

**NOMINATION OF
GEORGE “SONNY” PERDUE
TO BE SECRETARY OF
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

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

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

MARCH 23, 2017

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**NOMINATION OF
GEORGE “SONNY” PERDUE
TO BE SECRETARY OF
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Thursday, March 23, 2017**

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:01 a.m., in room 325, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Pat Roberts, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Roberts, Cochran, Boozman, Hoeven, Ernst, Grassley, Thune, Daines, Perdue, Strange, Stabenow, Leahy, Brown, Klobuchar, Bennet, Gillibrand, Donnelly, Heitkamp, Casey, and Van Hollen.

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

Chairman ROBERTS. Good morning, members of the Committee, I call this meeting of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry to order.

This morning, we welcome Governor Sonny Perdue, the President's nominee for U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

Members of this Committee have great appreciation for the farmers, ranchers, consumers, and other stakeholders that are directly affected by decisions made by the Secretary. The Department of Agriculture is made up of 29 agencies and offices. It employs nearly 100,000 men and women that work in all 50 states and all around the globe. The Department provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, scientific research, and related issues that impact Americans virtually every day.

Throughout our Nation's history, our farmers, ranchers, and folks in rural America have survived drought, disease, floods, tornadoes, and lately—yes, lately—prairie fires in Kansas and whatever else Mother Nature throws at them.

Year after year, they produce the safest, most abundant, and affordable food and fiber supply in the world; however, today, growers from across the country are facing tough economic times with multiple years of low prices.

These same producers need a strong market for their goods. During this critical time, the importance of trade for agriculture, our agriculture industry, cannot be overstated.

If that was not enough, over the last previous years, farmers and ranchers and rural businesses have been burdened by regulations

from agencies all across the Federal Government. I have heard time and time again, as well as many members of this Committee, about the costly and hard-to-understand regulations that endanger the ability of our producers to simply stay in business. This Committee will continue its efforts to make government a partner in their success, not an adversary.

This Committee has a lot of work to do over the next 2 years, including the reauthorization of the Farm Bill. We intend to do that work in the bipartisan fashion that has served us so well in the past. In this respect, I want to personally thank the distinguished Ranking Member and former Chairperson of this Committee, the Senator from Michigan.

Now more than ever, agriculture needs a voice and advocate at the highest levels of government, and Governor Perdue has been nominated to serve in exactly that role. He is from Georgia and has spent his entire life in and around agriculture. The Governor was raised on a farm and was a practicing veterinarian before returning to his home county to work in the grain business. He was elected to serve in local and state government, including two terms as Governor of Georgia. While serving farmers throughout the Southeast, he gained firsthand experience with the complexity of transportation and the global commodities market.

Governor, the Senate's role of advice and consent is an important responsibility, and today is a key step in that process. We look forward to hearing your testimony and to asking you questions about how you view the role of Agriculture Secretary, should you be confirmed.

In addition to the Governor, I would also like to welcome and recognize his wife, Mary, his 4 children and their spouses, and his 14 grandchildren. The Governor is also joined by so many of his friends and former staff from Georgia, we cannot count them. We welcome you all to the Committee.

I am especially glad to have our former Ag Committee Chairman and Senator from Georgia, the Honorable Saxby Chambliss; and Georgia Congressman David Scott, who serves on the House Agriculture Committee—pardon me—the sometimes powerful House Agriculture Committee—with us to provide introductions of our nominee. I see Congressman Sanford Bishop here in the audience to support the nominee as well. Sanford, it is good to see you again.

But before we hear from Senator Chambliss and Congressman Scott, I want to turn things over to Senator Stabenow for any remarks that the distinguished Ranking Member would like to make.

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

Senator STABENOW. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is great to be with you today as we are moving forward on this very important position, welcome Governor Perdue. It is pretty impressive to see your beautiful grandchildren, as well as children and family members. We know that you are a proud grandpa and we are happy to have you all here today.

To my friend, Senator Chambliss, we have worked on a lot of Farm Bills together and worked well. Thank you for your service

as Chair and as somebody advocating for Georgia and all States in the interest in agriculture. It is great to see you.

Representative Scott, welcome to you as well. We have a lot of work to do together with our colleagues in the House to be able to get the next Farm Bill done. We look forward to doing that.

It is clear that agriculture and rural America need to have a seat at the table. It is clear that we need to make sure that is happening with this administration.

Looking back at our history, our Presidents knew that farmers were the foundation of the country. That is why President Lincoln created the USDA and called it the “people’s department,” because he understood that agriculture is a cornerstone of our economy, and that the Department had a special relationship with the people it served. America’s farmers and ranchers grow the safest, most affordable food supply in the world, and we should be very proud of that. I always say that food security is national security because having a food-secure nation makes our country safe.

Our food and agriculture sector also supports 16 million American jobs. It is USDA’s job to ensure we can continue to make things and grow things in every state, and that means celebrating the diversity of American agriculture as well.

Michigan is the second most diverse agriculture state in the country, and it is important that USDA is a voice for Michigan farmers, as well as Kansas, Georgia, and all the farmers across our country. Large and small, conventional and organic, those who sell overseas, those who sell to their neighbors—we need a voice for all of our farmers.

The Agriculture Secretary will need to look past regional divides and partisan pressures to support all farmers, all families, and all rural communities. Right now we need an advocate to stand up for them with this administration. USDA not only helps a farmer weather storms, it also saves communities from wildfires in the West, helps to make lakes and rivers safe for families to enjoy, and ensures children have the healthy food they need to learn and grow to be healthy adults.

Rural America is the economic backbone of our country, and it is true that too many rural towns are still struggling to recover from the Great Recession. Over the past 8 years, USDA has made targeted investments in rural economies, and now we are beginning to see these communities on the road to recovery. But we need to make sure that these important investments continue so we can keep moving forward.

Unfortunately, during the first 2 months of the new administration, it is clear that rural America has been an afterthought. Even before President Trump took office, he sent a message by waiting until the last minute to name his pick for Agriculture Secretary.

Last week’s budget proposal has also made it clear that rural America is not a top priority for this administration. The proposal cuts USDA funding by 21 percent, the third largest cut to any federal agency.

In addition to eliminating critical rural development and international food aid programs, the administration has put a target on hundreds of critical programs that go through the appropriations

process. In fact, under the budget, important resources for farmers and families are facing cuts averaging 33 percent.

We need a Secretary of Agriculture who will advocate for the important services USDA provides and rural families and farmers need.

We need a strong voice to insist that the President listen to the 500 groups that are saying that agriculture, conservation, food assistance, and other Farm Bill programs should not be cut further after agreeing to a \$23 billion cut in the last Farm Bill.

We also need someone who will partner closely with Congress, especially as we put together the next Farm Bill and look at other key issues like immigration and trade that have a tremendous impact on farmers and rural communities.

In the 2014 Farm Bill, we made bipartisan reforms that saved taxpayers billions and protected the integrity of the farm and family safety net.

The Congressional Budget Office recently estimated that the current Farm Bill would save \$80 billion more than initially projected in the next 10 years, largely driven by crop insurance costs going down and reduced spending on food assistance, as the economy has improved.

In this Congress, we will be working hard to move another bipartisan Farm Bill. I am excited for this challenge, Mr. Chairman. With the USDA leadership and with all of our stakeholders, I know that we can get it done. We have worked together before on a comprehensive bill. We will do it again for the communities that we represent and for the entire country.

Especially during these times of low prices for agriculture and uncertainty around the budget, trade, and immigration, we need the next Secretary to be an unapologetic advocate for all of rural America. We need someone who will be tenacious, much like a Georgia bulldog.

