

<u>Name of Office</u>	<u>Elected/Appointed/ Candidate Only</u>	<u>Year(s) Election Held or Appointment Made</u>	<u>Term of Service (if applicable)</u>
Assistant Director Nebraska Department of Agriculture	Appointed	1/1999	6/2005
Director, Nebraska Department of Agriculture	Appointed	6/2005	Present

(B) List any offices held in or services rendered to a political party or election committee during the last ten years that you have not listed elsewhere.

<u>Name of Party/Election Committee</u>	<u>Office/Services Rendered</u>	<u>Responsibilities</u>	<u>Dates of Service</u>
NONE			

(C) Itemize all individual political contributions of \$200 or more that you have made in the past five years to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity. Please list each individual contribution and not the total amount contributed to the person or entity during the year.

<u>Name of Recipient</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Year of Contribution</u>
Deb Fischer for Senate	500.00	2012
Pete Ricketts for Governor	1000.00	2014
Donald Trump for President	250.00	2016
Lou Ann Linehan State Senator Campaign	500.00	2016
Adrian Smith for Congress	250.00	2015
Romney for President	250.00	2012
Romney for President	500.00	2012
Romney for President	500.00	2012
Paul Kenney for Regent	1000.00	2016

7. Publications

List the titles, publishers and dates of books, articles, reports or other published materials that you have written, including articles published on the Internet.

[illegible]

8. Lobbying

In the past ten years, have you registered as a lobbyist? If so, please indicate the state, federal, or local bodies with which you have registered (e.g., House, Senate, California Secretary of State).

NO

Executive Branch Personnel Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE Form 278e)

Filer's Information

Northey, William Howard

Under Secretary (Farm & Foreign Agricultural Services), Department of Agriculture

Other Federal Government Positions Held During the Preceding 12 Months:
None

Names of Congressional Committees Considering Nomination:

- **Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry**

Electronic Signature - I certify that the statements I have made in this form are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge.

/s/ Northey, William Howard [electronically signed on 06/22/2017 by Northey, William Howard in Integrity.gov]

Agency Ethics Official's Opinion - On the basis of information contained in this report, I conclude that the filer is in compliance with applicable laws and regulation:
(subject to any comments below).

/s/ Bender, Stuart, Certifying Official [electronically signed on 09/06/2017 by Bender, Stuart in Integrity.gov]

Other review conducted by

U.S. Office of Government Ethics Certification

/s/ Apol, David, Certifying Official [electronically signed on 09/11/2017 by Apol, David in Integrity.gov]

1. Filer's Positions Held Outside United States Government

#	ORGANIZATION NAME	CITY, STATE	ORGANIZATION TYPE	POSITION HELD	FROM	TO
1	State of Iowa	Des Moines, Iowa	Government	Iowa Secretary of Agriculture	1/2007	Present
2	WM Northey Farm	Spirit Lake, Iowa	Sole Proprietorship	Sole Proprietor	5/1981	Present

2. Filer's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	State of Iowa	N/A		Salary	\$150,000
2	WM Northey Farm, Spirit Lake, Iowa (sole proprietor)(crops)	N/A	\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	Farming Income	\$380,879
3	State of Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System (defined benefit pension)(value not readily ascertainable)	N/A			None (or less than \$201)
4	USDA Agriculture Loss Coverage-County Program	N/A		Program payments	\$6,548

3. Filer's Employment Agreements and Arrangements

#	EMPLOYER OR PARTY	CITY, STATE	STATUS AND TERMS	DATE
1	State of Iowa - IPERS	Des Moines, Iowa	I will continue to participate in this defined benefit plan.	1/2007

4. Filer's Sources of Compensation Exceeding \$5,000 in a Year

#	SOURCE NAME	CITY, STATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES
1	State of Iowa	Des Moines, Iowa	As Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, I oversee the approximately 345 employees of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

5. Spouse's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	Janus Henderson Forty D Fund	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		\$201 - \$1,000
2	Janus Henderson Research Fund Class D	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		\$201 - \$1,000
3	Janus Henderson Global Select Fund Class D	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)

6. Other Assets and Income

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	U.S. bank account (cash)	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000	Interest	None (or less than \$201)
2	Farm Bureau Life Insurance (universal life policy)	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000	Interest	\$201 - \$1,000
3	Lincoln Financial Group (whole life insurance policy)	N/A	\$100,001 - \$250,000	Interest	\$5,001 - \$15,000
4	Green Plains, Inc. (formerly Green Plains Renewable Energy)	N/A	\$15,001 - \$50,000	Dividends Capital Gains	\$201 - \$1,000
5	Northey Acres (Farm Real Estate Corporation)(Spirit Lake, Iowa)	See Endnote	\$15,001 - \$50,000	Dividends	\$2,501 - \$5,000
6	Principal Life Insurance (variable life policy)				
6.1	Principal Financial Group Stock	N/A	\$15,001 - \$50,000	Dividends	\$201 - \$1,000

7. Transactions

(N/A) - Not required for this type of report

8. Liabilities

#	CREDITOR NAME		TYPE	AMOUNT	YEAR INCURRED	RATE	TERM
1	Northwest Bank	See Endnote	Personal Loan	\$50,001 - \$100,000	2015	5.0%	5 years
2	Northwest Bank	See Endnote	Personal Loan	\$15,001 - \$50,000	2017	5.0%	1 year
3	SunTrust Mortgage		Mortgage on Personal Residence	\$50,001 - \$100,000	2010	4.375%	15 years

82

9. Gifts and Travel Reimbursements

(N/A) - Not required for this type of report

Endnotes

PART	#	ENDNOTE
6.	5	This is a family farm land ownership corporation of which I own approximately 6%.
8.	1	Machinery note
8.	2	2017 operating note

Summary of Contents

1. Filer's Positions Held Outside United States Government

Part 1 discloses positions that the filer held at any time during the reporting period (excluding positions with the United States Government). Positions are reported even if the filer did not receive compensation.

This section does not include the following: (1) positions with religious, social, fraternal, or political organizations; (2) positions solely of an honorary nature; (3) positions held as part of the filer's official duties with the United States Government; (4) mere membership in an organization; and (5) passive investment interests as a limited partner or non-managing member of a limited liability company.

2. Filer's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

Part 2 discloses the following:

- Sources of earned and other non-investment income of the filer totaling more than \$200 during the reporting period (e.g., salary, fees, partnership share, honoraria, scholarships, and prizes)
- Assets related to the filer's business, employment, or other income-generating activities that (1) ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) produced more than \$200 in income during the reporting period (e.g., equity in business or partnership, stock options, retirement plans/accounts and their underlying holdings as appropriate, deferred compensation, and intellectual property, such as book deals and patents)

This section does not include assets or income from United States Government employment or assets that were acquired separately from the filer's business, employment, or other income-generating activities (e.g., assets purchased through a brokerage account). Note: The type of income is not required if the amount of income is \$0 - \$200 or if the asset qualifies as an exempt investment fund (EIF).

3. Filer's Employment Agreements and Arrangements

Part 3 discloses agreements or arrangements that the filer had during the reporting period with an employer or former employer (except the United States Government), such as the following:

- Future employment
- Leave of absence
- Continuing payments from an employer, including severance and payments not yet received for previous work (excluding ordinary salary from a current employer)
- Continuing participation in an employee welfare, retirement, or other benefit plan, such as pensions or a deferred compensation plan
- Retention or disposition of employer-awarded equity, sharing in profits or carried interests (e.g., vested and unvested stock options, restricted stock, future share of a company's profits, etc.)

4. Filer's Sources of Compensation Exceeding \$5,000 in a Year

Part 4 discloses sources (except the United States Government) that paid more than \$5,000 in a calendar year for the filer's services during any year of the reporting period.

The filer discloses payments both from employers and from any clients to whom the filer personally provided services. The filer discloses a source even if the source made its payment to the filer's employer and not to the filer. The filer does not disclose a client's payment to the filer's employer if the filer did not provide the service for which the client is paying.

5. Spouse's Employment Assets & Income and Retirement Accounts

Part 5 discloses the following:

- Sources of earned income (excluding honoraria) for the filer's spouse totaling more than \$1,000 during the reporting period (e.g., salary, consulting fees, and partnership share)
- Sources of honoraria for the filer's spouse greater than \$200 during the reporting period
- Assets related to the filer's spouse's employment, business activities, other income-generating activities that (1) ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) produced more than \$200 in income during the reporting period (e.g., equity in business or partnership, stock options, retirement plans/accounts and their underlying holdings as appropriate, deferred compensation, and intellectual property, such as book deals and patents)

This section does not include assets or income from United States Government employment or assets that were acquired separately from the filer's spouse's business employment, or other income-generating activities (e.g., assets purchased through a brokerage account). Note: The type of income is not required if the amount of income is \$0 - \$200 or if the asset qualifies as an excepted investment fund (EIF). Amounts of income are not required for a spouse's earned income (excluding honoraria).

6. Other Assets and Income

Part 6 discloses each asset, not already reported, that (1) ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) produced more than \$200 in investment income during the reporting period. For purposes of the value and income thresholds, the filer aggregates the filer's interests with those of the filer's spouse and dependent children.

This section does not include the following types of assets: (1) a personal residence (unless it was rented out during the reporting period); (2) income or retirement benefits associated with United States Government employment (e.g., Thrift Savings Plan); and (3) cash accounts (e.g., checking, savings, money market accounts) in a single financial institution with a value of \$5,000 or less (unless more than \$200 of income was produced). Additional exceptions apply. Note: The type of income is not required if the amount of income is \$0 - \$200 or if the asset qualifies as an excepted investment fund (EIF).

7. Transactions

Part 7 discloses purchases, sales, or exchanges of real property or securities in excess of \$1,000 made on behalf of the filer, the filer's spouse or dependent child during the reporting period.

This section does not include transactions that concern the following: (1) a personal residence, unless rented out; (2) cash accounts (e.g., checking, savings, CDs, money market accounts) and money market mutual funds; (3) Treasury bills, bonds, and notes; and (4) holdings within a federal Thrift Savings Plan account. Additional exceptions apply.

8. Liabilities

Part 8 discloses liabilities over \$10,000 that the filer, the filer's spouse or dependent child owed at any time during the reporting period.

This section does not include the following types of liabilities: (1) mortgages on a personal residence, unless rented out (limitations apply for PAS filers); (2) loans secured by a personal motor vehicle, household furniture, or appliances, unless the loan exceeds the item's purchase price; and (3) revolving charge accounts, such as credit card balances, if the outstanding liability did not exceed \$10,000 at the end of the reporting period. Additional exceptions apply.

9. Gifts and Travel Reimbursements

This section discloses:

- Gifts totaling more than \$375 that the filer, the filer's spouse, and dependent children received from any one source during the reporting period.
- Travel reimbursements totaling more than \$375 that the filer, the filer's spouse, and dependent children received from any one source during the reporting period.

For purposes of this section, the filer need not aggregate any gift or travel reimbursement with a value of \$150 or less. Regardless of the value, this section does not include the following items: (1) anything received from relatives; (2) anything received from the United States Government or from the District of Columbia, state, or local governments; (3) bequests and other forms of inheritance; (4) gifts and travel reimbursements given to the filer's agency in connection with the filer's official duties; (5) gifts of hospitality (food, lodging, entertainment) at the donor's residence or personal premises; and (6) anything received by the filer's spouse or dependent child totally independent of their relationship to the filer. Additional exceptions apply.

Privacy Act Statement

Title I of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, as amended (the Act), 5 U.S.C. app. § 101 et seq., as amended by the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge Act 2012 (Pub. L. 112-105) (STOCK Act), and 5 C.F.R. Part 2634 of the U. S. Office of Government Ethics regulations require the reporting of this information. The prima facie presumption of the information on this report is for review by Government officials to determine compliance with applicable Federal laws and regulations. This report may also be disclosed upon request to any requesting person in accordance with sections 105 and 402(b)(1) of the Act or as otherwise authorized by law. You may inspect and request copies of this report for public access of your own form upon request. Additional disclosures of the information on this report may be made: (1) to any requesting person, subject to the limitation contained in section 208(d)(1) of title 18, any determination granting an exemption pursuant to sections 208(b)(1) and 208(b)(3) of title 18; (2) to a Federal, State, or local law enforcement agency if the disclosing agency becomes aware of violations or potential violations of law or regulation; (3) to another Federal agency, court or party in a court or Federal administrative proceeding when the Government is a party or in order to comply with a judge-issued subpoena; (4) to a source when necessary to obtain information relevant to a conflict of interest investigation or determination; (5) to the National Archives and Records Administration for the General Services Administration in records management inspections; (6) to the Office of Management and Budget during legislative coordination on private rulemaking or legislation; (7) to the Department of Justice or in certain legal proceedings when the disclosing agency, an employee of the disclosing agency, or the United States is a party to litigation or has an interest in the litigation and the use of such records is deemed relevant and necessary to the litigation; (8) to reviewing officials in a new office, department or agency when an employee transfers or is detailed from one covered position to another; (9) to a Member of Congress or a congressional officer in response to an inquiry made on behalf of an individual who is the subject of the record; (10) to contractors and other non-Government employees working on a contract, service or assignment for the Federal Government when necessary to accomplish a function related to an OGE Government-wide system of records; and (11) on the OGE Website and to any person, department or agency, any written ethics agreement filed with OGE by an individual nominated by the President to a position requiring Senate confirmation. See also the OGE/GOVT-1 executive branch-wide Privacy Act system of records.

Public Burden Information

This collection of information is estimated to take an average of three hours per response, including time for reviewing the instructions, gathering the data needed to complete the form. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the Program Counsel, U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE), Suite 500, 1201 New York Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20005-3917.

Pursuant to the Paperwork Reduction Act, as amended, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and no person is required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number (that number, 3209-0001, is displayed here and at the top of the first page of this OGE Form 278e).

September 6, 2017

Mr. Stuart Bender
Designated Agency Ethics Official
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Bender:

The purpose of this letter is to describe the steps that I will take to avoid any actual or apparent conflict of interest in the event that I am confirmed for the position of Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

As required by 18 U.S.C. § 208(a), I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter in which I know that I have a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, or in which I know that a person whose interests are imputed to me has a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2). I understand that the interests of the following persons are imputed to me: any spouse or minor child of mine; any general partner of a partnership in which I am a limited or general partner; any organization in which I serve as officer, director, trustee, general partner or employee; and any person or organization with which I am negotiating or have an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

Upon confirmation, I will resign from my position with the State of Iowa Department of Agriculture. For a period of one year after my resignation from this entity, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know the Iowa Department of Agriculture is a party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d).

I am the sole owner and proprietor of WM Northey Farms which is operated as a sole proprietorship. WM Northey Farms participates in the USDA Agriculture Loss Coverage-County Program and receives annual payments through this USDA program. During my tenure as Under Secretary, my brother in law will continue the operation of the farm and I will maintain a fixed cash lease on the farm. I will continue to have a financial interest in this entity, but I will not provide services material to the production of income. Instead, I will receive only passive investment income from it. I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of the WM Northey Farms or any payments received by this entity from USDA programs unless I first obtain a written waiver pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

I own a passive investment interest in Northey Acres – a family farm land ownership corporation with property in Dickinson County, Iowa. Northey Acres participates in the USDA Conservation Reserve Program and receives annual payments through this USDA program. I do not hold a position with this entity. I will continue to have a financial interest in this entity, but I will not provide services material to the production of income. Instead, I will receive only

passive investment income from it. This program is administered by USDA through the Commodity Credit Corporation in which I will serve as an officer and member of the Board. I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of Northey Acres or any payments received by this entity from USDA programs unless I first obtain a written waiver pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1). Additionally, in the event of a disaster in Dickinson County, Iowa, I will not participate in any way in a decision as to whether to designate Dickinson County as entitled to disaster relief.

I will divest my interests in Green Plains, Inc., within 90 days of my confirmation. I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of this entity until I have divested it, unless I first obtain a written waiver pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2).

I understand that I may be eligible to request a Certificate of Divestiture for qualifying assets and that a Certificate of Divestiture is effective only if obtained prior to divestiture. Regardless of whether I receive a Certificate of Divestiture, I will ensure that all divestitures discussed in this agreement occur within the agreed upon timeframes and that all proceeds are invested in non-conflicting assets.

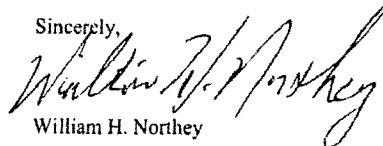
If I have a managed account or otherwise use the services of an investment professional during my appointment, I will ensure that the account manager or investment professional obtains my prior approval on a case-by-case basis for the purchase of any assets other than cash, cash equivalents, investment funds that qualify for the exemption at 5 C.F.R. § 2640.201(a), obligations of the United States, or municipal bonds.

I will meet in person with you during the first week of my service in the position of Under Secretary in order to complete the initial ethics briefing required under 5 C.F.R. § 2638.305. Within 90 days of my confirmation, I will also document my compliance with this ethics agreement by notifying you in writing when I have completed the steps described in this ethics agreement.

I understand that as an appointee I will be required to sign the Ethics Pledge (Exec. Order no. 13770) and that I will be bound by the requirements and restrictions therein in addition to the commitments I have made in this ethics agreement.

I have been advised that this ethics agreement will be posted publicly, consistent with 5 U.S.C. § 552, on the website of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics with ethics agreements of other Presidential nominees who file public financial disclosure reports.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William H. Northey", written in a cursive style.

William H. Northey

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF
GOVERNMENT ETHICS



September 11, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition,
and Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In accordance with the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, I enclose a copy of the financial disclosure report filed by William H. Northey, who has been nominated by President Trump for the position of Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, Department of Agriculture.

We have reviewed the report and have obtained advice from the agency concerning any possible conflict in light of its functions and the nominee's proposed duties. Also enclosed is an ethics agreement outlining the actions that the nominee will undertake to avoid conflicts of interest. Unless a date for compliance is indicated in the ethics agreement, the nominee must fully comply within three months of confirmation with any action specified in the ethics agreement.

Based thereon, we believe that this nominee is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest.

Sincerely,

DAVID APOL

Digitally signed by DAVID APOL
DN: c=US, o=U.S. Government, ou=Office of
Government Ethics, cn=DAVID APOL,
email=DAVID.APOL@OGE.DHS.gov, c=US
Date: 2017.09.11 14:02:52 -0700

David J. Apol
Acting Director and General Counsel

Enclosures



October 3, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts, Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Addendum to the Committee Questionnaire

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

During my interview with your staff counsels, we identified items that required clarification or were inadvertently left off my original Committee Questionnaire submitted.

Please find below the opinion from USDA's Office of the General Counsel in reference to my serving as "Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation" while being officially nominated for "Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services".

"If Mr. Northey is confirmed as Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, that will be his Senate-confirmed title. In practice, he will be the official overseeing the domestic-focused Farm Production and Conservation mission area and he will not oversee the Foreign Agricultural Service, which is now assigned to the Under Secretary of Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs. In the absence of a statutory change to the title, USDA may consider administratively referring to Mr. Northey as the Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation in order to convey accurately his areas of responsibility and avoid confusing producers and our international trading partners"

Please find below specific outline of periods of service and titles held for Innovative Growers, LLC for #3 - Employment:

Elected Official – State of Iowa	State of Iowa	Secretary of Agriculture	Des Moines, IA	1/2007	Present
Grain Farmer	Self-employed	Owner	Spirit Lake, IA	1981	Present
Management	Innovative Growers, LLC	President	Spirit Lake, IA	2000	2013

Please find below the addition of the Farm and Ranch Rural Communities Advisory Committee to #3(B)
- Employment:

Farm and Ranch Rural Communities Advisory Committee, Office of the Administrator, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Member	2010	2016
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Please find below additional memberships, periods of service, and corresponding titles for #5 – Memberships:

Des Moines Rotary Club	2014 (est) - present	Member
Iowa State Fair Board	2007 – present	Board Member
Iowa Water Resources Coordinating Council	2012 (est) - present	Chair - Member
EPA Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force	2007 - present	Co-chair
Iowa Promotion Board	2007 - present	Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa Soybean Association	2007 - present	Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa Beef Industry Council	2007 - present	Voting Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa Turkey Marketing Council	2007 - present	Member
Iowa Animal Care Review Board	2014 (est) - present	Board member
Iowa Egg Council	2007 – present	Ex-officio Board Member
Farm Foundation Bennett Roundtable	2002 (est) – present	Member
Iowa Crop Improvement Assn	2007 – present	Member

Iowa Grain Indemnity Fund Board	2007 – present	Member
Iowa Rural Health & Primary Care Advisory Committee	2007 – present	Member
Iowa Sheep & Wool Promotion Board	2007 – present	Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa State Dairy Board	2007 – present	Member
Iowa Watershed Improvement Review Board	2010 - present	Member
US Egg Industry Center – Iowa State University	2007 – present	Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa State University Plant Sciences Center	2007 – present	Member
Iowa Poultry Association	2007 – present	Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa Power Fund	2007 – 2011	Member
White House Nutrient Prize Partners	2014 (est) - present	Member
Valley E-Free Church, Des Moines	2008 – present	Member
NASDA	2013	Member at Large
NASDA	2011-2012	President
NASDA	2010-2011	Vice – President
NASDA	2009-2010	2nd Vice – President
NASDA	2008-2009	Secretary / Treasurer
NASDA	2013	Member

NASDA	Current	Committee: Plant Ag and Pesticide Reg.
NASDA	Current	Committee: Food Regulation
NASDA	Current	Committee: Marketing and International Trade
NASDA	Current	Committee: Rural Development and Financial Security
NASDA	Current	Committee: Animal Agriculture
NASDA	Current	Committee: Plant Ag and Pesticide Reg.
NASDA	Current	Committee: Natural Resources and Environment
MASDA	Current	Vice – President
MASDA	2007-Current	Member
Food Export Midwest	2011-2013	President
Food Export Midwest	2007-Present	Member

The following grid contains additional positions for which I have been elected or appointed to be included #6(A) – Political Activity:

Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship	Elected	1 st – Nov 2006 2 nd – Nov 2010 3 rd – Nov 2014	Serving Current term
Dickinson County Soil and Water District Commission	Elected	Nov 1998, Nov 2002	4 year terms
Dickinson County Extension Council	Elected	I believe I was elected twice in the 1990s. I am unsure of the dates.	4 year terms

The listing below provides an update to #6(B) – Political Activity:

Chuck Grassley	Surrogate	Public Speaking	2010, 2016
Joni Ernst	Surrogate	Public Speaking	2014
Kim Reynolds	Endorser	Endorsement	2017
Terry Branstad	Endorser	Endorsement	2010, 2014
Mark Jacobs	Endorser	Endorsement	2014
Steve King	Endorser	Endorsement	2014, 2016
Rod Blum	Endorser	Endorsement	2014, 2016
David Young	Endorser	Endorsement	2014, 2016
Tom Latham	Endorser	Endorsement	2008, 2010, 2012, 2014
Travis Harris	Endorser	Endorsement	2017
Bob Henderson	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
David Kerr	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
Joel Fry	Endorser	Endorsement	2010
Greg Forristall	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
Stan Gustafson	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
Kevin Koester	Endorser	Endorsement	2016

Jake Highfill	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
Jarad Klein	Endorser	Endorsement	2012
Tom Moore	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
Brian Best	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
John Kooiker	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
Jane Bloomingdale	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
David Maxwell	Endorser	Endorsement	2012
Louis Zumbach	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
Josh Byrnes	Endorser	Endorsement	2010
Darrel Branhagen	Endorser	Endorsement	2014
Brian Moore	Endorser	Endorsement	2012
Alan Burt	Endorser	Endorsement	2012
Bob Hager	Endorser	Endorsement	2012
Sandy Salmon	Endorser	Endorsement	2012
Megan Hess	Endorser	Endorsement	2012
Dan Rasmussen	Endorser	Endorsement	2010
Lee Hein	Endorser	Endorsement	2010

Mark Segebart	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
Dan Zumbach	Endorser	Endorsement	2016
Trump Agricultural and Rural Advisory Committee	Member	Member	2016-present
Jeff Smith	Endorser	Endorsement	2012
Bobby Kaufmann	Speaker	Speaker	11-13-2015
IA GOP Lincoln Dinner	Speaker	Speaker	May, 2016
Johnson County GOP Dinner	Speaker	Speaker	4-29-16
Black Hawk GOP Women's Lunch	Speaker	Speaker	4-1-16
Jeff Edler Event	Speaker	Speaker	2-25-16
Republican National Convention	IA Delegate	Delegate Duties	2008

Please see the table below for a breakdown of itemized political contributions #6(C) – Political Activity:

Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition	\$500	2012
Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition	\$400	2013
Iowa Farm Team PAC	\$500	2014
Republican Party of Iowa	\$10,000.00	2016
Republican Party of Iowa	\$20,000.00	2016
Republican Party of Iowa	\$1000.00	2016

Polk County Republican Central Committee	\$1000.00	2015
Polk County Republican Central Committee	\$1000.00	2014
Polk County Republican Central Committee	\$1000.00	2013
Republican Party of Iowa	\$15,000.00	2012
Republican Party of Iowa	\$15,000.00	2012
Polk County Republican Central Committee	\$1000.00	2012
Polk County Republican Central Committee	\$1000.00	2012

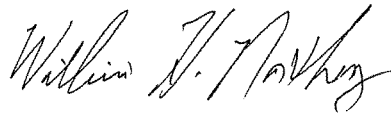
You requested that I clarify resignations of membership positions. If confirmed, I will resign all positions and memberships listed in #5 – Memberships with the exception of the Des Moines Rotary Club and the Valley E-Free Church in Des Moines, Iowa.

Due to the vast number of public events and speeches I have delivered during my tenure as Iowa Secretary of Agriculture please accept the attached documents detailing public events, speeches given, and where available talking points used, as an addendum to #7 – Publications.

For the final request on the need to list additional memberships on the OGE 278 form, I have consulted with Stuart Bender, Director of the Office of Ethics at USDA. Mr. Bender has determined that the additional memberships do not need to be listed on my nominee OGE-278 report. These memberships in certain agriculture-related Iowa state boards and councils are by virtue of my Iowa state government position. As Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture, I serve on those Iowa state councils to represent Iowa state government. The fiduciary duty is to my employer, the State of Iowa, and not to those respective boards and councils. These positions do not meet the fiduciary duty criteria established by the Ethics in Government Act and the U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE). As such, these positions do not need to be listed on his OGE-278 report.

Finally, please be advised that I certify the information included in all of my nominee documents was accurate as of the day of execution through present day, including my official nomination on September 5, 2017.

Sincerely,



October 4, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts, Chairman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

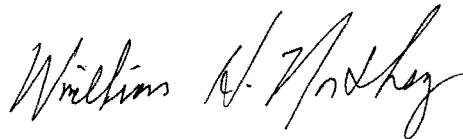
The Honorable Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

Please be advised that pursuant to section 101 (b) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, as amended, I have informed the appropriate ethics officials that the information required by section 102(a) (I)(A) of the Act with respect to income and honoraria contained in OGE Form 278e (Executive Branch Public Financial Disclosure Report) executed by me on September 6, 2017 is correct.

This information is current as of Wednesday, October 4, 2017. This date is within five days prior to the date of the first hearing scheduled to consider my nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William H. Hodge". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "W" and "H".

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION & FORESTRY
Questions for Executive Nominees
115th Congress

1. Basic Biographical Information

Please provide the following information.

<i>Position to Which You Have Been Nominated</i>	
<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date of Nomination</u>
Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation	

<i>Current Legal Name</i>			
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>
William	Howard	Northey	

<i>Addresses</i>					
<u>Residential Address</u> (do not include street address)			<u>Office Address</u> (include street address)		
			Street: 502 E 9 th St		
City: Urbandale	State: Iowa	Zip: 50322	City: Des Moines	State: Iowa	Zip: 50319

<i>Other Names Used</i>						
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<u>Check if Married Name</u>	<u>Name Used From</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
					Est □	Est □
					Est □	Est □

<i>Birth Year and Place</i>	
Year of Birth (Do not include month and day.)	Place of Birth
1959	Sioux City, IA

<i>Marital Status</i>					
Check All That Describe Your Current Situation:					
Never Married ☐	Married ☒	Separated ☐	Annulled ☐	Divorced ☐	Widowed ☐

<i>Spouse's Name (current spouse only)</i>			
<u>Spouse's First Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Middle Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Last Name</u>	<u>Spouse's Suffix</u>
Cynthia	Marie	Northey	

<i>Spouse's Other Names Used (current spouse only)</i>						
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<u>Check if Maiden Name</u>	<u>Name Used From</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
Cynthia	Marie	Lacey			09/1959 Est X	02/1983 Est X
					Est ☐	Est ☐

<i>Children's Names (if over 18)</i>			
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Suffix
Jessica	Northey	Meierotto	
Kathryn	Lorraine	Northey	
Emily	Northey	Brown	

2. Education

List all post-secondary schools attended.

<u>Name of School</u>	<u>Type of School</u> (vocational/technical/trade school, college/university/military college, correspondence/distance/extension/online school)	<u>Date Began School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Ended School</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still in school)	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Date Awarded</u>
Southwest Minnesota State University	University	August 2002 ^{Est} X	Dec 2004 ^{Est} X ^{Present} ☐	MBA	May 2004 <i>Dic</i>
Iowa State University	University	August 1977 ^{Est} X	May 1981 ^{Est} X ^{Present} ☐	Bachelors	May 1981

3. Employment

(A) List all of your employment activities, including unemployment and self-employment. If the employment activity was military duty, list separate employment activity periods to show each change of military duty station. Do not list employment before your 18th birthday unless to provide a minimum of two years of employment history.

<u>Type of Employment</u> (Active Military Duty Station, National Guard/Reserve, USPHS Commissioned Corps, Other Federal employment, State Government (Non- Federal Employment), Self- employment, Unemployment, Federal Contractor, Non- Government Employment (excluding self-employment), Other	<u>Name of Your Employer/ Assigned Duty Station</u>	<u>Most Recent Position Title/Rank</u>	<u>Location</u> (City and State only)	<u>Date Employment Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Employment Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still employed)
Elected Official – State of Iowa	State of Iowa	Secretary of Agriculture	Des Moines, IA	January 1 2007 (elected Nov. '06)	Est X Current □
Grain Farmer	Self-employed	Owner	Spirit Lake, IA	05/1981 Est X	Present □
				Est □	Est □

(B) List any advisory, consultative, honorary or other part-time service or positions with federal, state, or local governments, not listed elsewhere.

<u>Name of Government Entity</u>	<u>Name of Position</u>	<u>Date Service Began</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate)	<u>Date Service Ended</u> (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still serving)
USDA – Farm Service Agency	State FSA Committee	08/2001 Est X	08/2005 Est X Present □
		Est □	Est □ Present □

4. Honors and Awards

List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, civilian service citations, military medals, academic or professional honors, honorary society memberships and any other special recognition for outstanding service or achievement.

- 2016 Graham Award for Outstanding Service to Agriculture, National Assn. of State Departments of Agriculture;
 - *Foreign Animal Disease Leadership Team recognized for the response to highly pathogenic avian influenza*
- 2016 Master Farmer Recognition, Class of 2016, Wallaces Farmer
- 2016 4-H Outstanding Alumni Award
- 2016 Distinguished Achievement in Agriculture Award, Gamma Sigma Delta
 - Distinguished Service Award, Iowa Corn Growers Association
- 2015 State Public Service Award, National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA)
- 2014 Recognition of Contribution to Iowa Renewable Fuels Industry, Eco Engineers – RIN Academy
- 2013 Honorary Member, Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity
- 2012 Alumni Merit Award, Iowa State University Alumni Association
 - *The Alumni Association's ISU Club of Chicago established this award in 1932 to recognize ISU alumni for outstanding contributions to human welfare that transcend purely professional accomplishments and bring honor to the university*
- 2008 Gulf Guardian Award, EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program Partnership

5. Memberships

List all memberships that you have held in professional, social, business, fraternal, scholarly, civic, or charitable organizations in the last 10 years.

Unless relevant to your nomination, you do NOT need to include memberships in charitable organizations available to the public as a result of a tax deductible donation of \$1,000 or less, Parent-Teacher Associations or other organizations connected to schools attended by your children, athletic clubs or teams, automobile support organizations (such as AAA), discounts clubs (such as Groupon or Sam's Club), or affinity memberships/consumer clubs (such as frequent flyer memberships).