Governor Perdue, we need a champion—and I know you know that—right now more than ever. Today, I look forward to learning more about your views and qualifications to lead one of the most important Departments in our Federal Government.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROBERTS. I thank the Senator from Michigan.

It is my privilege and pleasure now to recognize the distinguished former member of this Committee and Chairman of this Committee, our colleague, our friend, the Honorable Saxby Chambliss.

**STATEMENT OF HON. SAXBY CHAMBLISS, FORMER U.S.
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA**

Senator CHAMBLISS. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Stabenow, distinguished members of the Committee, I am truly honored to be before you today, and I am humbled to be on this side of the dais but glad to be on this side for a number of reasons. But I am particularly pleased and honored to be here today to introduce my good friend, Governor George Ervin “Sonny” Perdue, who is President Trump’s nominee to be the next Secretary of Agriculture.

You know, I spent 12 of the best years of my life right here, and when people ask do I miss the Senate, I am very quick to respond

that what I miss are the good friends that I made over my 20 years in Congress, and members of this Committee are right at the top of the list of those best friends, and it is on both sides of the aisle. So I truly am pleased to be here.

When I was sworn in as a new Member of the House of Representatives in January of 1995, I was given the next-to-the-last seat on the Committee on Agriculture, which was made up of more than 50 Members. The Chairman of that Committee was the gentleman from Kansas, Mr. Roberts. Now, Mr. Chairman, you are probably the only person in the history of our country to chair both Committees, and I am going to steal your phrase, because I have heard you say it so often, that the "Sometimes Powerful Ag Committee," but you are to be congratulated for having the honor of chairing both Committees.

Governor Sonny Perdue is no stranger to agriculture. Sonny grew up on a farm in Houston County, Georgia, graduated from the veterinary school at the University of Georgia, and after a tour in the Air Force, returned to Houston County to be actively engaged in row-crop farming as well as in the operation of a very successful grain elevator business.

When I was elected to Congress, Sonny was a constituent of mine and was by that time in his life a member of the Georgia State Senate. Now, Houston County is the home of Robins Air Force. So Sonny and I shared the interest of defense as well as agriculture in our respective positions, and we began a dialogue that has lasted to this day.

In 2002, Sonny decided to run for Governor of Georgia, and I decided to run for the United States Senate, and needless to say, we spent many hours campaigning over the next year prior to that election. When you eat a lot of fried chicken and a lot of barbecue and ride a bus with somebody for a long period of time, you get to know them, and I got to know Sonny well.

That November, Sonny was elected as the first Republican governor in our state in 130 years. Sonny has been a leader in everything he has been involved in doing. As a farmer, he was a leader in the field of agribusiness in our state. As a member of the State Senate, he was elected by his peers to be the president pro tem of the Senate, and as governor, he was the chairman of the Republican Governors Association.

When he was elected governor, Sonny did what good leaders do, and that is to surround himself with good people. He went out and found a very experienced CEO and very experienced CFO. He also improved the state's leadership by implementing a meritocracy in that he went out and found the very best and most qualified people to run every one of our state agencies, irrespective of the political affiliation of those individuals. He committed to make Georgia the best managed state in the Nation, and he received significant national recognition for his accomplishments.

When he was elected, the state could not produce an audit, so he created the first state accounting office to focus on the timeliness and usefulness of financial information. Technology and purchasing systems at the state level were antiquated. Under Sonny's leadership, those systems were updated, and the state purchasing system has received many awards for its efficiency and accountability. A

new state data center was established, and much of the appropriate technology was outsourced in order to stay current and technologically state-of-the-art.

Now, we all know that technology at USDA today is way behind the curve. It is inefficient, and it is not farmer-friendly. This will be a challenge to Sonny, but I am very confident that he will be up to that challenge.

One of Sonny's most significant initiatives was the customer service focus to treat citizens of our state as customers and to create services for them that were faster, friendlier, and easier. That initiative significantly reduced the time and improved the customer experience in everything from getting a driver's license to getting a tax refund. It also produced a cultural change as state employees bought into this initiative.

Such an effort at USDA would be a vast improvement in the relationship with Washington and its largest customers at USDA—farmers and ranchers. This kind of executive experience and leadership combined with Sonny's knowledge of USDA programs make him ideally suited to be the next Secretary of Agriculture.

Mr. Chairman, I would urge this Committee to approve his nomination and bring his confirmation to a vote on the floor of the Senate as soon as possible, and I thank you very much.

Chairman ROBERTS. Thank you, Senator Chambliss, for an excellent—an excellent statement on behalf of the Governor.

It is also my personal pleasure and privilege to introduce a member of the House Agriculture Committee, a very valuable member, Congressman David Scott. David, we are delighted to have you here in the upper body.

[Laughter.]

Chairman ROBERTS. We will not go any farther with that. Please proceed, sir.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID SCOTT, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA**

Mr. SCOTT. Well, Chairman Roberts, thank you for that, but I do want to make one slight correction. When you said that House Agriculture was sometimes influential and powerful, may we add an amendment to that so it will go out that the House Agriculture Committee has always been and will always be powerful and influential.

Chairman ROBERTS. I appreciate that correction. It just was only one chairman that had the tenure when it was sometimes powerful.

[Laughter.]

Mr. SCOTT. Touchè, my friend. I will certainly take that in consideration.

Chairman Roberts, I am greatly honored and very thankful to have this opportunity to come and stand with my dear friend, my longtime friend, Sonny Perdue.

I want to just take a few minutes to share with you some things about Sonny that you need to know. My good friend, Senator Saxby Chambliss, went into great detail to share with you his immense qualifications, his education, the fact that he went to University of Georgia's veterinarian school.

But I am here to explain to you why Sonny Perdue is, indeed, the right person at the right time to do the absolute best job, the talents that I have shared and have witnessed with him in coming up through Georgia State Senate.

You see, Committee members, I was chairman of the Senate Rules Committee in Georgia for 10 years, first African American to get that position. My good friend, Sonny Perdue, was the president pro tempore of the Senate. Now, I am not saying that to just shake a bell on our credentials here, but I think that if you put that in the context of the Georgia legislature—and I assure you that Georgia legislature was one of the most exciting places to be every 40 days that went on for almost 80 days.

Now, Sonny and I had to meet every single day to work together, to set the agenda, to determine what bills got on to the floor in the House and the Senate, sometimes night after night, and when we did that, we had to also sit with the Governor and the Speaker. You talk about some fireworks; there were plenty in that Georgia legislature.

But you get to understand a person's temperament when you are on the battlefield with them, their courage, their decisiveness, and Sonny Perdue was just such a person. So on all of the major pieces of legislation that affected every Georgian of every stripe, of every condition, Sonny Perdue had a very integral part of that.

I want to take just a few minutes, if I may, because what is important to me is to make sure that my friend Sonny Perdue becomes the Secretary of Agriculture very quickly and that he comes with his record unblemished. That is why I wanted you to know at the outset, ladies and gentlemen, Sonny Perdue and I worked into the midnight hours, night after night. You get to know a person. He and I were like brothers, and I am grateful for that relationship.

I want to take just a minute, though, to address an issue that—I do not know—may or may not come up, but I think I would be derelict in my duty if I did not set the record straight on the Confederate battle flag business that has been in the air. I want to make sure that when you measure Sonny Perdue on that issue as well as all issues that you measure Sonny Perdue right.

Now, let me just give the Committee and the Nation just a preview and a setting. First of all, Sonny Perdue and I came along at a very significant time when Georgia made one of its most hysteric moments in changing the Confederate battle flag emblem from our State flag. It took time. It took experience. It took talent. It also took, Committee members, God's providence, his divine intervention at a very critical need when we needed it most, and because of leadership at that time, there were three governors. You cannot just tell the story with just one governor. This has been an ongoing process, and it took education. It took commitment. But the people of Georgia, black and white, rose to that occasion.

I want to just state that the first governor that had the courage to step forward to change that Confederate battle flag was Zell Miller, one of your former colleagues here. That took courage, and Zell paid the price for that. But it is very important to know that it was the white leadership in Georgia that stepped forward to lead that fight, took great risk to do so.

Then there was the second governor, Governor Roy Barnes, and as I said, God puts the right people in the right place at the right time. Governor Roy Barnes, one of the most courageous governors, a man of sterling strength, chose to do it, and he put forward the new flag. He too—and let me tell you something, Committee members. Many of those senators, State senators and State representatives, when they stood up to vote for that, many knew that they were not coming back because they were defeated. We have to measure people correctly, and they built on the foundation that each one laid.

Then came Sonny Perdue. The flag issue was in his lap. It was on everybody's mind. So when you judge a person, you have to judge them based upon the circumstances that he was placed in. Sonny Perdue, let it be known that when he was elected governor, he put forward a referendum. It was a tremendous campaign. Governor Roy Barnes lost the governorship for that. Many members of the House and the Senate lost their positions for that, and they deserve to be pointed out, respected for that. They paid the price, and when it came time and Sonny was elected, he promised a referendum, because the people of Georgia, it was their decision to make.

But you talk about brilliance, you talk about achievement in a tough area; Sonny Perdue negotiated the compromise and put together the referendum and gave the people a choice. He put Governor Barnes' flag there, which had a small emblem of the Confederate battle flag on there, and then Governor Sonny Perdue did a tremendously smart thing. He got an agreement on another flag that did not have the battle flag emblem on it, and he put that flag there with Georgia State seal, and he said, "People of Georgia, choose which one." You know what, Mr. Chairman and Committee members? The people of Georgia chose the one flag that Sonny Perdue provided the leadership, that did not have the small Confederate flag that Roy Barnes had.

We did not get to that point easily, but it was a great moment for the white and black people of Georgia. It could not have happened if we did not have a person with the level-headedness, with the brilliance and the tactical maneuvering, the willingness to sit and bring together Democrats, Republicans, urban, and rural together to solve that and let the people solve it.

I often refer to that experience, Chairman and Committee members. I call to your reference three people. God chose three people to get us to the Promised Land; Jacob, which was our Zell Miller, because Zell Miller had to go up and wrestle with this issue. Then came our Moses, Roy Barnes, who provided the leadership right to it, but then we had our Joshua that got us on across the Jordan River.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I urge you with all speed and urgency to please confirm my good friend, a great Georgian and a good American, a great American, who will make one of the best Secretaries of Agriculture this Nation has had, Sonny Perdue.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you.

Chairman ROBERTS. Congressman, thank you for that very inspiring endorsement. I think every member here, if they would like

to be endorsed for anything, would welcome you to do that. That was very special, and I appreciate it very much.

Governor?

Senator PERDUE. Mr. Chairman?

Chairman ROBERTS. Oh, I am sorry. Oh, pardon me.

Senator Perdue would like to have the opportunity to endorse Governor Perdue.

Senator PERDUE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I promise to be brief. As it has been stated——

Chairman ROBERTS. You take all the time you want. You were waving your arms, and I could not see you over there.

STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID PERDUE, U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF GEORGIA

Senator PERDUE. I just want to make a brief statement. As it has been stated, Governor Perdue and I are first cousins. We grew up together. We have a strong family. It is an extended family. I've known this man all of my life, and I can think of no one in the United States more qualified to be the next Secretary of Agriculture.

In Joshua it calls us to be strong and courageous. I know this man to be both strong and courageous. Today, he is going to answer all our questions, and the only thing I can say to him is, good luck, Cuz.

[Laughter.]

Chairman ROBERTS. Governor Perdue, would you please rise and raise your right hand, please, sir. 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. PERDUE. 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. PERDUE. Yes, sir, I will.

Chairman ROBERTS. Thank you. Please proceed now with your testimony, Governor.

TESTIMONY OF HON. GEORGE "SONNY" PERDUE, NOMINEE TO BE SECRETARY, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow and distinguished members of the Committee. It is an honor to be with all of you here today as the President's nominee to serve as the Nation's 31st Secretary of Agriculture.

Before I go any further, I want to thank both of my good friends and fellow Georgians, both Saxby Chambliss and David Scott, for their words of encouragement and inspiration to me as well, Mr. Chairman. I also want to thank my good friend Sanford Bishop, Congressman Sanford Bishop, whom we served in the State Senate together, as well for being here this morning also.

I know from visiting with many of you in your offices, there was some anxiety over whether there would be a Secretary of Agri-

culture nominee, and I must say with all the humility I can muster, I think the President must have saved the best for last.

[Laughter.]

Mr. PERDUE. I would like to thank each of you for making time to meet individually with me over the last few weeks, and I hope and trust that our meetings will not just be introductory episodes, but an ongoing opportunity to listen and to learn from one another. My goal today is to answer your questions transparently. You have—and to your satisfaction, not only to earn your affirmative vote, but your trust, and if you will afford me the opportunity, I will carry out this awesome job with integrity, complicit with the laws and policies that are set forth by Congress, and with the compassion of a golden-rule heart.

Before I get started, though, I would like to take a moment and introduce my family members who are with me here today. I am accompanied by my lovely wife, Mary, over my left shoulder. I had no idea when I married her 44 years ago, she would be such a prolific grandmother. As you can see, seated with Mary are our 4 children and 14 grandchildren and who are more familiar with my being called “Big Buddy” rather than any fancy other titles.

I am also pleased and frankly humbled, after 7 years, to have more than 30 of my former coworkers here, who labored side by side with me while serving the State of Georgia and its people.

Chairman ROBERTS. Governor, could you pardon this interruption. We would like for your family and your coworkers to stand, if you would, please.

Mr. PERDUE. Please.

Chairman ROBERTS. Thank you all for being here.

[Applause.]

Mr. PERDUE. Good-looking crowd, if I say so myself.

You read my bio and pored over my personal and professional history, but if you will indulge me today, I would like to tell you just a little bit about myself.

As a youngster growing up on a dairy farm and a diversified row-crop farm in the middle of Georgia, I never really fully realized the blessings that purposeful, meaningful work would serve me as well as they have in my life. When I was a young boy feeding the calves and plowing the fields, I was an integral part of the workforce there on our family’s farm. My mother was an English teacher, 42 years.

Chairman ROBERTS. Governor, if you would just cease for a moment, and we will take care of this problem.

[Pause.]

Chairman ROBERTS. Please proceed, Governor.

Mr. PERDUE. Yes, sir. Thank you.

My mother was also an English teacher for 42 years, so I benefited from her teachings as well, not just by raising me with the beliefs that I hold dear to my heart today, but being an English teacher, she also made sure I knew about dangling participles. It was a great life, and I had a blessed upbringing with wonderful memories. My favorite hobbies as a youngster were playing Little League baseball, training bird dogs, and riding my horse, Trigger.

Even as a youngster, I was determined and goal-oriented early on. I set my heart on becoming a veterinarian, having been influ-

enced by Dr. Davis, a kind and gentle veterinarian who cared for our dairy herd.

So, after high school, I enrolled at the University of Georgia, where I walked on to play football for the University of Georgia Bulldogs, Senator. “Play” is probably not the operative word, but I was on the team. Realizing that my future was not on the football field, I decided to apply myself to my studies.

As I entered veterinary school in 1967, you may remember Vietnam was roiling, so I signed up for an early commissioning program, the United States Air Force. As I finished my veterinary education in 1971, I was assigned to Columbus, Ohio, as base veterinarian, whose primary responsibilities were food safety, public health, and sanitation.