<u>Name of Organization</u>	<u>Dates of Your Membership</u> (You may approximate.)	<u>Position(s) Held</u>
Des Moines Rotary Club	2014 (est) - present	Member
Iowa State Fair Board	2007 – present	Board Member
Iowa Water Resources Coordinating Council	2012 (est) - present	Chair - Member
EPA Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force	2007 - present	Co-chair

Iowa Promotion Board	2007 - present	Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa Soybean Association	2007 - present	Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa Beef Industry Council	2007 - present	Voting Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa Turkey Marketing Council	2007 - present	Member
Iowa Animal Care Review Board	2014 (est) - present	Board member
Iowa Egg Council	2007 – present	Ex-officio Board Member
Farm Foundation Bennett Roundtable	2002 (est) – present	Member
Iowa Crop Improvement Assn	2007 – present	Member
Iowa Grain Indemnity Fund Board	2007 – present	Member
Iowa Rural Health & Primary Care Advisory Committee	2007 – present	Member
Iowa Sheep & Wool Promotion Board	2007 – present	Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa State Dairy Board	2007 – present	Member
Iowa Watershed Improvement Review Board	2010 - present	Member
US Egg Industry Center – Iowa State University	2007 – present	Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa State University Plant Sciences Center	2007 – present	Member
Iowa Poultry Association	2007 – present	Ex-officio Board Member
Iowa Power Fund	2007 – 2011	Member

White House Nutrient Prize Partners	2014 (est) - present	Member
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6. Political Activity

(A) Have you ever been a candidate for or been elected or appointed to a political office?

<u>Name of Office</u>	<u>Elected/Appointed/ Candidate Only</u>	<u>Year(s) Election Held or Appointment Made</u>	<u>Term of Service (if applicable)</u>
Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship	Elected	1 st – Nov 2006 2 nd – Nov 2010 3 rd – Nov 2014	Serving Current term

(B) List any offices held in or services rendered to a political party or election committee during the last ten years that you have not listed elsewhere.

<u>Name of Party/Election Committee</u>	<u>Office/Services Rendered</u>	<u>Responsibilities</u>	<u>Dates of Service</u>
NA			

(C) Itemize all individual political contributions of \$200 or more that you have made in the past five years to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity. Please list each individual contribution and not the total amount contributed to the person or entity during the year.

<u>Name of Recipient</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Year of Contribution</u>
Dickinson County Republican Party Pacyderms	\$100	2012
Dickinson County Republican Party Pacyderms	\$100	2014
Dickinson County Republican Party Pacyderms	\$100	2016

Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition	\$500	2012
Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition	\$400	2013
Iowa Farm Team PAC	\$500	2014

7. Publications

List the titles, publishers and dates of books, articles, reports or other published materials that you have written, including articles published on the Internet.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Publisher</u>	<u>Date(s) of Publication</u>
Iowan "Tama Jim" Wilson a USDA Secretary of great significance	Agri-Pulse	February 15, 2017
Iowans United on Water Quality Efforts	Des Moines Register	September 23, 2016
Farm Safety: A legacy to be proud of – Northey, Clabaugh, Currey & Wintersteen	General Distribution	September 15, 2016
E15: An affordable, clean-burning option at the pump	General Distribution	September 16, 2016
Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP): An important opportunity for Iowa farmers	Iowa Economic Development Authority	January 15, 2016
Agriculture and the Iowa Caucus		January 29, 2016
Water Quality Progress Requires Cooperation, not Blame	Des Moines Register	December 10, 2015
Collaboration: The Path Forward in Water Quality	Sioux City Journal	July, 7, 2015
Collaboration: The Path Forward in Water Quality	General Distribution	March, 5, 2015
California is taking away choices, not listening to consumers	Des Moines Register	October 23, 2014
Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy: Making Exciting Progress – Northey, Gipp, Lawrence	Cedar Rapids Gazette	August 29, 2014
Farmers and cities are working together on nutrient reduction – Northey, Gipp	Des Moines Register	June 30, 2014
California is trying to take away consumer choice	Cedar Rapids Gazette	May 1, 2014
Farmers engaged in Iowa Water Quality Initiative	General Distribution	April 11, 2014
King Amendment vital to Iowa agriculture	Des Moines Register	December 17, 2013

RFS Comment Period: An opportunity for Iowans to be heard	General Distribution	December 5, 2013
Farmers Embrace new Technologies to Address Environmental Challenges	General Distribution	July, 19, 2013
Nutrient Reduction Strategy key to keeping Iowa a national leader in conservation – Northey & Gipp	General Distribution	January 10, 2013
Tile Drainage and Flooding	Cedar rapids Gazette	March 23, 2012

8. Lobbying

In the past ten years, have you registered as a lobbyist? If so, please indicate the state, federal, or local bodies with which you have registered (e.g., House, Senate, California Secretary of State).

No.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

OCTOBER 5, 2017

**Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
Nomination Hearing
October 5, 2017
Questions for the Record
Mr. Gregory Ibach**

Chairman Pat Roberts

- (1) As Under Secretary, you will be responsible for implementing standards set forth by the Secretary through the National Organic Standards Board. A rule pertaining to production requirements for Organic Livestock and Poultry was finalized near the end of the previous Administration. This rule appeared to side with some in the organic industry who oppose commercial growth in this sector.
 - a. As Under Secretary, what will be your approach to addressing complex issues like this, where some argue concepts such as “organic” and “commercial” cannot coexist? If confirmed, I will help lead the Secretary’s efforts in protecting the integrity of the USDA organic certified seal through a collaborative and transparent process necessary to ensure USDA certified organic products meet consistent, uniform standards.
 - b. Will you support AMS programs that allow businesses to increase their scale and up their production? Yes.
- (2) Upon confirmation you will immediately be faced with departmental action on the GIPSA rules. These rules were first proposed in 2010 and haven’t been implemented due to the controversy surrounding them—industry economists have found these rules would have a negative impact of over a billion dollars to animal agriculture. These rules were also finalized near the end of the previous administration, and they are now set to take effect on October 19, 2017. As Under Secretary, will you commit to taking immediate steps to ensure these rules are not implemented? If confirmed, I will commit to implementing the Secretary’s Regulatory Reform agenda to ensure all MRP regulations are fact-based, data-driven and deliver a clearly defined regulatory benefit that balances costs and benefits without implementing undue burdens on American agriculture.
- (3) As Under Secretary you will be responsible for overseeing the commodity checkoffs. Checkoffs have been widely supported by farmers and ranchers due to the tremendous returns they generate. Yet, some interest groups claim checkoffs do not truly promote the interests of all farmers and ranchers and lack transparency.
 - a. Do you believe continuing commodity checkoffs are important for American agriculture? Yes.
 - b. From your experience in state government working with some of the commodity checkoffs, do you believe they are adequately managed? If confirmed, I commit to

managing all MRP programs consistent with the Secretary's Strategic Goals, which include working efficiently, effectively, with integrity and customer service.

- (4) The checkoff authority generally prohibits promotional materials for one product from disparaging another. How will you ensure that organic promotions that are from checkoff authority and monies will not disparage other non-organic products, such as those that are, contain or may contain biotechnology? If confirmed, I will oversee the commodity checkoffs consistent with the authority Congress has granted, and I will implement the Secretary's directive to maximize the ability of the men and women of America's agriculture to produce and sell the foods and fiber that feed and clothe the world.
- (5) The organic industry has experienced rapid growth since the establishment of the organic standard in 1990. With that growth, producers have utilized various approved methods of production to meet the growing consumer demand. However, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is discussing whether or not to recommend removing currently allowable production methods from being eligible to qualify for USDA's Organic label. As Under Secretary, how will you balance NOSB recommendations with the need for a variety of production methods to meet the demand for organics? If confirmed, I will facilitate the NOSB's recommendations consistent with the Secretary's directive to "Do Right and Feed Everyone."
- (6) I understand that USDA is making progress on implementation of the National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard. This new function was not intended as a new, costly, programmatic function of the agency as there are appropriate mechanisms in place for enforcement. Will you commit to work with me and the Committee to implement the biotech disclosure law in a manner that does not create significant new bureaucracy at USDA and in a manner that is as minimally disruptive to the marketplace? Yes.
- (7) Back in January both USDA and FDA proposed draft rules and guidance on biotechnology in agriculture. If confirmed, what steps would you take to engage and coordinate with USDA's counterpart agencies and our trade partners to try and harmonize these and any further rulemaking efforts? If confirmed, I will work with other USDA Under Secretaries and our counterpart agencies, along with our trading partners, to ensure a robust, transparent process based on the best available science is implemented to harmonize these rulemaking efforts.
- (8) In 2015, Congress passed the Agriculture Reauthorizations Act (P.L. 114-54) which amended the U.S. Grain Standards Act. On April 14th 2017, the Grain Inspection, Packers & Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) issued Directive 9290.18 providing for the cancellation of nonuse of service exception agreements if one or more parties cancel the exception. The cancelled and pending cancellations of nonuse of service exceptions has created concerns and confusion among stakeholders with pre-existing exception agreements.
 - a. How can USDA accommodate Congressional intent, expressed in report language, regarding requiring agreement between only the designated official agency and the applicant? I have not been fully briefed on this matter. However, if confirmed, I look

forward to becoming fully informed on this issue and the accompanying Congressional intent.

- b. Do you commit to working with stakeholders to address these concerns? Yes.

Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow**Budget**

- (1) If you are confirmed, will you commit to using all appropriated funds in a timely manner and spending all funds as intended by Congress? If confirmed, yes, I will in accordance with the relevant legal requirements.

Management

- (2) The Marketing and Regulatory Program Mission area oversees everything from international and domestic plant and animal health issues to organics, commodity promotion, and development of local markets.
 - a. What will you do to ensure you are balancing all of the functions of the role? During my testimony, I identified balance as the key challenge and approach to this job. If confirmed, I will first recognize the vast diversity of American agriculture and the evolving markets not just as challenges, but as opportunities we are uniquely suited to meet. On the issues related to health and safety, first and foremost, we must rely on science and data and insist on its integrity and adherence.
 - b. Will you commit to consulting with a broad group of stakeholders on decisions that impact your mission area? If confirmed, yes, I will. As Secretary in Nebraska, I found consultation vital and as President of NASDA, consultation was the foundation for our unity of voice and action.

Specialty Crops

- (3) Specialty Crop Block Grants support research, marketing and promotion of specialty crops. This program has been critical to supporting growth of Michigan's hop industry which is now the 4th largest site of production in the country.
 - a. Will you commit to supporting, protecting, and continuing specialty crop programs in your mission area? Yes.
 - b. What efforts will you take to ensure that the U.S. specialty crop industry is healthy and growing? If confirmed, I look forward to becoming fully briefed on the challenges and the programs and working with Congress and stakeholders to best prioritize activities.

Organics

- (4) Organic agriculture is the fastest growing sector of American agriculture, contributing over \$50 billion annually to the national economy. Protecting organic integrity and helping farmers transition into organics are vitally important to growth in the organic sector.
 - a. Will you commit to working with the National Organic Standards Board, producers, and organic stakeholders to protect the integrity of the National Organic Program? If confirmed, I will. I am supportive of all of agriculture and the organic markets provide a particularly attractive opportunity for small, beginning and local producers.

- b. If confirmed, how will you support organics in your new role? If confirmed, I look forward to becoming fully briefed on the federal programs and challenges and working with organic producers and Congress to identify priorities such as the integrity of the seal and transitional barriers you referenced.
- (5) A recent audit by the USDA Office of the Inspector General found that the National Organic Program lacked proper controls for imports of supposedly “organic” products. I am concerned that this lack of oversight and accountability could damage consumer confidence and compromise the integrity of the organic program.
 - a. Will you commit to making enforcement of USDA’s organic standards for imports a priority? If confirmed, yes, I will as has the Secretary.
 - b. Will you commit to updating my staff on progress the National Organic Program is making to increase accountability and enforcement of organic standards for imports? Yes, I will.
 - c. Given increasingly complex global supply chains, how will you ensure the integrity of the USDA organic seal? If confirmed, I will make it a priority to get briefed on the OIG report and options for resolution. It is not clear to me yet what demands may be for human and financial resources or whether new methods are necessary to best ensure compliance but we must ensure that consumer confidence in the seal is maintained.
 - d. NOP has limited resources to carry out investigations and enforcing activities, will USDA take a risk based approach to addressing integrity concerns? Yes, I will, if confirmed.

Checkoffs

- (6) Congress authorized the organic checkoff in the 2014 farm bill to allow industry to meet growing research needs and find solutions to emerging challenges. Despite larger criticisms of the checkoff programs, the organic sector should have the same opportunity as any other agricultural sector to put in place a checkoff program. Will you commit equal treatment of all checkoff programs, including the proposed organic checkoff? I am not aware of issues surrounding an effort to put an organic checkoff program in effect but as a producer, I have been supportive of checkoff programs across industries that are accountable and operate within important guidelines to protect the producer investment, to prevent political intervention and to ensure a positive industry message. If confirmed, I will become briefed on this matter and look forward to discussing it with stakeholders and interested members of the Congress.
- (7) The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) oversees more than 20 research and promotion boards and is responsible for reviewing the “checkoff” budgets and contracts to ensure that they do not violate the law. AMS is also required to submit an annual report to Congress on the National Dairy Promotion and Research Program and National Fluid Milk Processor Promotion Program, however this report has not been published since 2012.
 - a. If confirmed, will you commit to finalizing all of the missing dairy checkoff reports, and to publish all future reports in a timely manner? This is a matter of which I have

not previously been apprised but if confirmed, I will get to the bottom of it at your request.

- b. There have been several high-profile incidents of checkoff funds being misused, and USDA's inspector general has called for greater oversight of checkoff boards. How will you work to ensure that all research and promotion programs have proper oversight and ensure checkoff funds are not being misused? If confirmed I will familiarize myself with the OIG findings you referenced. As I indicated in response to question 6, accountability of these programs is vital and it is the responsibility of the MRP leadership to make it so.

GIPSA

- (8) Throughout his campaign and in his inaugural address, President Trump stressed the importance of defending American workers against an economy that has been rigged to favor large corporations—not workers. The farm sector is certainly not exempt from the same forces that can lead to unfair wages and working conditions that President Trump has vowed to fight. That pursuit of fairness sits at the heart of the Packers and Stockyards Act, an important law administered by the Grain Inspection, Packers, and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA). As you may know, GIPSA promulgated a set of rules designed to protect poultry farmers against unfair business practices, which have been delayed and now have an effective date of October 19, 2017. Both the Farm Bureau and the National Farmers Union have supported the rules.

Consistent with President Trump's pledge to protect farmers and ranchers, do you intend to fully implement the Farmer Fair Practices Rules promulgated by GIPSA? As a livestock producer, I appreciate the competing views on this and related competitiveness matters and pledge to work with stakeholders to find the right balance. As stated in my response to Senator Roberts, if confirmed, I will commit to implementing the Secretary's Regulatory Reform agenda to ensure all MRP regulations are fact-based, data-driven and deliver a clearly defined regulatory benefit that balances costs and benefits without implementing undue burdens on American agriculture.

- (9) As a part of the reorganization effort at USDA, the Packers and Stockyards Program is being shifted from having its own Deputy Administrator to promote fair business practices and competitive markets for farmers and ranchers, to being one program among many overseen by a Deputy Administrator. How will you ensure that this downgrade does not impact the ability for farmers and ranchers to have a level playing field? If confirmed, I intend to immediately be briefed on the new roles and responsibilities outlined in the latest reorganization efforts. I understand the Secretary's commitment to being more efficient and better serving customers and believe that commitment to GIPSA customers will remain.

Animal Welfare

- (10) In February 2017, USDA removed thousands of pages from its APHIS website relating to the enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act and the Horse Protection Act, including facility inspection reports, lists of regulated entities, enforcement records, and research facility annual reports. Much of this information continues to be withheld from the public, depriving the public of a valuable resource to gain transparency into USDA's enforcement of these important animal welfare laws and cases of abuse and mistreatment of animals.

If confirmed will you promote transparency and adherence to animal welfare laws? Will you work to restore the AWA and HPA records previously available? If confirmed, I will request a progress report on this matter. I believe strongly we should be transparent according to applicable legal requirements.

Animal Health

- (11) Bovine tuberculosis was once the most prevalent infectious disease in cattle in the U.S., causing more losses among U.S. livestock in the early part of the last century than all other infectious diseases combined. The Cooperative State-Federal Tuberculosis Eradication Program was created 100 years ago, in 1917. Since then, the disease has been nearly eradicated, though Michigan continues to have outbreaks of the disease in cattle due to a disease reservoir in deer.

Do you commit to continue to work with state and local governments, as well as producers, to continue efforts to eradicate bovine tuberculosis? Yes. This is an important example of both the success of federal animal health programs and the elusive nature of animal disease which requires our continuous diligence.

- (12) Within the last year, the U.S. has seen outbreaks of avian influenza, New World Screwworm, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, and bovine tuberculosis. Zoonotic diseases pose a threat to both human and animal health, and most new human pathogens originate in animals. USDA is the primary government agency responsible for safeguarding animal health.