As I completed my active duty commitment, I joined a small animal veterinary practice in Raleigh, North Carolina. I soon realized, though, even though our practice was thriving, that I missed our farm and my former agricultural way of life. So, in 1976, Mary and I and our two small girls moved back home where I partnered with my brother-in-law to build a grain elevator in our home county, which did not yet have one. Sadly, my brother-in-law and my partner passed away after only 3 years at the age of 43.

So I have been in agribusiness since 1977, the founder and operator of three agribusiness and transportation firms serving farmers across the southeastern United States. Farming and farmers have been my life ever since. I have lived and breathed the exhilaration of a great crop and the despair and devastation of a drought. I have learned by experience what my father told me as a child, “If you take care of the land, it will take care of you.”

So let us fast-forward to what you are probably more interested in, my years as a public servant, and I want to be clear. Growing up, I was not one of those young men, young boys who shook a President’s hand at the age of 16 and aspired to run for office. I was tuned into current events, but I had absolutely no interest in elected politics. I did understand we all have civic rent, so I agreed to chair our local planning and zoning commission. But after 10 years of that service, a State Senate seat became open, and I was asked to run for that seat. I initially declined, but after a pre-planned family vacation to Williamsburg, Virginia, I changed my mind, having observed the Founders’ demonstration of citizen engagement.

In 1990, the people of District 18 elected me to serve as a member of the Georgia State Senate. I served there for 11 years and during my tenure was elected by my colleagues, as Congressman Scott said, to be president pro tempore, the pinnacle of leadership in that body, from 1996 to ’98. You have probably heard—and it is interesting to note—that I served both as a Democrat and a Republican in the Georgia State Senate. In 2002, I was elected the first Republican governor of Georgia in more than 130 years, as Senator Chambliss reminded us, and I assumed that office believing that it was a big job, not just a position. Our team worked diligently for 8 years, striving to make Georgia the best managed state in the Nation. As you remember, the period of time from 2002 to 2011 were not the best economic times in our Nation, but we learned with the help of a joyful state workforce that we could con-

tinue to provide value to the citizens of Georgia, even in times of extreme budget pressures.

Even though Georgia may not compare to some of your states in some agricultural sectors, I am proud to say that I come from a state whose number one economic driver is agriculture. In Georgia, agriculture is one area where Democrats and Republicans consistently have reached across the aisle and worked together. I am pleased to know that reaching across the aisle is common practice within this Committee, where partisanship does not get in the way of good solutions for America's farmers, ranchers, and consumers.

If confirmed as the Secretary of Agriculture, I look forward to working with you, all of you. The makeup of this Committee speaks to the size, the reach, and diversity of America's agricultural sector, and it includes at least one guy that I picked watermelons with side by side in my youth.

Though I have a lifetime of experience with farming and agribusiness, I appreciate that the Department of Agriculture touches the lives of Americans in many ways that go beyond just farming itself, including, in a very small way, improving the lives of the least of these. To continue that role, if I am honored with Senate confirmation, I will work tirelessly to advance four primary goals, and each of these goals is focused on an important constituency, the stakeholders of American agriculture.

First, I will maximize the opportunity and ability of the men and women of America's agriculture and agribusiness sector to create jobs, to produce and sell the food and the fiber that feed and clothe the world, and to reap the earned reward of their labor. We want to remove every obstacle and give them every opportunity to prosper.

Second, for the American taxpayers, our customers, I will prioritize customer service every day. They expect and have every right to demand that we conduct the people's business officially, effectively, and with the utmost integrity.

Third, as our taxpayers are also our consumers, they expect a safe and secure food supply, and USDA will continue to serve in that critical role of ensuring the food that we put on the table to feed our families meets the strict safety standards to which we have established and are accustomed.

I will never forget that we are the fortunate beneficiaries of past generations who put a premium on smart stewardship, protecting, preserving, and entrusting us with those valuable resources. That is the basis of our fourth goal. American agricultural bounty comes directly from the land, and today, those land resources sustain more than 320 million Americans and countless millions more around the globe.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your time this morning, and rest assured that if confirmed, I look forward to working with the dedicated men and women of the USDA who are committed to serving the people's department. I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Perdue can be found on page 46 in the appendix.]

Chairman ROBERTS. At this time, before we begin questioning, Senator Chambliss and Congressman Scott, if you would like to excuse yourself, why, please do so.

[Pause.]

Chairman ROBERTS. Governor, I will begin by saying that our farmers and ranchers depend on strong trade relationships around the world. Expanding market access and ensuring that our producers have a level playing field is absolutely critical to our rural economy. The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Office of U.S. Trade Representative have a history of working hand in hand to make sure that U.S. agriculture has an influential seat at the trade table.

As this administration takes shape, I have been concerned that there may be too many cooks in the kitchen when it comes to trade, and we want to make sure that they are familiar with the main ingredients.

In addition to the USTR, the President recently established a new National Trade Council at the White House and increased trade responsibilities under the Department of Commerce. The question is, what is the best way that the Department of Agriculture can continue and strengthen its involvement in establishing strong trade policies? How can we best work with the U.S. Trade Representative, the lead trade negotiator, along with other officials throughout the executive branch to make sure that agriculture is a top—and I mean top—priority?

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You are absolutely correct, and I think as Senator Stabenow mentioned, agriculture needs a strong advocate, a tenacious advocate regarding one of the top issues.

We are blessed in this Nation to be able to produce more than we can consume, and we are grateful for that, but obviously, that implies that we need to settle the bounty all around the world. You are correct. The relationship between the USDA and its trade representatives, as well as the USTR, as well as Secretary Ross and Commerce will be vital. Those really begin with relationships and, I think, personal relationships.

I have had conversations already in this pending time awaiting confirmation to discuss with Mr. Lighthizer in a conversation with Secretary Ross over the great opportunity they have to use the bounty of American agriculture to promote agricultural products and to sell those products around the world, I think, building goodwill as well as doing the moral aspect of helping to feed that world.

Chairman ROBERTS. I thank you for your response, Governor.

Let me advise all members of the Committee, we will have a second round. I know members have other things and other responsibilities, and there are other committees that are meeting, but we will have a second round.

In preparation for the 2018 Farm Bill, this year the Committee has already started our process of listening to farmers, ranchers, and other stakeholders. Before we write any Farm Bill, the Committee examines the program and asks what is working and what is not working. We will continue the listening and learning process over the weeks and months to come as we craft the next Farm Bill.

I would greatly appreciate your commitment of the Department's resources to assist our Committee during this entire process. Can we expect support regarding our efforts on behalf of America's farmers and ranchers?

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. Chairman, I look forward with great interest to be involved with you all as you look to deliberate and to create the 2018 Farm Bill. I will absolutely commit to you, if confirmed, the resources and the research of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide you the information you need to make good decisions.

I value my own self as governor in being a facts-based, data-driven decision-maker, and I think it is important that we take those facts of things that have worked, learn from the past, those things that have not worked, and create a Farm Bill for the future in 2018.

I know that you and the Ranking Member are already on the job in doing that in your respective states and listening to our producers across the country as well as our consumers. So I will absolutely commit to you that you will have access to the resources of the Department of Agriculture and anything that you believe you need, to the depth that you need, if I am allowed to be Secretary, to utilize those resources.

There is great talent over there. We know that the men and women of the USDA have a great wealth of knowledge. The career employees have been doing this for years, and there is a great opportunity to learn from them as well as our producers. I see the 2018 Farm Bill as an opportunity to meld the wisdom of those career people with what you all hear in your own districts to make sure that a 2018 Farm Bill meets the needs of our producers, our consumers, and the American taxpayers in 2018.

Chairman ROBERTS. Thank you, Governor. We have already had the first hearing in Manhattan, Kansas, 600 people in attendance, and that is what the building held, that is when the fire marshal said stop. Pretty much all of them, as I recall, Senator, stayed. We had 21 good witnesses.

I am going to Michigan State. I will probably have to wear green and white and may apologize for the 20-point victory that Kansas had.

Senator STABENOW. Okay, you can stop now.

[Laughter.]

Senator STABENOW. I wore purple when I went to Kansas. I just wanted you to know that. I wore purple for the Chairman, and he is reminding me of something I would like to forget.

Chairman ROBERTS. Maybe you could wear black or something like that.

[Laughter.]

Chairman ROBERTS. Okay, Senator Stabenow.

Senator STABENOW. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am actually going to defer to former Chairman, Senator Leahy, who has responsibilities on the Judiciary Committee. We know there is a very important Supreme Court nominee being considered, and he does need to leave. So, with your agreement, I am going to defer to Senator Leahy.

Chairman ROBERTS. The distinguished Senator and father of the northeastern dairy compacts always presented to us at the 11th hour and 59th minute——

Senator STABENOW. That is true.

Chairman ROBERTS. —is recognized.

[Laughter.]

Senator LEAHY. Do not forget I wrote the organic Farm Bill too. But, Mr. Chairman, thank you, and, Senator Stabenow, thank you for your usual and gracious courtesy.

We know how important the Department of Agriculture is in supporting our Nation's farmers, our rural communities, our hungry and malnourished families here and abroad, forest lands, consumers. They also advance innovation, research, and energy, the environment, the mounting climate crisis. We have to address what is happening in climate change, the nearly doubling of acres burned in western fires over the last 30 years, and, of course, Governor that problem in Georgia. If it is left unchecked, in 10 years, two out of every three dollars—just think of this. Two out of every three dollars that we appropriate for the Forest Service will be spent on fire programs, and of course, there is also the loss of life.

Last year, we lost a young Vermonter, Justin Beebe, who was killed while battling a fire in Nevada with the Lolo Hotshots. So we have to work on this.

I would commend to you, as I did when we had our private meeting, the dedicated, competent, and loyal federal employees, Agriculture Department employees, many of them, and they deserve your support. It is a time when they wonder what is happening with hiring freezes or cutbacks. You should spend time with them.

Now, I am going to submit a number of questions for the record, but as I was reminded by the Chairman, I never would have thought this otherwise. I should mention something about our dairy farmers. They are desperate for a new Farm Bill, but they are asking for some of your support in developing much needed risk management options for milk producers. Dairy farmers cannot get left behind. They look at cotton farmers in Georgia and Arkansas who are given generous payments, like the \$300 million last year in the Cotton Ginning Cost-Sharing Program. I think we have to have help for our dairy farmers. I would hope that we have, as we have had direct support provided to cotton producers by the USDA outside of the Farm Bill, I recommend—or recommended by the USDA for inclusion in the next Farm Bill. Will you work on a proportional and immediate support for hardworking dairy farmers?

Mr. PERDUE. Senator, I will commit to you. As a son of a dairy farmer and having dairy myself, I understand the hard work, 7 days a week, 365 days a year that our farm families, particularly smaller farm families, particularly in your area and others go through. These are family operations, and they do not take a holiday. They do not take a break, and I understand the pain when the profitability of these farms for the milk prices are just not there. It puts many farm families under duress to do that.

Senator LEAHY. I appreciate that.

One of the problems that they face too, is that dairyfarmers have a well-documented farm labor shortage. Now, the federal H-2A

Temporary Agricultural Visa Program, which has helped many—it has worked in your State of Georgia. The Trump Winery uses it, but it allows only for seasonal farm workers.

The Senate had passed comprehensive immigration reform, which the House did not take up. They said that even though it would have passed that it would violate the—apparently the sacred rule they have, the Dennis Hastert rule, as they did not bring it up. But now we are having with the operations of ICE and others—I would ask you to support finding a way to include dairy farms, which require year-round labor. I mean, you can not have somebody come in for 6 months and then say, “Okay,” to the cows, “I will be back in 6 months to milk you again.” Your own experience that does not work very well.

So we have—sheep and goat herders have that exemption. Will you work with us to find a way to have dairy farms, dairy farm workers in the same program, in the same way goat and sheep herders are?

Mr. PERDUE. Senator, if I am honored by the confirmation of the Senate, then I will commit to you to certainly advise and counsel the administration over the need for an agricultural program that is for workers that is year-round. As you indicated, cows cannot be milked half a day. There are 365 days a year, and I am very well aware of that. So there is a need.

Obviously, many of our dairy workers are immigrant workers, and while there are exemptions in other places, certainly I believe dairy qualifies for that as well.

Senator LEAHY. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Senator Stabenow.

Chairman ROBERTS. The Chair recognizes the distinguished Senator from Michigan, Senator Stabenow.

Senator STABENOW. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and welcome again, Governor Perdue. We are glad to have this hearing. We need a Secretary of Agriculture, and we need to move forward. I appreciate the fact that you understand the agency and agriculture and grew up in agriculture and support the mission of the agency. That is very, very important.

I want to first start where I think Senator Leahy left off in terms of dairy. You and I have talked about this, and I know growing up on a dairy farm, you understand the challenges. Certainly, when we look at the last Farm Bills—and Chairman Roberts and I worked very hard to expand crop insurance—we did expand it to specialty crops, which we are already seeing has been very important with the weather challenges in Michigan and other places for our growers. We also worked to expand help for young and beginning farmers. But dairy farmers have not been able to qualify for crop insurance.

As you and I talked about yesterday, three national groups that speak for dairy farmers, both the American Farm Bureau, National Farmers Union, and the National Milk Producers have suggested a way that the USDA could provide additional risk management tools for dairy farmers in the short run, while we are putting together the Farm Bill, because we have family farmers in Michigan and across the country that are in a very, very difficult situation.

If you are confirmed will you commit to working with me and working with the industry and all of colleagues who care about this, to use administrative authority available to you to provide our Nation's dairy farmers with reliable risk management tools, including the crop insurance proposal that was put forward in the letter by the national organizations?

Mr. PERDUE. Senator, I welcomed our meeting yesterday, and I was intrigued by your suggestion of that. As I indicated to you, many of your colleagues have regretted the fact that the 2014 Farm Bill really did not meet to your expectations for dairy farmers or maybe even the cotton program as well, and is not under Title I.

As I indicated yesterday, I am absolutely committed to look for a way that can give immediate and temporary relief even prior to the 2018 Farm Bill, if it is within the discretion of the Secretary, if I am confirmed, and also we have got to be mindful, obviously, of budget periods as well, so it has got to be within the parameters that meet the budget as well. But I think the ideas that have been proposed are intriguing to me. I have no philosophical difference with those definitions that have been suggested, and I would absolutely look forward to us providing a short-and a long-term solution for the dairy and even the cotton program that may help really in the context and the formation of the 2018 Farm Bill. I think it would be great if we had some ideas that we believe could work even prior to that time.

Senator STABENOW. Thank you very much. I think we do have an opportunity, and I really look forward to working with you to achieve that.

You mentioned the budget, and I have to focus on the budget because I am deeply concerned about the budget put forward by the administration, which signals a lack of understanding of agriculture.

I have always said to have an economy and to have a middle class, you have to make things and grow things. It is clear the President has focused on making things, which I appreciate in Michigan, but not growing things, which is equally important. So when we look at a 21 percent cut in the USDA budget it is extremely concerning to me and to so many of us that care about small towns. In fact, I grew up in one of those small towns in northern Michigan.