If confirmed will you advocate on behalf of producers to Congress to provide additional funding to respond to infectious disease outbreaks? Are you prepared to represent the U.S. agricultural industry with our trading partners during a disease outbreak? If confirmed, yes to all the above. Matters related to health of this nature must have the resources necessary to get the job done and as with this and all other trade issues, it will be the job of APHIS to adhere to science and data to inform trade access outcomes.

Urban Agriculture

- (13) Urban agriculture is quickly expanding and gaining popularity in communities, small towns, and metropolitans across the United States. Urban agriculture brings farming to urban residents and strengthens connections to rural communities. It also provides economic opportunities, increases access to food, and is a training ground for future farmers.

Will you commit to supporting new farmers, innovative production methods, and all farmers regardless if they are located in urban or rural areas? Yes, I will. With a smaller and smaller percentage of Americans providing food, fuel and fiber in this country, this represents a meaningful opportunity to restore the critical bonds you identify.

People's Garden

- (14) To date, there are nearly 2000 registered people's gardens across the country, located on federal properties, schools, faith based centers, and other community sites. These gardens coordinated through USDA and managed by volunteers have donated over 3.9 million pounds of produce to hungry communities all across the country.
- What is your vision for the USDA People's Garden Program? As one who believes that we farm not just for nutrition and an economic living but for personal growth, I applaud efforts to get more people directly involved. This effort speaks to the necessary connection you cited before that I believe is necessary to preserve political unity around broad American farm production pursuits.
 - Will you commit to continue to use the People's Garden in Washington, D.C. to educate the residents and visitors in the Nation's Capital about food and agriculture? Yes.
 - Will you commit to continue to manage USDA's national network of People's Gardens across the country? Yes.

Local Foods

- (15) Industry data shows that local food sales totaled at least \$12 billion in 2014 and are expected to reach over \$20 billion by 2019. Over 160,000 farmers currently sell products into the local food economy both through small scale purchases at farmers and into food hub aggregates for large wholesale purchases. Over the past decade, USDA has made significant investment in building infrastructure to support the local food economy.
- What will you do to build, improve, and diversify efforts to ensure that direct marketing opportunities are available to all American farmers? Local sales are an exciting growth area for many American farmers. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with this community to learn how USDA can best help.
 - What will you do to build local markets and regional food systems? While not intimately familiar with the details of the past investment you mention, if confirmed, I look forward to engaging this community to learn of past action and determine how best to proceed.
 - Will you commit to continue working with other USDA agencies to support local and regional food system development? Yes.
 - Will you commit to working with Congress and stakeholders to expand and improve local and regional food systems? Yes.
 - What is your vision for the future of the Know Your Farmer Know Your Food initiative?
(a-e): If confirmed, I will insist on a comprehensive briefing of all the authorities provided MRP by Congress in this regard including Know Your Farmer Know Your Food. In short, I find new and local market opportunities very exciting for both producers and consumers. An increasing number of consumers value local production and are willing to pay suitable returns to local providers in addition to providing the

connectivity you cited previously. If confirmed, I pledge to work with stakeholders and Congress on measures to continue the momentum.

- f. As part of the Know your Farmer Know Your Food Initiative, USDA posted a local food compass on the USDA website to help stakeholders assess and develop regional and local food infrastructure. Will you commit to sharing this information with stakeholders and posting updated information on USDA's website? This is a matter that I must look into but I commit to doing so.
 - g. Will you commit to continuing the USDA seasonal farmers market in Washington, D.C.? If confirmed, I will.
- (16) USDA Food and Nutrition Service has initiated several efforts to help small family farms engage in direct marketing by addressing technology barriers that make it difficult for SNAP participants to make purchases at farmers markets, farm-stands, and through community supported agriculture programs.
- a. Will you commit to focusing on these issues to make it easier for direct to consumer sales? Yes, I look forward to a discussion of these issues of which I am not yet adequately briefed.
 - b. What will you do to support efforts that strengthen markets for small farmers? The issues related to FNS eligibility and compliance and direct markets are ones I must look into for further detail. If confirmed, I pledge to do so.

GMO Labeling

- (17) I know the Secretary is committed to getting this implemented on time, which I appreciate. However, it is just as important to get the policy right, which will require a balance between ensuring consumers have the transparency about their food that they expect with making sure the disclosure is based on sound science.
- a. Will you commit to working with Congress and all interested stakeholders to craft a rule consistent with congressional intent for transparency? If confirmed, yes.
 - b. Will you commit to regular briefings for the Committee as implementation moves forward? Yes.

Food Safety

- (18) The relationship between USDA and FDA is critically important to the safety of the nation's food supply. It's also been an important partnership while FDA implements final rules under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), which will improve food safety of processed foods, fresh produce, pet food, and ensure foreign suppliers are meeting the same standards as domestic producers and processors.
- a. Will you commit to maintaining and strengthening this relationship? This was a challenging matter that state ag leaders toiled over at length when I was President of NASDA. If confirmed, yes, I will.

- b. How will you increase communication and cooperation between USDA and FDA on food safety issues? My observation to date is that the Secretary is leading the way on interagency cooperation and I look forward to doing more than my part. Whether with FSMA or other matters on which we work together with FDA, I look forward to a close working relationship for the reasons you identify.

(19) The FSMA standards are poised to have major impacts on small farmers. FDA's own regulatory impact analysis states that some small farms will go out of business. Will you commit to ensuring that USDA programs provide outreach and technical assistance to smaller operations attempting to comply with FSMA? Yes.

Market Data

(20) AMS serves an important role in providing market news and price reporting for farmers and ranchers, and can be more responsive and tailor reporting to the needs of industry faster than NASS. The data AMS provides is valuable for facilitating open, transparent price discovery and providing all market participants with information. As more commodity programs and crop insurance policies become available for a wide range of crops, accurate and reliable price and yield data is increasingly important.

- a. How will you work to improve the important market news and reporting that AMS provides for farmers and ranchers? When I am adequately briefed on existing procedures, I will reach out to stakeholders and to leadership at REE for their best ideas. This is an opportunity to deliver on customer service with information the public requires and that we can best produce. It should be an ongoing conversation.
- b. How will you work to ensure this reporting remains available and transparent for all market participants under increasingly tight budgets? As with all matters where important functions face budget pressure, I will be both encouraging and stubborn in pursuit of innovative delivery approaches that go farther with less.

Working with Congress

(21) If you are confirmed, I look forward to working very closely with you on the upcoming Farm Bill and other issues of importance to American farmers, ranchers, and families. If confirmed, do you agree, without reservation, to:

- a. Promptly reply to any request for information from me or any duly constituted committee of the Congress? If confirmed, yes.
- b. Respond to my requests for data and technical assistance in drafting legislation? Yes.
- c. Notify me or my staff in advance of making public any major changes USDA decides to make or major decisions USDA makes during your tenure? Under the leadership of three Governors, I have been sensitive about this duty. Yes, to the very best of my ability.

- d. Notify me of any programs in your Mission area that USDA intends to end, discontinue new enrollment or new awards, or not promote, prior to making any such changes to any program? Yes, to the very best of my ability.
- e. Provide to this Committee any reports provided by USDA to the Senate Appropriations Committee or the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee? Yes.

Senator Joni Ernst

- (1) In 2015 we experienced the worst foreign animal disease outbreak in our nation's history, with the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) or Bird Flu as it was commonly called. In Iowa our turkey and egg laying flocks were devastated, and the impact was felt acutely by farmers across the Midwest. As Bill Northey can attest to, it was trial by fire, and the Iowa Department of Ag learned a lot through the experience, as did the USDA. How would you collaborate with other agencies and within the USDA to ensure we are prepared to response to another foreign animal disease outbreak, be it HPAI, Foot and Mouth Disease, or something else? While Nebraska did not experience the same level of HPAI incidents or impacts Iowa and other states suffered, Nebraska was forced to depopulate four large egg-laying facilities containing nearly five million chickens impacted by the HPAI outbreak in 2015. If confirmed, I will facilitate an aggressive interagency process within USDA and all appropriate federal and state agency partners, as well as producers, to ensure we are prepared to mitigate and, when necessary, respond to future animal disease outbreaks.

Senator Steve Daines

- (1) As you know, the Agricultural Marketing Service will play an essential role in developing the rules related to labeling biotechnology. As USDA moves forward in its rule-making process, will you commit to ensuring that your priority will be to make determinations based on sound science regarding the safety of food or products within its jurisdiction, and not on marketing or mandatory labeling efforts that have no bearing on food safety or plant pest risk? Yes.
- (2) APHIS plays a critical role in establishing the rules surrounding ensuring that imported food is safe and that countries are meeting their obligations within existing trade agreements. How will you work with other relevant agencies within the federal government to ensure that U.S. products are not facing unfair trade barriers, whether they be sanitary and phytosanitary measures or otherwise? I believe that partnerships are critical to ensure a unified strategy against unfair sanitary and phytosanitary trade barriers. If confirmed, I plan to work closely and stay in regular communication with the USDA Under Secretaries for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs, Food Safety, and Research, Education and Economics, as well as the U.S. Trade Representative and Department of Commerce to fight unfair barriers with the best science available.
- (3) Farmers and ranchers in the Greater Yellowstone Area have significant concerns regarding brucellosis. How do you see APHIS coordinating and cooperating with state and local agencies in Montana, including Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Department of Livestock on disease management efforts, particularly regarding brucellosis, in the Greater Yellowstone Area? Just as with trade barriers, I think it is critical to have open lines of communication and the best science available when dealing with challenges like brucellosis. If confirmed, I will work with APHIS to make sure that we are listening to our state and local counterparts, as well as local producers as we work to address brucellosis. The elusive nature of this animal disease requires a well-coordinated response.
- (4) APHIS and the Department of Homeland Security are responsible for maintaining the Select Agents and Toxins list. The inclusion of the *Brucella abortus* bacteria on this list has substantially hindered critical research into brucellosis, which endangers cattle herds of farmers and ranchers in Southwest Montana and elsewhere in the West. While protecting the homeland against the potential of a biological attack is of utmost importance, would you commit to working with me to see if there can be an appropriate exemption made for legitimate research, particularly surrounding agriculture, for the *Brucella abortus* bacteria? Yes.

Senator Patrick Leahy

- (1) In your opinion, what are the major management challenges facing the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today? How do you intend to address any such challenges? If confirmed, I look forward to carefully reviewing the operations of APHIS to identify where the agency works well and where there is room for improvement. I agree with the Secretary's goal to make USDA the most efficient, effective and best run department in the Federal government and will work to ensure that the agencies under my supervision strive to reach this standard.
- (2) In your opinion, what are the major management challenges facing the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration today? How do you intend to address any such challenges? According to USDA's recently announced realignment, the Federal Grain Inspection Service and the Packers and Stockyards will be separated and realigned within MRP. If confirmed, I look forward to carefully reviewing the operations of both entities to ensure that these changes achieve their aim of delivering better service to the customers of both FGIS and Packers and Stockyards. I agree with the Secretary's goal to make USDA the most efficient, effective and best run department in the Federal government and will work to ensure that the agencies under my supervision strive to reach this standard.
- (3) In your opinion, what are the major management challenges facing the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) today? How do you intend to address any such challenges? If confirmed, I look forward to carefully reviewing the operations of AMS to identify where the agency works well and where there is room for improvement, and would want to ensure that the addition of program components to AMS recently announced by the Secretary goes smoothly. I agree with the Secretary's goal to make USDA the most efficient, effective and best run department in the Federal government and will work to ensure that the agencies under my supervision strive to reach this standard.
- (4) The AMS oversees the Federal Milk Marketing Orders (FMMO) that help to ensure stability of producer milk prices and an adequate milk supply for the marketplace. However, I have heard complaints that our current FMMO dairy pricing system stands as a disincentive for making donations of dairy products during times of low milk prices. Today we have perverse financial signals for dairy processors and farmer cooperatives to simply dump milk in manure lagoons rather than donating it to food banks or other feeding programs.

Would you support changes to the present pricing formula to encourage the donation of dairy products rather than just seeing that milk dumped into manure pits? FMMOs have added stability to milk pricing for producers and buyers for some time. The waste that you describe is disturbing. If confirmed, I intend to get briefed on this and then let us discuss further on how best to resolve.
- (5) In 2010, the U.S. Department of Justice, Antitrust Division, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) held five joint public workshops to explore competition issues affecting the agricultural sector in the 21st century and the appropriate role for antitrust and regulatory enforcement in that industry.

- a. Do I have your commitment that you will thoroughly review the issues raised by farmers from across the country at those five workshops? Yes.
 - b. How can the USDA and Congress better address barriers to fair competition in agriculture markets, including buyer power (monopsony) and vertical integration? I believe that fair competition is vital to healthy agricultural markets that benefit both producers and consumers. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary, Congress, and stakeholders to ensure that the regulatory agencies within MRP are accomplishing their missions while also not causing undue regulatory barriers to competition.
- (6) Under your leadership as the Director of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, your state has witnessed a nearly 300 percent increase in the number of farmers' markets since 2000 and I saw that in 2015 you helped to lead the celebration when Nebraska surpassed 100 farmers' markets statewide. Nationwide we have seen the number of farmers' markets double in the last ten years, which helps all types of agriculture to create jobs and ensure a safe and secure food supply.

How will you work to ensure that local foods and farmers' markets, which many Americans rely on as a source of affordable, nutritious, and accessible food, receive the necessary federal resources and attention to continue feeding communities and creating markets for producers and jobs for rural communities? If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the agencies under my supervision meet the needs of their diverse customers, including both the local markets that many Americans enjoy as well as the producers and consumers in larger, traditional markets which supply the safe, abundant food which will be necessary to meet needs of the future.

- (7) According to data from the Food and Nutrition Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, roughly .02% of all Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) spending occurs at farmers' markets while 51% of SNAP dollars are spent at big box stores.
- a. Recognizing that local food and farmers' markets are an important source of affordable and healthy options and necessary for a secure food supply, how do you suggest we encourage and educate people on opportunities to redeem SNAP dollars at farmers' markets? If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the programs under my supervision increase awareness amongst consumers, including SNAP recipients, of the diverse range of options for healthy, wholesome food provided by our producers. If confirmed, I will investigate the current programs to identify incentives and barriers that presently exist.
 - b. According to a USDA study, SNAP participants cite the acceptance of the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card as a major reason for shopping at a particular location and that financial incentives are a major reason for choosing to shop at one place over another. How can we encourage the acceptance of EBT cards at more farmers' markets and encourage farmer's markets to adopt financial incentives for those who use EBT cards? I believe the consumer and producer choice should drive the operations of

markets. If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing how we can best increase markets for our producers and open additional options for healthy, wholesome food for consumers, including EBT card users.

- c. Farmers markets may be occasional or transient, as compared to bricks and mortar stores, making the cost of EBT implementation for just one day a week a barrier. Is it possible to adopt rules that allow the sharing of EBT accounts/machines among farmers markets within a county or town? If confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this issue to ensure that our rules and operations keep pace with modern markets and the evolving needs of producers and consumers, including in EBT transactions.
- (8) Industry data show that local food sales are expected to reach over \$20 billion by 2019, and over 160,000 farmers currently sell products into the local food economy both through small scale purchases at farmers' markets and into food hub aggregates for large wholesale purchases. In recent years the USDA has made significant investments in building the infrastructure needed to support the local food economy.
- a. How do you propose to help American farmers who want to find new ways to support and market to local food systems in order to increase economic development and jobs in the farm and food sector and improve access to healthy local food for rural communities? If confirmed, I will work to ensure the programs under my supervision support the needs of their customers, including those entering growing market such as those for local foods.
 - b. What experience do you have in Nebraska in supporting economic initiatives that assist local food infrastructure and local economic growth and development? In Nebraska, the Department of Agriculture engaged in a broad range of activities to promote the products of Nebraska farmers and ranchers, including those marketing their products locally. For instance, the department maintained a searchable database of both farmer's markets and local produce growers, amongst other things. If confirmed, I look forward to bringing this experience to my new role.
- (9) What ideas do you have to support modern and efficient agricultural production for our local food systems that promote much needed rural jobs and support our struggling rural economies? If confirmed, I support continuing the innovative programs in the MRP mission area that promote the continued success of American producers, including those involved in local food systems.
- (10) Following the national trend, Nebraska's organic industry has more than doubled since 2000. Organics, which was considered just a niche market when I wrote the first Organic Farm Bill in 1990 as Chairman of this Committee, is now a vital market for producers and a source of quality food consumers have come to trust and rely on. However, that consumer support is only as strong as the USDA organic seal and USDA enforcement of organic standards to ensure a fair playing field across the country, and internationally. In addition, it is important to know that these organic standards are entirely voluntary and are only required of those farms and businesses that opt in to be certified organic producers.