I would like to just go through a series of questions quickly and get your yes or no answer on whether or not you would support these things. Do you think that small communities should have the same access to clean water as large cities?

Mr. PERDUE. Of course.

Senator STABENOW. Good. Do you think it is important for individuals in small towns who live far away from a health center or a hospital to have access to telemedicine services?

Mr. PERDUE. Like you, Senator, as a product of a small community, I absolutely do.

Senator STABENOW. Do you think it is important that farmers have access to the latest research and tools to make their farms more productive?

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly.

Senator STABENOW. Do you think rural small businesses should have access to capital to keep them competitive and grow their business?

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly.

Senator STABENOW. Do you believe organic farmers have a place in farming?

Mr. PERDUE. I think consumers across the country have demonstrated that. I am sorry Senator Leahy had to leave.

Senator STABENOW. Yes.

Do you think it is important to feed seniors and children in need of assistance?

Mr. PERDUE. Yes, ma'am.

Senator STABENOW. I indicate all this because these are some of the cuts in the budget. These are some of the areas that have been zeroed out, like rural water and sewer, or have taken severe cuts in the budget, which are deeply concerning.

In the final moment here, first, did you have any input in this budget process? Second, how will you move forward when we are looking at these cuts? How would you as Secretary of Agriculture address this to be able to meet the needs of rural America?

Mr. PERDUE. I think you are probably aware, Senator, without confirmation and not being confirmed, I have had no input into the budget. Obviously, I think you probably saw it before I did. Also having some concern, obviously as a member of the administration, I view this budget similar to what I did as governor when I got a revenue estimate that I did not like as well. I did not like it, but we manage to it. My goal—I think you indicated the words in your opening statement that you want a Secretary who can be a strong advocate and tenacious advocate. If I am confirmed, I want to get under the boards and get some room and work for agriculture producers and consumers to let this administration and any of the people that are making those decisions in that budget area know what is important to America.

I think the President understands that many of his votes came from the areas that you are mentioning and referred to, and I hope in the context of a balanced or a budget that meets the objectives that we can get agricultural share there. These are important programs. I recognize that, and I will do everything within my power, within the confines of the administration, working there to match what our desires are.

I flippantly say sometimes I grew a \$20 billion budget in Georgia to \$60 billion during that 2003–2011 period of time, not necessarily voluntary, but with the dedicated work of the civil workforce in Georgia who really worked hard in those areas. We did do more with less. Some of that has to do with efficiency and effectiveness, which I look forward to engaging this USDA federal workforce in and inspiring them that we can do more. Obviously, it takes some money in many of these areas, and I promise to you I will be a strong and tenacious advocate for that.

Senator STABENOW. Well, thank you, and let me just stress again that agriculture has been doing more with less, that was our charge, and we met it in the last Farm Bill. But the cuts we are talking about here will be really devastating for farmers and small towns.

Mr. PERDUE. Sure.

Senator STABENOW. Thank you.

Chairman ROBERTS. Speaking of the budget, Senator Boozman, you will be recognized next, but first, we would like to hear from the Chairman of the distinguished Senate Appropriations Committee and the former Chairman of this Committee. I would remind everyone of the saying that everybody knows, "The President proposes and the Congress disposes."

Senator Cochran.

Senator COCHRAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for your kind remarks about me and my interest in agriculture and the obligation that we have as government to ensure the fair funding of the important government programs that we see in many cases help farmers when they are in desperate straits, with weather disasters and other challenges that come along from time to time that really could put our country in very difficult economic situations.

So I know you are familiar with most of the programs that are authorized by our Committee and first recommended by our Committee and passed and signed and nurtured by both houses of Congress. You have got a lot of people watching you and urging you to do this and that, and I am confident in your leadership and your insights, your experiences, all to be brought to the challenge of the Office of Secretary of Agriculture. I am confident that you are going to do a fine job, and we look forward to working closely with you to identify problems when they arise and can be addressed in a positive way to suit our country's interest, economic interest as well.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you.

Senator COCHRAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROBERTS. We thank the distinguished Chairman.

Senator Boozman.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Governor Perdue, for your willingness to serve. I enjoyed visiting with you in the office and getting to know you over lunch and getting to know more about you and your wife. You have got a big job before you, and yet you have a history of doing big jobs. We do appreciate your willingness to throw your hat in the ring.

Arkansas is such that agriculture is its number one industry, around 25 percent. It is interesting when you look at the statistics, though, agriculture, farm income is going to be cut from \$124 billion to 60—\$62 billion, so literally half, which is a real problem in much of our states because much of our states are rural in nature.

One of the things, though, that we can lessen that pressure is looking for other markets, and in Arkansas, Cuba would be a very important market with rice production and various other things, poultry. Can you talk a little bit about efforts that you would take in the sense, not only Cuba, but other markets throughout the world so that we could have the attitude that we have got customers here but, very importantly, customers spread out all over the world?

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly, Senator. I think in respect specifically to Cuba, for those of you on the Gulf Coast and those on the East Coast as well as even have been mentioned by your colleagues in

the upper Midwest, I think we would love to have Cuba as a customer in many things.

I led an Ag delegation from Georgia to Cuba as governor in 2010, and I found then, as much of the problem there regarding demand, was the ability to pay and the ability to finance there as much as anything. I think they would love to have our products, and they are certainly appropriate customers for the rice that Louisiana grows and that Arkansas grows and other beans that are edible beans up in the upper Midwest that they grow. For that reason, I think if you all could see fit to look into the private financing operation, one of the things they mentioned to us is that they had to—by the restraints, they had to go through Europe and have a haircut, financial haircut in that regard of—by being able to purchase the product.

So I think we have the product they need, and they would like the product. I think the real issue that I heard regarding Cuba was the financing part, and certainly, that would come probably under another area that is not the USDA, but I would support their efforts if we could get private financing.

Regarding other areas, certainly in Central, South America; Europe; and Southeast Asia as well, there are new and developing markets there, and I hope that we can work very closely with the Trade Representative Lighthizer as well as Secretary of Commerce Ross in order to put agriculture first in their repertoire of things to trade. I believe that we have the ability to produce a very efficient crop and products, food products as well as other products that clothe and other things around the world they need. I look forward. That is certainly from visiting with most all of your colleagues. Trade was right at the top of the list. I think when you talk to farmers around the globe, that is what they are most concerned about.

We have a worldwide supply-and-demand issue that is weighing heavily on prices currently, and we are seeing some of the lowest prices in many years. It is putting a lot of pain out there, which is a direct result of the financial situation that you mentioned in your comments, that farmers are really struggling to be profitable, hold on, and many times, even the best farmers are not able to produce a product even with the best production capabilities they may have.

So I think trade is really the answer. I look forward to being an advisor and a counsel to this administration, U.S. Trade Representative, specifically, about the benefit that we have of farm products to sell around the world.

Senator BOOZMAN. No, that is excellent, and as you said, in regard to Cuba, the financing really is key. So we actually have a bill that says that not government-backed, but if an individual or a private bank or whatever wants to do the financing, that they will have the ability to do that.

I am running out of time, but I do want to comment. One of the things that I have real concern about—and I think the Committee does—is you have the feeding programs in the schools. Summer comes, and then you have a bunch of kids that do not benefit from that. What we are trying to do is get a smooth transition, and if you would just affirm your recognition of the importance of that.

Those rules that govern that transition and stuff have not been changed since the '60s. So if you could just in 5 seconds talk about that.