- a. Are you committed to working on the continued success of the National Organic Program and its voluntary certification for farmers and food companies that support nearly 24,000 domestic jobs and more than \$50 billion in sales? Yes. As I have indicated in response to numerous questions identifying support for organic and local movements, I strongly support all systems of American agriculture where producers and consumers can exercise their choices. In a world that expects dramatic growth in world food demand, I believe we must support surge capacity across the board. In addition to the industry growth in Nebraska which you noted, as President of NASDA, I learned much about the growing success of the organic industry from many of my colleagues from all parts of our country and enjoyed visiting Vermont recently when Secretary Ross hosted the annual meeting of NASDA which showcased many Vermont producers. Finally, if I may say a word about what I consider the wise foresight of the author of the Organic Program, the continued success of the organic industry remains driven by success in the marketplace where farmers have provided products to satisfied consumers willing to pay premium prices. Producers are succeeding by being responsive to market demand and that market reality suggests structural promise for future success.
 - b. How will you ensure the National Organic Program has adequate resources to enforce the organic label? Organic food production is a growing segment to the agricultural community with much future promise. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that the National Organic Program is able to continue to meet the needs of its customers involved in this exciting market. It is critical that the integrity of the seal be protected and resources must be identified necessary to make it so.
 - c. Will you commit to collecting organic market data information? Yes.
 - d. What do you see as the greatest challenges to continuing to expand the organics market domestically and abroad and how can we address them? If confirmed, I look forward to identifying the biggest challenges facing the customers served by the agencies under my supervision, including those in the organics market, and working as a partner with these producers to ensure that they can meet the demand of organic consumers.
- (11) What suggestions do you have for expanding organic production in this country in order to better meet the growing domestic demand and prevent a further reliance on organic imports, some of which have recently been found to be fraudulent or from questionable sources abroad? USDA's programs should help maximize the opportunities and abilities of both conventional and organic producers to meet market demand. Where organic market demand grows, USDA should work to provide the tools to organic operations to meet these needs.
 - (12) During your hearing you mentioned that one of the most important roles you will have at the USDA will be safeguarding animal health and overseeing the work of the APHIS. You went on to say that if we cannot keep out new pests, that we will be putting our farmers, ranchers, and producers at great risk, but you made no mention of the forest pests that APHIS is also tasked with since its mission is "*To protect the health and value of American agriculture and natural resources.*"

- a. What familiarity do you have with APHIS' work to keep out invasive forests pests that threaten our nation's forests and the rural jobs and economy those forests support? I am familiar with the work that APHIS does in partnership with states to keep out and eradicate forest pests. In fact, in Nebraska, we have been working closely with APHIS prior to and since Emerald Ash Borer was found in the state for the first-time last year. These pests can absolutely devastate our forests, and if confirmed, I would work to make sure that APHIS' pest programs, including those to protect the green mountains of Vermont, are effective.
 - b. Can you tell me how many wood and tree pests APHIS inspectors find every year, which theoretically should not have made it to our shores if importers were using the best available processes and phytosanitary practices to keep *American agriculture and natural resources safe*? And do you commit to looking into this issue and finding ways to safeguard both American agriculture and our natural resources? I do not have that data, but commit to learning more and working every day to protect American agriculture and natural resources if confirmed.
- (13) I understand that in 2014 the Nebraska Legislature passed a state law allowing university research into the viability of growing industrial hemp. Vermont has a similar state law that established policies and procedures for growing hemp in Vermont so that farmers and other businesses in the Vermont agricultural industry can take advantage of this market opportunity. Your own alma mater, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has been utilizing an authorization in the 2014 Farm Bill that allows states like Nebraska and Vermont, with hemp laws on the books, to research industrial hemp, but the University has encountered many challenges and a sea of red tape and regulations.

Under the 2014 Farm Bill authorization, how will you work to help farmers in Nebraska, Vermont, and the 31 other states that have passed hemp laws, to research the best varieties for their regions and take other steps to demonstrate what is best in terms of fertilizer and density of plantings, and marketing of their industrial hemp crops so they can take advantage of this growing domestic market and rapidly growing demand? Although I would need to more closely review the pilot programs authorized under the 2014 farm bill and the Marketing and Regulatory Programs' role in this area if confirmed, I will continue to work with the Secretary to administer this program as authorized by Congress.

Senator Michael F. Bennet

- 1) In listening sessions across Colorado, we hear regularly about the sustained interest in organic production, and increasing interest local foods, and regional supply chains – which can benefit rural communities. Despite this, the President's FY 18 Budget Proposal eliminated the Local Food Promotion Program, the Farmers Market Promotion Program, and Specialty Crop Block Grants program – all of which can support local and regional food systems.
 - a. If confirmed, will you work with the Secretary to ensure that USDA's programs have the resources necessary to keep pace with the organic industry's growth? Recognizing the difficult budget constraints which the Administration and the Congress must operate within, if confirmed, I will work with all parties to press for resources to fund the priorities supporting organic agriculture.
 - b. If confirmed, will you be an advocate for these three USDA programs that are vitally important to Colorado's fruit and vegetable growers? If confirmed, I am committed to coming fully up to speed on the three programs you identify and working with the Secretary, the Administration, and the Congress to identify and fund the priorities that best serve these markets.
 - c. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure that the USDA is effectively serving the small businesses engaged in local and regional supply chains? I believe that the growth of diverse customer demands is an important new opportunity for consumers as well as producers who have new opportunities to benefit from high value markets unforeseen when I started farming. If confirmed, I will be supportive of efforts to promote these markets and I look forward to continuing this dialogue to achieve the objectives you identify.

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

- (1) In your testimony, you mention the difficulty of striking a balance between marketing and regulating. I think there is a good example in the National Organic Program, housed within the Agricultural Marketing Service. Organic farming has been an extraordinary opportunity for New York farmers to capture more of the value of their production as the organic industry has grown to more than \$43 billion in annual sales. Part of the success of the organic industry has been its ability to redefine itself and determine its own set of standards through the collaborative work of the National Organic Standards Board. That is a bottom up, producer driven model we can all support. However, I am concerned that you have written opposing the proposed Livestock and Poultry Practices rule, a rule that the NOSB helped to create.
- a. Do you support the NOSB, and the rights of farmers who voluntarily choose organic standards to define those methods? Yes.
 - b. Would you agree that organic farmers have the right to redefine organic to be more in line with consumer expectations? I agree that organic producers have a central role in informing and defining organic standards. I believe further that as we largely defer to industry participants on standards, we must be mindful of impacts that may include diminished producer predictability or the creation of producer winners and losers as standards shift beneath them.
 - c. Do you agree that animal welfare standards are an important part of organic standards and key to maintaining consumer confidence? I am aware of the importance of this discussion but have not been adequately briefed in detail on the status of relevant precedents, the legal authority one way or the other, or USDA's Process Verified Program utilization. If confirmed, I commit to achieve a full understanding of these and other issues and consult with stakeholders on the best path forward.
- (2) You have committed yourself to protecting the integrity of the organic seal. One of the biggest threats to that integrity is fraud – specifically imported feed that is falsely certified as organic. This lowers the value of our domestic organic grains, takes money out of the pockets of our growers, and if we do not put an end to it, it will make consumers question the very idea of organics.
- a. How, specifically, would you put an end to this fraud? If confirmed, I will help lead the Secretary's efforts in protecting the integrity of the USDA organic certified seal, which includes initiating enforcement actions against those violating USDA organic regulations. I want to ensure that when America's farmers purchase organic feed, or America's consumers purchase organic food, they are getting what they paid for, and not to the detriment of our organic producers. I want to look at how AMS can increase its ability to detect and root out any organic fraud.
 - b. How would you direct the staff of MRP to work with other Agency staff to increase inspections and are more significant penalties required? If confirmed, I will help lead the Secretary's directive to work efficiently, effectively, with integrity and customer focus

throughout USDA in all program areas, including efforts to protect the integrity of the USDA organic certified seal.

- (3) I will soon introduce the Invasive Fish and Wildlife Prevention Act, a bill that would give Fish and Wildlife Services new tools to prevent or respond to the introduction of harmful wildlife species like the Asian Longhorned Beetle. Obviously, the Animal, Plant Health Inspection Service has a major role to play in preventing the introduction of invasive species. The Emerald Ash Borer, which is currently destroying some of New York's most valuable trees, was introduced through wood packing material imported from Asia fifteen years ago.
 - a. How would you direct the staff of APHIS to prevent future introductions of forest pests and does the Plant Protection Act provide APHIS sufficient authority? These pests can devastate our farmers', ranchers', and landowners' livelihoods, and shut down trade in an instant. While I have more familiarity with diseases of livestock, if confirmed, I will fully review and gain a better understanding of how we can prevent plant pests and diseases. I am not fully briefed on the full authorities under the Plant Protection Act, but would also look forward to better understanding these authorities.
 - b. APHIS has the ability to levy significant penalties for violations of the Plant Protection Act. Does APHIS use this authority sufficiently to deter violations and would you advocate for more rigorous enforcement action and penalties? I am not fully briefed on current APHIS enforcement actions or lack thereof, but if confirmed, I will undertake a review of those actions to better understand their effectiveness and any corresponding impacts those actions have on deterrence.
 - c. Would you agree that the best use of any funds generated from fines for violations of the Plant Protection Act would be to address some of the damage already done by invasive pest species? Violations of the Plant Protection Act can have devastating impacts on American agriculture and our natural resources, and if confirmed, I will commit to ensuring an effective and aggressive approach to mitigating future introductions and impacts from invasive species.

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

- (1) Pennsylvania is proud to be home to a rapidly growing organic sector, second only to California. Last year about 78% of Pennsylvania household's purchased organic and PA has over 1,400 organic businesses.
 - a. If confirmed, how will USDA support the organic industry? As the Secretary stated, organic farming is an exciting and expanding area of agricultural production, and the commodities produced through organic farming must be part of the overall strategy to feed the world and grow our local, state, and national economies. If confirmed, I will help lead the Secretary's commitment to seeing that organic products are an integral part of our overall food and trade strategy.
 - b. If confirmed, will you support funding for organic research? Yes.
 - c. What do you believe is USDA's role in assisting farmers who may be just beginning to farm and want to become organic producers or to farmers who are looking for ways to diversify their business to survive an economic downturn? I am committed to the support of beginning farmers and ranchers, those underserved in agriculture and our veterans. If confirmed, I will help lead the Secretary's directive to develop and integrate a plan to continue to incentivize all new entries into agriculture, and I will commit to assisting all producers in their efforts to diversify their operations and mitigate risk.
 - d. I have heard from many Pennsylvania organic producers who are deeply concerned about USDA's decision to delay the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices rule. What are your thoughts on having different operating systems for poultry operations under an organic standard that is supposed to be consistent? Does that create an un-level playing field for organic farmers? I have not been fully briefed on this rule or the different operating systems for poultry operations under the organic standard, but if confirmed, I will undertake a detailed review of this matter.
- (2) President Trump's budget for FY2018 eliminated the Local Food Promotion Program, the Farmers Market Promotion Program, and Specialty Crop Block Grants program. These programs help support our farmers, connect producers directly to consumers, and provide access to healthy food.
 - a. If confirmed, will you support maintaining these programs? I am not fully briefed on these programs, but if confirmed, I will look forward to better understanding and reviewing these programs.
 - b. Can you please elaborate on your stance on local foods and specialty crop programs? I strongly support all systems of American agriculture where producers and consumers can exercise their choices. In a world that expects dramatic growth in world food demand, I believe we must support surge capacity across the board. In addition to the industry growth we have celebrated in Nebraska, as President of NASDA, I learned

much about the growing success of the organic, local, and specialty crop industries from many of my colleagues from all parts of our country. Additionally, I applaud the model that fosters a marketplace where farmers provide products to satisfied consumers willing to pay premium prices new, young and local farmers can enjoy. Producers are succeeding by being responsive to market demand and that market reality suggests structural promise for future success.

- (3) An insect that is not native to the United States, the Spotted Lanternfly, is a newly-established plant pest in Pennsylvania which is threatening our agricultural economy in addition to our natural resources and our broader trade in goods interstate and internationally. This is yet another in a string of invasive pests that are introduced into the United States through global travel and trade. To date, funding through APHIS has been our state's primary means of combatting it. I am grateful for the more than \$5 million directed to PA over the past three years and for the technical assistance and guidance from USDA staff. But the reality is that the magnitude of the threat and the challenge of containing and eradicating this pest will require multiple more dollars in terms of funding.
 - a. So funding for APHIS will be absolutely critical and we hope to count on you for support, but we also hope that you will fight against any proposal that charges for APHIS services when states and our farmers are standing ready to be collaborative partners. Will you do that? I am not fully briefed on these proposals. If confirmed, I will thoroughly review this matter.
 - b. Additionally, what role do you see USDA-APHIS playing in responding to other invasive pests threatening agricultural commodities and our priceless ecosystems? APHIS plays a critical role in preventing the introduction and spread of plant pests and invasive species, and if confirmed, I will help lead the Secretary's directive within USDA and with other federal partners to reduce the risk of imported pests coming into the country.
- (4) Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) impacted the US poultry industry and farmers recently. Is the USDA-APHIS prepared to respond to an outbreak? And what measures would you take to protect our food supply from disease? While Nebraska did not experience the same level of HPAI incidents or impacts of other states, Nebraska was forced to depopulate four large egg-laying facilities containing nearly five million chickens impacted by the HPAI outbreak in 2015. If confirmed, I will facilitate an aggressive interagency process within USDA and all appropriate federal and state agency partners, as well as producers, to ensure we are prepared to mitigate and, when necessary, respond to future animal disease outbreaks.
- (5) With over 19% of children in Pennsylvania experiencing food insecurity, providing them with at least one meal a day that contains enough nutritional content to get them through the school day is critical. The National School Lunch Program must have access to these fresh, healthy foods if our children are to succeed and to avoid behavioral and health problems associated with a lack of nutrition. What do you see as the role of USDA-AMS in procuring these foods and how will you find opportunities to source more local foods for the programs you administer? I am not fully briefed on AMS' role in procuring foods for the National School

Lunch Program, but if confirmed, I will look forward to better understanding AMS' role in this process and supporting the Secretary's commitment to supporting local food production.

- (6) While the ag economy has really been in a downturn the last number of years, and a lot of our producers are hurting, especially those young and beginning farmers that have just gotten their start in the last few years, I am concerned with the proposed cuts to USDA's budget that have been made by President Trump. How do you believe that you will be able to continue to provide a level of service to sustain and then grow what is the number one industry in Pennsylvania, as well as to maintain our position as a leader in the world for having the safest and most affordable food supply? If confirmed, I commit to conducting the people's business efficiently, effectively, and with the utmost integrity within USDA, and I will help lead the Secretary's goal to ensure a safe and secure food supply for our consumers.
- (7) After record high prices in 2014, milk prices fell substantially. The Dairy Margin Protection Program, which was established by the 2014 farm bill, has not worked as intended. When milk prices were at historic lows recently, only those who purchased the highest level of MPP coverage received payments. There is broad agreement that improvements to MPP are necessary, and I'm committed to strengthening dairy programs in the upcoming Farm Bill. However, Pennsylvania's dairy farmers cannot wait until 2018. Will you commit to supporting the development of additional risk management tools for dairy farmers? Yes.

Senator Chris Van Hollen

- (1) The last Administration proposed an important rule to update Horse Protection Act regulations to finally end horse soring, following up on a highly critical audit by the USDA Inspector General in 2010. The rule had overwhelming, bipartisan Congressional support from 42 Senators and 182 Representatives who sent letters to USDA, along with more than 100,000 public comments submitted in support. Because of a backlog at the Federal Register, the final rule was never published as USDA announced it would be on January 13th of this year. If confirmed, will you ensure that the final rule is promptly published? I have not been fully briefed on the proposed rule, reviewed the comments or consulted the veterinarians or experts within the Department. However, if confirmed, I look forward to discussing how best to improve the animal well-being we desire.

**Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
Nomination Hearing
October 5, 2017
Questions for the Record
Mr. William Northey**

Chairman Pat Roberts

1. Your experience as a farmer and Secretary of Agriculture in Iowa gives you valuable firsthand perspective on the economic challenges facing agriculture and rural America.
 - a. How do you view the risk management tools offered by the Farm Service Agency and Risk Management Agency during the agriculture economic downturn? I think that Congress did a great job in writing the 2014 Farm Bill to support producers during the hard times. The last couple of years have tested those programs and I think that they have been crucial to keeping many producers in business.
 - b. Are the programs working as intended? I believe that overall, yes, the programs are acting as a true safety net for most commodities with a few exceptions like cotton and dairy programs. Crop insurance is another important part of the farm safety net that has truly been tried and tested over the years but continues to be the best way for farmers to manage their own risk.
2. There are multiple pending administrative actions at FSA and RMA. These include a request by 26 Senators for FSA to operate the Cotton Ginning Cost Share program for the 2016 crop year as created and administered by the previous Administration for the 2015 crop year. The FY2017 omnibus (P.L. 115-31) requires FSA to establish a \$5 million pilot program for an alternate calculation of ARC Country yields to reduce disparities between comparable counties. Finally, Senator Stabenow and I wrote the Secretary regarding administrative actions that could improve dairy insurance. If confirmed as Under Secretary, how will you ensure the agencies reach decisions and implement these and other initiatives for producers in a timely and transparent manner? If confirmed, I will ask staff to fully brief me on this and any outstanding requests made by Members of Congress, and in consultation with the Secretary, will give them full consideration before completing any actions.
3. We hear a rather consistent message of frustration among farmers, particularly among beginning farmers trying to get started in the business, about the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the disparity between the program's rental payment rates as they compare to local market rates. The program at times is more financially attractive to a landowner to enroll prime farmland into CRP, rather than make that land available for production. If confirmed, you will be overseeing CRP.
 - a. What administrative steps would you take to address these issues and to encourage enrollment of more environmentally sensitive land? As Secretary of Agriculture in Iowa, I recognize and have championed appropriate conservation efforts. At the same time, I'm

very familiar with the challenges that face new and beginning farmers. It's important that the CRP program achieves its conservation goals while also not disrupting market land prices in local communities. If confirmed, I want to make sure that USDA's programs under my jurisdiction work as intended. I will prioritize examining this issue and taking steps to address any disparities.

- b. Will you work with the Committee on policy ideas to better target CRP enrollment?
Absolutely.
4. Natural disasters can strike agricultural areas of the United States at any point throughout the year. In the event of a disaster, there would likely be a variety of authorities that could be used in your mission to provide timely support to producers. For example, during wildfires this past March in Kansas, the livestock indemnity, emergency conservation, and crop insurance programs all provided assistance to producers, and each faced local implementation challenges. If confirmed, how will you manage responses to natural disasters and who will you seek input from while making time-sensitive decisions during these types of events? Natural disasters are often devastating to U.S. producers and it is critical that USDA move deftly and expeditiously to provide much needed support. If confirmed, I will work closely with impacted state governments, producers, and agency employees on-the-ground and Congress to make sure we have the best information to make timely and informed decisions.
5. As a producer and as Secretary of Agriculture in Iowa, you have witnessed multiple natural disasters including droughts, floods, and other storms. If confirmed as Under Secretary, how will you work to improve FSA, RMA, and other risk management tools for producers across the country? USDA's risk management tools, particularly crop insurance, work generally well, but I recognize that there is room for improvement. I agree with Secretary Perdue that our goal should be to make USDA the most effective, efficient, and customer friendly organization in the U.S. government. If confirmed, I will focus every day on making sure that the programs and agencies under my supervision strive towards that goal, and will continuously evaluate programs to determine where we can improve. We will operate within the limits of our authority, and consult with Congress should legislative adjustments be needed to better serve producers.
6. The new Farm Production and Conservation mission area will house several agencies which have daily, direct contact with farmers in a single customer-focused mission area, including the Farm Service Agency (FSA), the Risk Management Agency (RMA), and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The motivation behind this change is to increase agency efficiencies, enhance program deliverability, and improve producers' experiences. Issues like conservation compliance have raised implementation challenges because they require coordination between all three of these agencies. If confirmed, how will you foster streamlining collaboration between these three agencies, particularly with complicated issues like conservation compliance? I believe that Secretary Perdue's efforts to align FSA, RMA, and NRCS and create a one-stop shop for USDA's customers will go a long way in improving coordination across these three agencies. Additionally, his recent announcement to consolidate mission support functions at the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) level will help create a unified mission area. I know this will be a

challenging task. I am up for that challenge and if confirmed, look forward to getting up to speed on efforts so far, and to champion better collaboration at FPAC. I think that cross training staff, making sure agencies can talk across IT platforms, and reducing duplicative interactions and reporting that producers must go through will help in this effort.

7. The technology needs of the FPAC mission area continue to be a challenge for USDA. For example, the Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative (ACRSI) was designed to improve producer's experiences during acreage reporting to the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Risk Management Agency (RMA). While there have been improvements to information-sharing between the two agencies, there are still challenges with common reporting standards and acceptance of precision data. If confirmed as the first Undersecretary to oversee FSA, RMA, and NRCS, how will you manage technology issues and coordination between the agencies to improve customer service? I have heard from producers in my state that an improved reporting process is needed to make the programs run more smoothly for them. If confirmed, I will prioritize the maintenance of a culture where FPAC is constantly looking for improvements to the customer experience and ensuring that its IT infrastructure incorporates advancements in new tools and technology.
8. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) and the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) board base decisions off of sound data in order for crop insurance to be actuarially sound. The use of conservation practices, including no till, cover crops, and crop rotations vary by climate, soil, and commodity grown. When considering changes to crop insurance, including the encouragement of conservation practices, will you commit to continuing to make these decisions based on sound data? Yes.

Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow**Farm Bill**

- (1) During the 2014 Farm Bill, the House of Representatives attempted to split the Farm Bill into two parts rather than maintain the long-standing connection between food and farm policy. This ultimately failing strategy was opposed by over 500 farm, food, energy, conservation, nutrition and rural groups. If confirmed, will you oppose any efforts to split the Farm Bill and, instead, join the broad coalition of Farm Bill groups to support a comprehensive Farm Bill? The President and the Secretary have committed to maintain a unified Farm Bill as do I. In addition to maximizing the likelihood of approving a Farm Bill, it helps to unify the natural coalition of rural and urban voices in the food security discussion.

Conservation

- (2) Water quality issues are on the top of the minds of many Michigan residents and farmers. Will you commit to supporting all voluntary agriculture conservation programs authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill to help farmers address water quality and other natural resource concerns? The voluntary incentive-based approach working with multiple stakeholders is the approach I pressed in Iowa and the approach I believe that best serves federal conservation efforts.
- (3) USDA announced a Clean Lakes Estuaries and Rivers (CLEAR) initiative to retrofit existing buffers and install new buffers with new water quality practices such as bioreactors and saturated buffers. If confirmed, will you brief me on the status of this effort and future plans for ways to enhance water quality through CRP? Yes.
- (4) As we have discussed, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) has been important in Michigan to help address issues like water quality in Lake Erie and the Saginaw Bay. I know they have been important in your home state of Iowa as well. Unfortunately, the President's budget proposed eliminating this program and there have been some indications that NRCS may not be holding any future sign ups or be allowed to promote the program.
- a. If confirmed, will you be a champion for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program? Yes. I will be a reserve champion as the Secretary has already committed to be its champion.
 - b. Will you advocate for the program both within USDA and to OMB and the White House and push back against efforts to eliminate it in future budgets? If confirmed, I plan to follow the Secretary's lead and support voluntary working lands programs so long as Congress directs USDA to continue doing so.
 - c. If confirmed, will you provide the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee with a full briefing on the status of being able to sign up for new projects through the RCPP program and on USDA's promotion of RCPP? Yes
- (5) Conservation compliance has been a bedrock agreement between farmers and taxpayers since 1985 – for more than 30 years. This agreement was further highlighted by the broad coalition

of conservation, crop insurance, and farm groups who supported expanding conservation compliance in the 2014 Farm Bill in return for protecting the crop insurance program. To protect against future cuts to crop insurance in the upcoming Farm Bill we will need to maintain conservation compliance and ensure the program is credible. The OIG has cited USDA for inconsistent enforcement of the program. Will you commit to supporting the current conservation compliance agreement and ensuring it is properly enforced so that we have a broad coalition to help protect crop insurance? I plan to support and continue enforcing conservation compliance requirements within FPAC programs as directed by the Farm Bill statute.

- (6) As we discussed earlier this week, my constituents continue to be frustrated by the CRP review in Lenawee County, MI. While I understand progress has been made by USDA in resolving this issue, I continue to hear frustration from producers and local farm groups with how USDA handled the process, especially given that this review stemmed from errors made by USDA employees. In our meeting I gave you a copy of the letter I sent to Secretary Perdue last week.
 - a. When can I expect a response to the letter? If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to provide a timely and accurate response.
 - b. Will you commit to looking into my requests and make full 2016 payments to all producers? I recall your raising this matter as a priority and appreciate the urgency that it be resolved. If confirmed, I will look into this matter in detail, and report to you on the status of the response to your letter and to the status of our response to the issues related to Lenawee County.
- (7) Will you commit to working with the future Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment to continue areas where NRCS and Forest Service have successfully collaborated, like the Joint Chiefs Restoration Initiative? If confirmed, yes.
- (8) Will you commit to continuing the NRCS initiatives focused on wildlife, water quality, drought, including Working Lands for Wildlife, the National Water Quality Initiative, and the National Drought Resilience Partnership? Yes.

Forestry

- (9) In addition to helping our farmers and ranchers, NRCS conservation programs also provide technical and financial support to 21 million family forest owners nationwide. This support helps forest owners manage oftentimes significant challenges— like wildfire mitigation and invasive species outbreaks. These programs also help forest owners manage for improved wildlife habitat important to hunters and anglers. Given these substantial benefits, how will you work with NRCS to continue this support for forest owners as well as more traditional agricultural producers? If confirmed, I plan to work with the Secretary to ensure that all the programs under my supervision most effectively and efficiently serve their customers, including the forest owners served by NRCS and will work collaboratively with the NRE mission area and the Forest Service.

- (10) In many cases, private forest owners have found that NRCS lacks the technical forestry expertise capacity to work with forest owners on big challenges – including reducing threats of uncharacteristic wildfire. This lack of expertise persists in spite of Congress specifically instructing NRCS to make forestry a part of these popular initiatives.
- a. How will you work with the Forest Service, state forestry agencies, and private sector foresters, to deliver the needed expertise and support for forest owners? If confirmed, I plan to work closely with other agencies and our state, local and private sector partners to find areas where our cooperation and collaboration can maximize outcomes for the customers that we jointly serve, including forest owners.
 - b. If confirmed, will you commit to streamlining the process for non-NRCS foresters to assist NRCS with technical assistance? Yes.

Farm Safety Net

- (11) Robust risk management protection through Federal Crop Insurance has been a critical part of the safety net for farmers, as was highlighted in a recent letter signed by over 50 organizations. Unfortunately, many producers who grow specialty crops or grow outside the main production areas still do not have crop insurance available. While the addition of a buy-up option under the 2014 Farm Bill's Non-insured Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), has provided improved risk management options for these producers, it does not provide the same risk protection as crop insurance.
- a. If confirmed, do you commit to continuing to expand risk protection and crop insurance options to new areas and commodities? Yes.
 - b. How will you encourage collaboration and regular data-sharing between the Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency and even the public in order to assist in the development of new crop insurance policies? If confirmed, I intend to use the data and resources at hand as you outline, and including the Office of the Chief Economist, to improve risk management tools for producers.

Dairy

- (12) As you know, our dairy farmers are operating without meaningful risk management tools, and there is currently an artificial cap on dairy insurance. Numerous stakeholder groups and members of this Committee have requested that dairy be removed from this artificial cap so that we can improve dairy insurance options – a change that USDA can make today through the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation board. If confirmed, can I count on your support to advocate for this change within the Department and at the White House? I understand that dairy producers have struggled in recent years, even when many commodity producers had beneficial crops years. Further, I appreciate that the safety net for those who produce dairy has not met expectations. If confirmed, I commit to working within the Department and Administration and working with Congress and industry to improve the safety net including insurance options.

Management/Reorganization

- (13) We have heard from Secretary Perdue about the importance of improving customer service and we need to make sure we are meeting the needs of a diverse group of agriculture stakeholders. Whether you're new to farming, a veteran, a woman, or a minority farmer, growing in rural or urban areas, all potential USDA customers deserve customer service and outreach.
- a. Will you commit to providing USDA customer service to a diverse group of agriculture stakeholders, who participate in the programs you oversee? Yes.
 - b. How will you improve this customer service and create new opportunities for beginning farmers? I agree with you and Secretary Perdue that USDA must work to meet the needs of its diverse customers. If confirmed, I will seek feedback from the customers and will prioritize continuous review to identify areas that work well and find areas where the department can improve.
- (14) USDA has long struggled to improve its information technology. Will you prioritize improving IT management and keep the Committee informed of the status of IT in your mission area? If confirmed, yes.
- (15) This administration does not plan to appoint a Deputy Under Secretary to support you in running the Mission Area. The job of Under Secretary often takes you on the road or out of the office.
- a. Who will be supporting you and making decisions on a day to day basis when you are not in the office? If confirmed, I plan to work with the Secretary, my Chief of Staff, and the three Administrators of RMA, FSA, and NRCS to ensure that we can effectively and efficiently manage these critical agencies and provide a high level of customer service on a day to day basis.
 - b. Do you think you'll have the support you need to manage such large, field-based agencies? Yes.
- (16) You will oversee a new Mission Area as part of the larger reorganization of USDA that now includes FSA, RMA, and NRCS. As part of this reorganization, we understand that USDA is planning to consolidate several functions of the agencies at the mission area, including budget, human resources, IT, procurement, and property management. Much of this reorganization has been done with limited Congressional and stakeholder outreach and engagement. For example, I understand that cooperative partners with NRCS, like conservation districts, have not been consulted. You served for eight years as a local county soil and water district commissioner and so should know firsthand the importance of NRCS' cooperative work with local districts. If confirmed, what is your plan to increase Congressional and stakeholder engagement on the aspects of the reorganization that are in your Mission Area? The important efforts to reorganize to provide better service and improved customer service will be an ongoing process. To ensure the highest success, the consultation you describe will be important to me and I look forward to making it so.

- (17) I am keeping a close eye on the consolidation of NRCS and FSA into the same mission area. While I'm all for simplifying and streamlining services, especially those for farmers, I want to make sure that conservation activities remain a priority for this Department. How will you ensure that conservation activities continue to be promoted and prioritized by the Department? As you mentioned earlier, I was previously a board member of my local Soil and Water Conservation District. I was also a champion for voluntary conservation in Iowa. If confirmed, I fully intend to continue being an advocate for conservation.

As part of the reorganization, we have heard some discussion about transferring the administration of NRCS programs to FSA employees. Are you aware of such a plan and what do you think about taking administration of conservation programs away from the conservation agency? If confirmed, I will need to look into this as I have no official knowledge of this notion as described.

- (18) Will you commit to providing me comprehensive information about the consolidation of NRCS and FSA, including any consolidation or closure of both NRCS and FSA field offices, particularly those in the more remote parts of Michigan? Yes.
- (19) Will you provide regular briefings, both proactively and as requested, to the Committee on the implementation of all reorganization efforts in your mission area? Yes.

Commodity Programs

- (20) Under the 2014 Farm Bill, direct payments were replaced by ARC and PLC and farmers were given a choice between protecting against revenue declines or just price alone.
- a. What choice did you and your neighbors make? I chose ARC County, as did most of my neighbors.
 - b. Is one option better than the other or do you think we should maintain a legitimate choice? As individual producers, circumstances and market conditions differ and change, I believe most farmers prefer that Congress maintain a choice.
- (21) If confirmed, will you commit to providing me with data on the program and other technical assistance as we consider a new Farm Bill? Yes.

Sugar

- (22) The U.S. sugar industry supports 142,000 jobs across the country, including thousands of jobs in Michigan. Unfortunately our producers – and especially young farmers – have been hurt by very low prices and volatility caused by the ongoing situation with Mexico dumping large volumes of sugar on the U.S. market. Hopefully this dumping will be stopped with the new suspension agreement, and I appreciate Secretary Perdue taking the time to speak with some of our Michigan sugar producers about this issue earlier this year. Thank you for agreeing in our earlier meeting to visit Michigan to see our diverse agriculture, including seeing first-hand the importance of sugar beet production for our local economy.

- a. Will you commit to work within USDA and with other agencies to ensure that the sugar program is managed in a way that puts American farmers and American jobs first? Yes.
- b. Will you advocate within the Administration to revive the Sweeteners Working Group under the NAFTA U.S.-Mexico Consultative Committee on Agriculture in order to facilitate a dialogue about these issues? If confirmed, I commit to thoroughly reviewing this issue with my staff and considering the merits of reviving this Working Group.