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly. I was able to share with several of your colleagues, who had mentioned that privately in their offices, that I would love to facilitate that kind of transition to make sure that those kids who are able to get meals while they are at school are able to continue that through the summertime and that they do not fall into a problem during that period of time, to keep kids healthy.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks, Governor. Chairman ROBERTS. Senator Bennet.

Senator BENNET. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so much for holding the hearing, and, Governor Perdue, congratulations—

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you.

Senator BENNET. —to you and your family on your nomination.

I was not going to raise it, but Senator Boozman did, that is a bill he and I both have together on school lunches, so I am glad—in the summer—glad to hear him raise it and your comment.

I also was going to raise trade, and I am so pleased with your answer because, as you know, commodity prices are just terrible right now for all of our farmers and ranchers. Throughout Colorado, our rural communities, which really led the recovery for us coming out of this terrible recession, now face commodity prices that really challenge them as they are trying—as their inputs are higher and higher and higher.

There was so much negative talk about trade during this presidential campaign that I think we are looking to you to help resurrect that with respect to agriculture in the United States. Eighty percent of the wheat that we produce in Colorado is exported. All of the growth for our dairy farmers is going to come from trade with countries, many of which were countries that were involved with the TPP. Our potato growers in Colorado need to have access to these markets.

So knowing that you will be a zealous advocate for trade on behalf of our agricultural sector is enormously important to my state, and if there is anything I can do to help you help translate that to this administration, I will commit to do that to you.

I also wanted to raise with you the issue of our national forests. A lot of people do not know that comes within the Department of Agriculture, and you mentioned in your—in your statement, the importance of smart stewardship. One place where we have not had smart stewardship was with the maintenance of our national forests, as you and I discussed when you were in my office.

Last year, we spent over 50 percent—I think it was 60 percent of the budget, the Forest Service budget, fighting fires. We have had—in 2015, the Colorado State Forest Service estimated there are around 834 million dead standing trees in Colorado. That is up 30 percent from 2008 estimates.

I have said to my colleagues on this Committee and other places in the Senate, if you are downstream from Colorado, which almost everybody is, you need to care about what is happening in the headwaters of these rivers, and that is forests that are managed by your folks, if you are confirmed.

So let me first say this: Will you please come to Colorado and look at these forests firsthand?

Mr. PERDUE. I would look forward to that, Senator.

I think I mentioned to you I saw the ravages of that terrible fire over north of Glenwood that occurred many years ago——

Senator BENNET. Right.

Mr. PERDUE. —with loss of life, and I still see on those beautiful mountains there, the effects of forest fire from years ago. So, absolutely, I will come and look forward to visiting with you, as well as many of your western colleagues, mention this is one of their primary areas, so it is a concern.

Senator BENNET. Well, and I hope—and maybe you could say a word about this too. I know Senator Thune and others have been concerned about this.

Every year, Secretary Vilsack has tried to put something in the budget to end this fire borrowing process that we have to make sure that either we treat these fires like every other disaster that we have or that somehow we budget correctly so that we can do the mitigation on the front end, because what we are doing is we are spending the money in the most expensive, least logical way possible. I wonder if you have got a comment on that.

Mr. PERDUE. I certainly do, and I have heard you all and your colleagues loud and clear over that.

I also had an extensive conversation with Secretary Vilsack about the upside-down portion of the budget there and his continual having to borrow to manage those forest fires or to help put out those forest fires. That is a bad way to do, as we talked about.

On the front end, as you know, the healthy forests are helpful in preventing forest fires, and whether it is the underbrush, the deadfall that we have not been able to get to, using two-thirds of the budget to fight, we are upside-down on that. We need to be doing at least two-thirds there of the budget in managing healthy forests in order to prevent forest fires.

So my goal would be to reverse that, and I would love for you and your colleagues to consider looking at forest fires, like we do many other natural disasters as well, to put a funding mechanism in there where, just like hurricanes or tornadoes or other things that are—floods—that we use there would qualify for those types of funds, because Secretary Vilsack was very disheartened by the fact of having to come up with millions of dollars many times from other parts of the budget and borrowing there. It just did not—it was not very effective.

Senator BENNET. Well, if you can break this Gordian knot, you will be a hero in my state and probably some others as well. So I look forward to having you in Colorado. Thanks.

Mr. PERDUE. I look forward, Senator, for us to break that Gordian knot.

Senator BENNET. Let us do it. Let us do it.

Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Chairman ROBERTS. Senator Ernst.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Governor Perdue, thank you so much for being here today, and I want to thank your lovely family for joining you as well. It is good to see everybody here.

As some of my colleagues have already stated, 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 really in the last 10 years.

The renewable fuels revolution bolstered demand for our commodities, driven by the Renewable Fuel Standard and energy programs that were included in the Farm Bill. Trade deals like NAFTA helped to fuel both grain and meat exports, which are very vital to our producers' profitability.

As we have seen so many times before, our farmers continue to innovate and find new ways to grow more food with fewer inputs and have not only met this new demand, but they have exceeded it and done quite well, leading to the slump in commodity prices we have been feeling so acutely.

When I travel around the state, I engage in a 99-county tour, and I consistently hear how challenging it is to be a farmer or a rancher right now, due not only to the low prices, but also because of the onerous government regulations.

I hope you are prepared to work with all of those who are engaged in our ag economy to ensure it remains one of the strongest in feeding and fueling our growing world.

Whenever I do visit those farmers and ranchers and others within the ag community, one of the common refrains that I hear is about federal regulations, especially from the EPA, how they are harming their operations and making their lives pretty difficult. Whether it is their misguided WOTUS rule or the delays in approving ag biotech products, the EPA almost seems to have an agenda against those that are in the agricultural community.

How will you collaborate with the EPA to ensure that their work is helping rather than hindering our farmers and ranchers?

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you very much, Senator.

I think, like many solutions, it begins with personal relationships. I have taken the opportunity to visit with Administrator Pruitt already regarding some of these issues, and I think not only in the EPA, but in all agencies, we develop silos that are unfortunate because, as you well know, many of our producers, when a regulation is made in other places, whether it be Labor or EPA or others, are the guys who are the ones that get pushed off the boat. My goal is to have an ongoing communications team identified with each of these agencies. It may be, whether it is FDA, EPA, Labor, OSHA, others, to identify the things that would be the—maybe the unintended consequences of regulations and to work together ahead of time before those regulations are promulgated to give us an opportunity in representing USDA, both agricultural producers and consumers, to let these other agencies know what the impact would be and what the cost-benefit reward would be to agricultural producers.

So I think it becomes—I am kind of a face-to-face sort of person. I believe in going directly and communicating transparently about the needs and about the desires there.

I come from the part of the world that has seen our farmers as good stewards. I think they want to be. If they have the right tools, from a conservation perspective, they want to care for the land. They are the ones that are making their living out there, and I be-

lieve they want to do that. Rather than prescriptive, onerous-type regulations, let us give them the ability to do that and incentivize them in a way where they can be even better than they have been in the past.

But the progress that you indicated that we have made over the last several years with doing more production with less inputs, precision agriculture, better use of water, and those kind of things, and no till, all those sorts of things, preserving our soil, our producers have done a good job at that. They want just kind of a fair shake in being able to produce without the onerous prescriptive type of regulations that harm their ability to continue to perform.

Senator ERNST. Well, I appreciate that very much, and I certainly support your willingness to work with the other Departments and heads of those agencies. We simply cannot operate in a vacuum, and developing those relationships and keeping those relationships is very important. I think you are absolutely the right person to do that, so I appreciate that very much.

I also just want to make a comment too. I know that in the 2014 Farm Bill, Congress really recognized the importance of trade, and Congress directed the USDA to establish an Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs, and I hope that you will take a look at that make sure that we have the right person for that job established as well.