Specialty Crops

- (23) Michigan's agriculture sector is rich in diversity, from traditional commodities and specialty crops to organics and local food systems, the Michigan agriculture sector contributes over \$101.2 billion annually to the state's economy.
 - a. If confirmed, how will you ensure the Farm Production and Conservation mission area supports all farmers - including small and medium scale farmers, specialty crop growers, and organic producers? If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to meet his stated goal of serving all of USDA's diverse customers, including small, beginning, and organic farmers. Producer needs vary depending on size, experience, industry and geography. USDA must be committed to meeting these diverse needs.
 - b. Will you commit to meeting the unique needs of new and beginning farmers, particularly those in urban areas and those using new and innovative growing methods? Yes.

Organics

- (24) Organic agriculture is the fastest growing segment in the U.S. agriculture economy. The organic industry has grown over 200% over since 2007 and now contributes over \$50 billion a year to the national economy.
 - a. How do you plan to support organics if confirmed? If confirmed, I will join the Secretary in ensuring that we are constantly reviewing our programs and seeking input from stakeholders, including organic farmers. This growing segment is important to the future of American agriculture and FPAC programs must assist these producers as they strive to meet growing market demand.
 - b. Will you continue efforts to integrate and offer services to organic producers through the field based agencies like NRCS and FSA? Yes.
 - c. Will you continue to support outreach and improved customer service and program delivery for the Organic Transition Assistance Program, which was recently assigned to FSA? Yes. If confirmed, will you brief me on the status of this program and future plans? Yes.

- d. Will you commit to working with RMA to develop crop insurance tools that work for organic producers? Yes.

Beginning Farmers

- (25) As the average age of the American farmer is continuing to get older, several new efforts were put in place in the 2014 Farm Bill to support new farmers, including better access to credit, easier land transition, and risk management tools.
- a. What efforts will you take to ensure new farmers and ranchers have access to USDA programs and resources? In Iowa, like other heartland states, we have a blessing of highly experienced farmers but given the high barriers to entry that you have identified, I agree we must be mindful of increasing incentives and decreasing barriers for those who will follow and build. I was supportive of the related efforts Congress formulated in the 2014 Farm Bill and commit to aggressively implementing those authorities consistent with Congressional intent. Additionally, I believe we must be willing to lend our voice, as the Secretary has done, to matters not directly under USDA jurisdiction such as tax policy and inter-agency regulatory matters. In any case, if confirmed, I will work with young farmers as I did in Iowa to promote the next generation coming on duty to "feed everyone".
 - b. Will you commit to continuing outreach and interagency coordination to reach new farmers, including the beginning farmer coordinator positions within FSA? Yes.
 - c. Will you commit to looking across all USDA programs and sure they are working in collaboration to meet the needs of new farmers? Yes.
 - d. Will you commit to supporting youth programing like FFA, 4-H, and farm to school activities? Yes.
- (26) Over the past several years, we've seen significant increases in the number of veterans interested in farming and agriculture careers post-military service. The training and experience veterans gain in the military provides important skills that help them transition into new farmers and ranchers.

Will you commit to working to increase opportunities for veterans at the USDA, including keeping the Military Veterans Agriculture Liaison position and expanding that office to include full time employees? If confirmed, I will advocate for continued and expanded veterans outreach.

- (27) Urban agriculture is quickly expanding and gaining popularity in communities, small towns, and metropolitans across the United States. Urban agriculture brings farming to urban residents and strengthens connections to rural communities. It also provides economic opportunities, increases access to food, and is a training ground for future farmers.

Will you commit to supporting new farmers, innovative production methods, and all farmers regardless if they are located in urban or rural areas? Yes. I agree that there are many lessons in farm life that do not stop at the city limits including the fundamental idea that typically in life, one must plant before one harvests. As a humble note of caution, many of us experienced hands in rural agriculture may have to warm up to the idea that we may learn an important thing or two from our urban friends and neighbors.

Foreign Transactions

- (28) The Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act requires foreign investors who acquire an interest in American agricultural land to report to USDA. Recently, a report by the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting found shortcomings in FSA's oversight of these transactions, even as the amount of foreign-controlled farmland doubled between 2004 and 2014.
- a. Will you commit to enforcing the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act? Yes.
 - b. Will you review the findings of this report and inform the Committee of your response to it and any changes you believe need to be made to address USDA's oversight of these transactions? If confirmed, I will review this report and work with the Secretary and the Committee to address any concerns which it raises.

Process/Responsiveness to Congress

- (29) I look forward to having a close working relationship with you, if you are confirmed. The work in this very important area is truly a bipartisan team effort. If confirmed, do you agree without reservation to:
- a. Reply promptly to any request for information from me? Yes.
 - b. Reply promptly to any request from other members of this Committee or other Senators? Yes.
 - c. Respond to my requests for data and technical assistance in drafting legislation? Yes.
 - d. Notify me or my staff in advance of making public any major changes USDA decides to make or major decisions USDA makes during your tenure? Yes.
 - e. Notify me of any programs in your Mission area that USDA intends to end, discontinue new enrollment or new awards, or not promote, prior to making any such changes to any program? Yes.
 - f. Provide to this Committee any reports provided by USDA to the Senate Appropriations Committee or the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee? Yes.

Appropriations

- (30) If you are confirmed, will you commit to using all appropriated funds as intended by Congress? Yes.

Agricultural Diversity

- (31) Michigan is the second most diverse agricultural state, growing over 300 different commodities. How will you ensure that that all crops and commodities are treated equitably at USDA? If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to ensure that all FPAC customers are treated equitably, most importantly by constantly seeking feedback from the customers and stakeholders.
- (32) The work to reach out and serve other underserved customers such as organic, urban, veterans and beginning farmers is an area for growth and improvement. A good first step would be for FSA to establish some urban county committees so urban farmers have a voice. Will you work with me to pilot a handful of urban FSA committees? If confirmed, I certainly look forward to speaking with you more about this proposal.
- (33) Do you support efforts such as USDA's StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity Initiative that targets high-poverty counties for additional outreach and the ability to enter into partnerships with local organizations to better serve customers? If confirmed, I plan to work in coordination with the Secretary on how to best serve America's poverty-stricken rural counties through the FPAC mission area.
- a. If confirmed, will you commit to brief my staff on the future plans for Strikeforce or any other similar efforts? Yes.
- (34) In 2015 and 2016, FSA offered Outreach and Technical Assistance Cooperative Agreements of between \$20,000 and \$75,000 to enter into partnerships to reach and educate nontraditional FSA customers on the services provided by FSA and USDA more generally. If confirmed, will you brief my staff on the status of these agreements and future plans for the effort? Yes.
- (35) FSA has had success with streamlining the application and servicing requirements for smaller loans (a.k.a. "microloans") within the direct, guaranteed and farm storage facility loan programs that are commonly used by urban, beginning and other underserved customers. If confirmed, will you periodically brief my staff on the status of these programs and any future plans for further streamlining efforts? Yes.

Senator John Boozman

- (1) Mr. Northey, as you know, many times in agricultural policy, the fault lines are not drawn on party lines, but rather regional lines. The nominees for USDA are all from different parts of the country. I think this diversity will serve US agriculture well and can be an asset to each of you in your roles at USDA. However, for that to happen, there must also be a recognition that the agriculture industry in this country is incredibly diverse. As such, we must have policies and programs that can account for regional differences. The policies that may work for corn and soybeans in your home state may not necessarily work for rice and cotton in my home state or for wheat in the Chairman's home state. As such, I was pleased to see at the end of your written testimony that you pledged to find workable solutions for all producers.
- a. Will you please share your perspectives on this issue and your viewpoint of how to account for the unique differences among crops and regions, and how that relates to Federal agricultural policy? I agree that we have many challenges and blessed opportunities born of our remarkable diversity in agriculture as you have identified. Central to my thinking is the recognition that we have a lot of work to do in the decades ahead to meet the historic growth in world food demand. For years, I have discussed this challenge and opportunity with producers noting that to get the job done, we cannot leave any productive capability on the sidelines. Additionally, there are consumers who have distinct demands of the marketplace which provides additional opportunities for alternative uses, local markets, small, local and organic producers that allow producers a larger share of that agriculture dollar. I will work to protect a level working field which in these growing food markets should yield success among all the diverse producers. If we have producer choice and consumer choice, the American farmer will be a winner.
 - b. Can I have your commitment that you will work to advance policies that support all producers, all crops, and all regions equitably and not make decisions or take positions unworkable for certain regions or commodities? If confirmed, yes.

Senator Joni Ernst

- (1) Too often I hear from Iowa farmers that the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) has gotten away from its original intent of converting highly erodible cropland and other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover. They are also generally quick to note how they, or someone they know, has been “out-bid” by CRP. Will you commit to work with me and this committee to ensure we authorize the proper number of acres of CRP, and get it re-focused on protecting marginal acres, and away from competing with farmers? Yes. As Secretary of Agriculture in Iowa, I have heard the same feedback. The CRP program must achieve balance between achieving its conservation goals and not disrupting market land prices in local communities. If confirmed, I will work to ensure that CRP operates as intended.

Senator Steve Daines

1. As you know, Montana and much of the West has been devastated by a severe drought and wildfire season to the extent we haven't seen in decades. Over one million acres in Montana have been consumed (2)by flames. While the weather has turned and diminished most of the remaining fires, the impacts of this fire season on Montana's farmers and ranchers still remains. Will you commit to working to provide farmers and ranchers as much flexibility as possible within FSA and NRCS programs to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters when they strike? If confirmed, yes.

2. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) has been utilized in places like the Clark Fork River basin, to improve aging irrigation infrastructure while also helping restore the river. If confirmed, how will you ensure that the RCPP serves the needs of western producers who rely on large-scale irrigation infrastructure? The Secretary has stated the conservation of resources, especially our water, air and land, must be a top priority for USDA. I am intimately familiar with how these programs are delivered and utilized in Iowa, but I have not been fully briefed on the specific applications of RCPP in western states. If confirmed, I will fully review and gain a better understanding of how RCPP serves the needs of western producers who rely on large-scale irrigation infrastructure.

Senator Patrick Leahy

- (1) In your opinion, what are the major management challenges facing the Farm Service Agency (FSA) today? How do you intend to address any such challenges? I believe that Secretary Perdue's efforts to align FSA, RMA, and NRCS and create a one-stop shop for USDA's customers will go a long way in improving coordination across the three agencies. At the same time, it is going to take a focused and coordinated effort to manage this change and ensure that it results in better service and better results for our farmers. I also believe there are significant IT challenges to make sure that USDA customers aren't overburdened with paperwork and that the systems of the three Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) agencies work together. If confirmed, I will quickly get to work to fully understand the changes that are being undertaken and make sure they are done in a way that isn't disruptive to our producers and improves our program delivery.
- (2) In your opinion, what are the major management challenges facing the Risk Management Agency (RMA) today? How do you intend to address any such challenges? I believe we have to continue to innovate and develop risk management tools to support our farmers. This challenge requires we have a strong workforce that understands and is connected to our customer. I intend to focus on workforce, customer service, and technology needs to ensure RMA and the other FPAC agencies are best prepared to serve our customers today and tomorrow.
- (3) In your opinion, what are the major management challenges facing the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) today? How do you intend to address any such challenges? I believe that Secretary Perdue's efforts to align FSA, RMA, and NRCS and create a one-stop shop for USDA's customers will go a long way in improving coordination across the three agencies. At the same time, it is going to take a focused and coordinated effort to manage this change and ensure that it results in better service and better results for our farmers. I also believe there are significant IT challenges to make sure that USDA customers aren't overburdened with paperwork and that the systems of the three Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) agencies work together. If confirmed, I will quickly get to work to fully understand the changes that are being undertaken and make sure they are done in a way that isn't disruptive to our producers and improves our program delivery.
- (4) The USDA reorganization created your new position of Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC). You will oversee an extremely broad mission area related to domestic agricultural issues, which now include both the FSA and NRCS. How will you ensure that conservation efforts and resources are not lost or mitigated in this transition? As Secretary of Agriculture in Iowa, I recognized and championed appropriate conservation efforts, and appreciate your strong leadership on this issue. If confirmed, I will assist Secretary Perdue to ensure that our farmers and ranchers are supported as they do their part in terms of conservation efforts, and to effectively and efficiently use the conservation resources provided to USDA by Congress as intended. My goal with this transition would be to make better use of taxpayer dollars for conservation, not to diminish them.

- (5) In your testimony you mentioned how as Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture, you have significantly increased the state's efforts in improving water quality, and an increased focus on soil health. In Vermont, the NRCS staff are doing an amazing job of working with farmers and our Vermont Agency of Agriculture to implement critical new water quality practices on farms that are directly helping to reduce phosphorus runoff in the four targeted areas of the lake. In fact, recent data is showing that the hard work and dedication of the farmers in the basin to expand the use of cover crops, reduce tillage, and improve nutrient management, all with significant financial and technical assistance from the NRCS, is reducing phosphorus loading across the entire basin.
- a. Do I have your commitment to continue the work started by Secretary Vilsack to help our farmers in Vermont comply with stricter state water quality regulations by addressing phosphorus runoff and ensuring the safety and health of our water sources? Yes.
 - b. The conservation practices installed in the Lake Champlain basin over the last few years are already making a positive impact on soil and water health, but this is only possible due to the financial commitment from the USDA through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and the hard work of our farmers to implement these changes. If confirmed, will you commit to fighting for these vital conservation programs and not requesting or recommending any reductions in funding or spending for these voluntary conservation programs? If confirmed, I commit to fully reviewing USDA's conservation programs and making sound recommendations for consideration by the Secretary, the Administration, and Congress.
- (6) Secretary Perdue has stated that it will be critical for FPAC to improve customer service at the USDA's most farmer facing agencies, improve USDA's impact on helping farmers for their natural resources, and implement the farm programs as directed by Congress. The Committee has been informed that Secretary Perdue and the staff at USDA are studying different consolidation, personnel realignments, automation initiatives, and even hiring freezes to streamline the department. I am concerned that these steps to reduce staffing, including the proposed Fiscal Year 2018 decrease of 278 direct staff years for the FSA, will result in unacceptable levels of customer service.

The same should be said of the NRCS where the agency appears to have been rather creative when tallying their total number of unfilled positions for Fiscal Year 2017 and 2018, despite the stories our Committee has heard from across the country of unfilled positions and a forced hiring freeze, without calling it a hiring freeze. The USDA tried to claim in its Congressional Budget Justification for Fiscal Year 2018 that the NRCS for Fiscal Year 2017 and 2018 has, and would have, absolutely no unfilled positions. Quite frankly that is an absurd claim and I am concerned that this hiring freeze is causing delays in implementing farm conservation practices at NRCS, including important water quality work in Vermont and Iowa, and it is leading to increased frustration for farmers across the country.

In 2015, as the Iowa Secretary of Agriculture you raised similar customer service concerns

with the NRCS' proposed procedures for State Offsite Methods (SOSMs) in completing wetlands determinations. Specifically you said that the SOSMs proposal would "decrease NRCS staff working directly with farmers, and as such may decrease farmer trust when determinations containing wetlands are made since onsite visits may not always occur as proposed in the SOSMs."

- a. Do you agree that a similar argument can be made here, that such dramatic NRCS staffing reductions and the ongoing hiring freeze could lead to a decrease in farmers trust as they find it harder to receive technical assistance and financial assistance from the NRCS? I am not familiar with the staffing numbers at NRCS but if confirmed, I will take a thorough look at staffing in NRCS, as well as FSA and RMA, to make sure that we are strategic in providing exceptional service to our farmers and ranchers.
 - b. Do you agree that a similar argument can be made that with the FSA staff hiring freeze, the agency's reliance on natural attrition, and increased automation, farmers will experience a decrease in staff working directly with them and a reduced customer service, which will decrease their trust in the Department? As I mentioned previously, I do not have access to staffing data at USDA, but if confirmed, will work to carry out a transition that does not diminish the level of service provided to producers.
 - c. In the past the Senate Agriculture Committee has taken strong stances on opposing FSA office closures and the Senate Appropriations Committee has also pushed back on proposed closures. Based on your experience in Iowa as Secretary of Agriculture and a farmer yourself, how have USDA office closures and low staffing levels directly impacted farmers? I agree that insufficient staffing can be a challenge for farmers who use USDA programs. I also believe that strong data and analysis has to back any decisions on staffing and office locations. If confirmed, my goal would be to take a thoughtful approach to staffing and offices, making sure USDA resources are allocated to where they are most needed.
- (7) Secretary Perdue has clearly expressed that it is his priority to deliver services as efficiently and effectively as possible to farmers across this country. Despite this, the General Services Administration (GSA) is forcing the relocation of the busiest joint NRCS-FSA county office in New England in St. Albans, Vermont, to move to a high level security federal facility that the USDA leadership at both the State and National level have determined is incompatible with efficiently serving farmers, and will interfere with their ability to fulfill their mission.

Will you commit to quickly looking into the imminent move of the Franklin County Vermont USDA Service Center, and to oppose this move with the GSA should you agree that it will impair delivery of these important USDA programs? If confirmed, I will give full consideration to all proposed office moves and closures.

- (8) You recently submitted comments on a proposed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rule that would establish maximum cyanobacteria levels in water allowed for recreational activity in which you raised concerns that these proposed levels were too high and would be a burden to implement.

- a. Are you committed to establishing and enforcing strong, credible conservation and water quality regulations based on the recommendations of the scientists at USDA?
Yes.
 - b. Are there areas in land conservation and water quality that you would highlight as needing more or less regulation to improve soil and water health? Secretary Perdue has been charged by the President with removing burdensome regulations within USDA. If confirmed, I will take a deeper dive into the FPAC mission area's regulations and provide the Secretary with fully vetted recommendations to improve service for our customers and to maximize benefits of our taxpayer-supported programs.
 - c. Are there areas in land conservation and water quality that you would highlight as needing more federal support to encourage voluntary conservation practices? I truly believe, and see every day, that farmers want to protect and conserve the land. As Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, I worked closely with Iowa farmers to incentivize and encourage voluntary land conservation and water quality measures that helped improve our natural resources across the state. If confirmed, I look forward to working through NRCS and FSA to encourage farmers to try new practices and make long term commitments to conservation.
- (9) I understand that you were a member of the EPA's Farm, Ranch, and Rural Communities Federal Advisory Committee (FRRCC), which had a rather constructive policy dialogue about EPA efforts to restore, maintain, and enhance water quality through nutrient management programs.
- a. Can you share with us how your participation in the FRRCC has better prepared you for this Undersecretary position to which you have been nominated? The FRRCC helped me better understand the challenges faced at the federal level as the agriculture community works to address water quality issues. It also helped me understand a diverse group of viewpoints that I'll be able to reflect upon if confirmed.
 - b. What national experiences and background did you gain as a part of the FRRCC that have helped to prepare you for this national role as Undersecretary? As the Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, I was lucky to have a very agriculture-centric group of constituents. On the FRRCC, I had the opportunity to work with other Advisory members from all over the country with a range of experiences and backgrounds. These diverse viewpoints helped to broaden my own viewpoints and better understand challenges that other parts of the country and agriculture industry are experiencing. If confirmed, I'll have to take a national approach to serving in my role, overseeing farm production and conservation programs across all types of agriculture in all states and territories.
- (10) This summer Secretary Perdue was quoted in the press as saying that he wants farmers to use crop insurance – not abuse it. In your testimony you stated that “Crop insurance is the most important part of the farm safety net and through RMA, we need to ensure that we maintain

this vital tool for producers.” Unfortunately our nation’s dairy farmers are basically being blocked from really using insurance as a tool at all as long as the USDA continues to classify milk as “livestock,” rather than treating milk as an eligible commodity the same way you do corn, soybeans, nuts, or nursery crops. It is the milk that our farmers want to insure, not the dairy cows producing that milk.

- a. If you believe that it is the most important part of the farm safety net, do you agree with me that crop insurance should be extended to fully support dairy farmers and aid in the creation of more dairy revenue insurance products and policies, which companies are currently discouraged from doing as long as milk continues to be classified as “livestock” by the USDA for insurance options? I have heard many concerns from many producers about the lack of risk management tools for dairy producers and the challenges with the MPP program. If confirmed, I would like to see how we can do better for the U.S. dairy industry. I commit to learning more about the classification issue you raise and examining all possible solutions so that we can make sure that dairy farmers are properly supported by the farm safety net.
 - b. Do you support having the RMA and the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation utilize their existing authorities to expand and enhance insurance products for dairy farmers by treating milk as the commodity it truly is so that it is fully eligible for policies and new insurance products through the Federal Crop Insurance program? Why or why not? I commit to learning more about this issue and examining all possible solutions so that we can make sure that dairy farmers are properly supported by the farm safety net. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress to ensure this issue is fixed in statute in the upcoming Farm Bill.
- (11) In Vermont, dairy farmers are the biggest single part of our state’s agricultural economy. The state has estimated that 80% of agricultural land in Vermont supports our dairy industry in one way or another. According to the 2012 USDA Ag Census, Iowa had approximately 1,180 dairy farms, but over the previous five years the state has lost some 580 or 24% of your dairy farms. I believe that we should use this next Farm Bill to make sure that our family dairy farms survive and thrive, which is important not only to the dairy industry, but also to our rural communities who greatly benefit from dairy’s positive impact throughout the country. We have had a terrible problem in both of our states where so many dairy farmers have lost not just income, but have lost their livelihood, which has destroyed hundreds and hundreds of our country’s dairy farms, year after year.
- a. Do I have your commitment to work on supporting congressional solutions to improving the Margin Protection Program (MPP) in the next Farm Bill, and working with your staff at the FSA to develop recommendations for Congress to make much needed improvements to the MPP? Yes.
 - b. Our dairy farmers are seeing less competition for their milk, which is leading to lower prices, margins, and profitability. With the U.S. supply growing faster than our domestic demand for dairy, we have seen exports gaining importance but leaving our farmers at the

whim of volatile foreign markets. What suggestions do you have for building more demand and production capacity here in the U.S. to give our dairy farmers additional markets for their milk? On the domestic demand side, I think there is more we can do to help support this nutritious food like we've seen Secretary Perdue do when he announced more flexibility around milk in school lunches. If confirmed, I'd like to explore opportunities like that with the Food and Nutrition Service and the Agricultural Marketing Service. Growing exports is also going to be vital during this Administration. I look forward to working with my colleague, Under Secretary McKinney, to encourage foreign market growth for U.S. dairy. Regarding production capacity, that is an issue I'll have to look into further if confirmed, but is an important area I think we should explore.

- c. I have heard complaints that our current dairy pricing system stands as a disincentive to make donations of dairy products, and a dairy processor or farmer cooperative has a perverse financial incentive to simply dump milk in manure lagoons rather than donating it to food banks or other feeding programs. Would you support changes to our Federal Milk Marketing Orders to encourage the donation of dairy products rather than just seeing that milk dumped into manure pits? I know the dairy pricing system is a controversial topic for dairy producers. If confirmed, I will work with my colleagues at the Agricultural Marketing Service from a peripheral role on addressing this.
- (12) Dairy farmers are also the biggest single part of Puerto Rico's agricultural economy. They account for about a third of Puerto Rico's total agricultural production, in part because of limits on milk imports while Puerto Rico imports most of its other foods. What suggestions do you have to help these struggling dairy farmers in Puerto Rico, these American farmers, to get back on their feet? Hurricane Irma was absolutely devastating to Puerto Rico and its agricultural economy. USDA has a number of great programs within the FPAC mission area to help in situations such as this. I am eager, if confirmed, to reinforce efforts these programs are already taking in Puerto Rico to ensure a speedy recovery.
- (13) As part of now Deputy Secretary Censky's nomination hearing before this Committee, in his response to questions for the record he stated that "Lumber and its by-products are crops the same as corn or wheat."
- a. Do you agree with Deputy Secretary Censky? Yes.
 - b. If so, do you support looking at ways for the USDA farm loan programs to better support our forestry industry and loggers, who need more access to capital and lines of credit to help this industry? Yes.
- (14) We must do more to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to energy derived from domestic renewable energy resources.
- a. Do you agree that climate change and the energy security of our country are two very important issues facing our nation? I agree that we need to do more to look at long-term challenges caused by weather, climate, and energy using sound science to direct USDA's resources.

How will you work to address climate change and energy security? I think it is critical to have strong science to inform any efforts we undertake to support our farmers in addressing and responding to the impacts of climate on their crops.

- b. Do you agree that agriculture and forestry can play a central role in our country's energy transition and should earn economic rewards for doing so? Yes.
- c. Do you believe that farms and ranches can provide ideal sites for wind power and solar energy, as well as methane biodigesters systems, and can be an important resource basis for a new energy economy? Yes, if done in respect of private property rights.
- d. Finally, how will you work to support the role of farms and our forests in a new renewable energy economy that supports rural jobs and communities? If confirmed, I pledge to always be a great supporter of our farms and forests, and of landowners' ability to sustain rural jobs and economic growth on their lands and in their communities. While the Forest Service is no longer housed with NRCS by mission area, I intend to work closely with the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment on collaborative solutions.

Senator Michael F. Bennet

- 1) In Colorado, private landowners have worked to protect wildlife habitat with the help of NRCS initiatives like Working Lands for Wildlife. During the last administration, we made sure these voluntary efforts were counted as part of the decision to avoid a listing for the Greater Sage Grouse. Through initiatives like Working Lands for Wildlife – and targeting USDA’s conservation dollars – the broader public receives a solid return on investment.
 - a. What can we do within existing conservation programs, such as EQIP, CSP, or CRP, to target conservation dollars toward important western wildlife habitat in the next farm bill? Programs like EQIP have been helpful in providing incentives for landowners to implement wildlife habitat practices on their operations. The 5 percent set-aside within the statute has been one way to ensure these initiatives are maintained. Will you work with my team to advance these efforts? Yes.
 - b. With the movement of NRCS into the Farm Production and Conservation mission area, what steps will you take to ensure that collaborative conservation remains a top priority? Conservation is a critical part of the current and future success of American agriculture. If confirmed, I will work with the Secretary to ensure the realignment of NRCS into FPAC increases the effectiveness of the agency and maximizes the success of its programs.
- 2) As you know, swings in the farm economy—with low commodity prices and persistent drought — can hit beginning and small farmers especially hard, and can even prevent individuals from entering the farming and ranching business. Young farmers in Western states like Colorado are especially interested in how USDA’s conservation programs can improve the affordability of land, conserve water resources, improve soil health, and help their business.
 - a. Would you agree that it is important to enroll new and beginning farmers in conservation programs early and often, particularly to improve outcomes for water quality and soil health? Yes.
 - b. What steps will you take to ensure USDA’s conservation programs are accessible to farmers and ranchers who are new to the business? How can the Committee assist you in this effort? New and beginning farmers are the future of American agriculture. If confirmed, I will prioritize outreach to this important segment of the agriculture community to ensure that they are able to fully utilize conservation programs as well as other FPAC programs and thereby increase their chances for success. This Committee can maintain provisions within the Farm Bill statute that provide higher cost-share rates and other incentives for new and beginning farmers and ranchers, veterans, and other historically underserved producers.
- 3) As you may know, I supported providing a new \$150 million in FY17 for NRCS’ Watershed Act program. Together with seven other Colorado River Basin Senators, Republicans and Democrats, we asked that USDA dedicate half of this funding to the Basin. We supported this

program because it can holistically address western agriculture's on and off farm needs. I was disappointed to learn that the Department did not fund any Colorado projects.

- a. Could you provide us with a list of projects submitted for consideration and the total dollar amount of funding sought? How many of these program applicants were former beneficiaries of the program? While I am not currently privy to the specific answers to this question, if confirmed, I plan to be briefed on the details of this issue and look forward to speaking more with you about it in the future.
- b. How did you ensure that the FY17 funding was distributed in an equitable fashion? While I do not yet have access to the specific answers to this question, if confirmed, I plan to be briefed on the details of this issue and look forward to speaking more with you about it in the future.

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

- (1) While New York does not have as many farms as Iowa, it does produce an extraordinarily diverse range of crops. The Risk Management Agency has worked hard to expand specialty crop insurance options and I know my growers appreciate that. However, not every insurance program has worked as well as it should. I have been very disappointed with the Whole Farm Revenue Program. The Whole Farm program requires a farmer track the sales of all their crops in every way that they come to market. For a diversified vegetable farmer that grows 10 different crops and sells some wholesale, some at farmers markets, and some in a CSA, they would require a degree in Accounting to comply.
- a. How could you direct RMA to improve the Whole Farm policy and make it easier to use for New York farmers? If confirmed, I will explore this matter in detail. As you describe it, it sounds very much like a problem Secretary Perdue would insist be resolved as well and I will rely upon your input.
 - b. How would you ensure that agents know about the product and give farmers a Whole Farm option if it is right for them? Program delivery and customer service is a stated priority of the Secretary and if confirmed, I commit to working to ensure that our program delivery structure is up to the task.

Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

- (1) Pennsylvania has a long and successful history of utilizing the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). The conservation practices funded through CREP, riparian buffers in particular, are a key element of Pennsylvania's strategy for improving the health of local waterways and meeting the state's Chesapeake Bay cleanup goals. Unfortunately, Pennsylvania CREP enrollment has stalled in recent years. I am advised that one of the factors contributing to this decline is the confusion that results from having two agencies, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency, share implementation of the program.

As you know, the recent USDA reorganization has placed NRCS and FSA under a single mission, which you will oversee if confirmed.

- a. As Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, what steps will you take to encourage greater collaboration and cooperation between FSA and NRCS in order to improve the implementation of CREP? If confirmed, I will ensure that FSA and NRCS are both at the table when CREP agreements are being written with states and make sure they plan for long term coordination and success for both USDA and the state's goals to be reached.
 - b. What role do you think third parties can play in increasing enrollment in CREP or CRP working lands programs? While third parties cannot truly execute CREP agreements, they can play a crucial role in outreach and education to eligible participants. NRCS/FSA partners that provide technical assistance through agreements would be ideal organizations to help encourage CREP enrollment.
 - c. If confirmed, how would you increase flexibility in the implementation of CREP? While the implementation of CREP agreements varies based on the specific agreements signed, if confirmed, I plan to aggressively pursue new CREP agreements and ensure that flexibility is built into those new agreements that would not hamper progress if a state is to change their contribution rates or other unforeseen circumstances arise.
- (2) One of the challenges to getting conservation practices implemented is the need for additional boots on the ground.
- a. Could you speak to the role you envision third parties, whether they be NGOs or private sector businesses, playing in delivering conservation technical assistance? Conservation Technical Assistance is the backbone of service that NRCS provides our customers. With tighter budgets it is becoming even more important that our conservation partners, certified Technical Service Providers, are able to help reach our wide network of customers in a timely, professional manner to help implement voluntary, incentive-based conservation practices.

- b. Do you think this is an opportunity to deliver more conservation in areas where it is most needed? There are always opportunities for improvement, including in the area of conservation practice adoption.
- (3) I have been informed that the Farm Service Agency, through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, may have set aside a \$20 million funding allocation from the Commodity Credit Corporation for riparian buffer work in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Pennsylvania's farmers want to install conservation practices that will lead to cleaner local watersheds and help restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay, but they need help. This set aside would provide assistance that is badly needed throughout the watershed.
 - a. If confirmed, will you have FSA brief my office on the status of these funds? Yes.
 - b. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that these funds are expeditiously applied? Yes.
- (4) While the ag economy has really been in a downturn the last number of years, and a lot of our producers are hurting, especially those young and beginning farmers that have just gotten their start in the last few years, I am concerned with the proposed cuts to USDA's budget that have been made by President Trump. How do you believe that you will be able to continue to provide a level of service to sustain and then grow what is the number one industry in Pennsylvania, as well as to maintain our position as a leader in the world for having the safest and most affordable food supply? I think that Secretary Perdue is a fighter and an innovator who will ensure that we modernize and improve our delivery of service to make sure that we continue to provide high quality service in the Federal government's leanest and most efficient department.

Senator Chris Van Hollen

- (1) Of utmost importance to my constituents in Maryland are efforts to protect the Chesapeake Bay. We work closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to implement projects that provide assistance to agricultural producers to minimize excess nutrients and sediments into the Chesapeake Bay through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, or RCPP. I have heard a number of concerns from my constituents about needed improvements to the RCPP Program in order to make sure the Chesapeake Bay gets the attention it needs and I am currently working on legislation to do so. If confirmed, can I get your commitment to work with me on this important issue? Yes.

- (2) I have heard some concerns from stakeholders about USDA's ongoing reorganization and the lack of information and stakeholder engagement about the process. Specifically, Maryland soil and water conservation districts feel in the dark about how the new processes for hiring and office leasing will work. I've also heard from the Chesapeake Bay Commission that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff are stretch too thin doing administrative that used to be done by the Farm Services Agency (FSA), leaving significantly less time for one-on-one engagement with farmers. Can you assure the Committee that if confirmed, you will begin to engage with these core partners about the reorganization? Yes.