So thank you very much, Governor. It is good to see you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman ROBERTS. Senator Gillibrand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Governor, for being here. Thank you for our meeting that we had previously.

I want to talk a little bit about immigration. It has been an issue, unfortunately, that has had a very toxic debate that has been harmful in our state. One area where it is particularly harmful is in agriculture because we rely on immigrant labor for a lot of our fruits, vegetables, and dairy. I hope that you can speak to President Trump and Secretary Kelly about the effects of immigration enforcement policies and priorities that the President has announced and how it impacts our agriculture sector.

It is estimated that about 50 percent of agriculture workers are immigrants, and so if we do not have proper immigration reform and a debate about holistic policy, it is going to harm families in New York, and it is going to harm agricultural workers at our farms throughout Upstate New York and Long Island.

So I ask, Will you make a comment that you will work towards making sure our farms have the workers they need?

Mr. PERDUE. I will certainly commit to you that, Senator. Particularly in your dairy industry in Upstate New York and others, just as Senator Leahy has mentioned, that is not a seasonal job, and I think if you go into dairy barns around the country, you are going to find most of the time, those cows are being milked by immigrant labor. I do plan to be a voice in the administration to persuade policymakers there over this issue.

I recognize that many of our producers, both seasonal types of crops that you mention as well as dairy farms, have a good bit of

anxiety about that, considering that, and I will absolutely commit to you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Enormous anxiety.

The other area, as you mentioned, our H-2A program is a visa program to recruit temporary workers on a seasonal basis. Cows need to be milked every day. So it does not work for us. It is very cumbersome, it is difficult, and so I would also ask your commitment that you will work on that program specifically to streamline it and make it available for all agricultural workers.

Mr. PERDUE. Senator, I have heard that loud and clear from people close to me at home and our customers there in Georgia as well.

You mentioned, obviously, your state, but I think virtually every state in the Nation is affected by that to some degree. I think there are some things that we can do with H-2A, and if I am confirmed, I will commit to you that that and trade are two issues that we will begin posthaste to work on.

Senator GILLIBRAND. So, as you know, we are a significant dairy state. We are the third producer—fourth, I think, most recently, in the country, and I would love it if you would come to Upstate New York and do a field hearing. I know you have to go to Colorado now, but could you please also come to Upstate New York? We would love to have a field hearing to talk about dairy pricing because the dairy pricing system, as you know, has been so destabilizing and is not something that farmers can rely on. The insurance programs we have written are not working. So we really need to do a top-to-bottom reform of how we do dairy pricing in this country and create insurance programs and products that can actually work for small dairies, particularly in places like Upstate New York.

Mr. PERDUE. Senator, I will come if you promise not to make me milk any more cows.

Senator GILLIBRAND. No, you do not have to milk. I promise.

Mr. PERDUE. But you are right, though, the volatility of prices—and there is no business—not just agriculture, but there is no business that can survive with the volatility of range of prices that dairy farmers have had to undergo the last few years. They had some high prices, but the prices they are currently experiencing are just unprofitable, and even the best family farms cannot survive under those.

Senator GILLIBRAND. I agree.

Another issue very important to New York State is the SNAP program. It is so important that we have food for our families. Some of the work this Committee has done for making sure SNAP gets to rural families using farmers markets, making sure that we can do summer meals, that kind of work, I would ask your commitment to focusing on how we can deliver more food to more families throughout this country as our Ag Secretary.

Mr. PERDUE. We hope that we can do that even more efficiently and effectively than we have. It is certainly important to the children and the families of America to do that, Senator, and I hope that we can work together to accomplish that.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

My last issue is funding and budgets. I was very concerned about the President's budget and how it would take away access to water systems. We have so many unmet sewer needs in New York State. Our rural water systems are in desperate need of investment.

Similarly, we have desperate need of investment for rural broadband. It is really important that we can get high-speed Internet to all our rural areas. Our farmers depend upon it. Our small businesses depend upon it. The USDA Rural Utilities Service Program is really important, so I would like your commitment that you will continue to work with this Committee, which has bipartisan support for those investments.

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly. I am hopeful, obviously, that the President's proposal over infrastructure, it will be recognized that the agricultural broadband issue—if we are going to keep kids on the farm in rural areas, if our rural areas are going to be able to thrive and survive like cities do with the density, we have got to have the connectivity. It is just as important really now as sewer or water, clean water, or other things, is the connectivity to the world.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Yep.

Mr. PERDUE. That is what we are advocating, will advocate, continue to advocate. I know members of the USDA have already been in a meeting with the White House infrastructure team over that, and we will certainly promote that to the best of our ability.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

Chairman ROBERTS. Well, Coop, it is time for you, sir.

Senator THUNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is almost high noon, so it is time for me to ask questions.

But thank you, Governor Perdue, for taking this on. You are the right guy for the job. These are tough times in agriculture. We have got commodity prices and livestock prices below the cost of production, uncertainty about trade, concerns about disease, and two crop years left in terms of implementation of this Farm Bill before we start writing a new one, and I look forward to working with you on the next Farm Bill as well as continuing to implement this one.

I know we will not have any problem getting you to come to South Dakota as long as we still have pheasants in South Dakota, so I expect you to be there.

I have got a number of questions that I need to cover quickly, so if you could just answer yes to all of them, that would be fine. [Laughter.]

Senator THUNE. In terms of the current Farm Bill, the past administration showed a lot of inflexibility with regard to administration in a number of areas—the commodity title, Title I, the ARC payments, and the data that was used to calculate those payments. CRP vegetative cover management practices and equitable CRP acreage distribution were all things that—where we do not think the past administration was following the intent of Congress.

So with two years left on that Farm Bill, will you be willing to work with me and my staff on these issues to make improvements in program administration and make sure those programs are operating in the way in which Congress intended?

Mr. PERDUE. Yes.

Senator THUNE. Thank you.

Governor Perdue, I know you are aware of the recent tainted Brazilian meat scandal, which has resulted now in USDA issuing a press release announcing additional steps that they are taking to ensure that our food supply is kept safe. None of the facilities implicated in that scandal, the Brazilian meat scandal, have shipped meat to the United States according to USDA, but—and the question is, Do you believe that accelerated testing of all the incoming shipments of raw meat from Brazil will provide adequate protection, or should we begin to think about triggering USDA to impose an outright shutdown if there is unsafe meat?

Mr. PERDUE. Senator, I believe that the men and women of the FSIS are doing a wonderful job, going to the 100 percent inspection there coming in. I am concerned, obviously, if we go to embargoing at this—where these plants were not shipping to the U.S., if we go to embargoing or putting a shutdown on there, there will be retaliation there for our products or maybe around the world as well.

We already know that we have had some high-path avian influenza, and some countries have responded in that way. So while that is very, very localized, I do not want to punish another country, but I do want USDA inspectors to be on the job with 100 percent type of inspection of any products coming in, into the United States.

Senator THUNE. Okay. We both come from states where we grow trees. The trees in South Dakota grow a little slower than the pine trees do in your home state, but in the last half decade, we have seen a rapid increase in mortality—it is up 53 percent—and a decrease in growth, down 69 percent in our state. Unfortunately, our situation is not unique, with over 82 million acres of national forests under stress from fires, insects, or both, and I know that Senator Bennet touched on this. But can I get your commitment to focus on turning around the national forests and expanding the management that we need to create jobs in healthy stands of timber?

Mr. PERDUE. Senator, absolutely, you can have my commitment. I think that the—I view the United States Forest Service and our United States forests as challenges, opportunities clothed in challenges right now, and I think there is real opportunity to make these forests healthy.

I do come from a state where it is mostly private ownership. My sense from visiting with many of you is that we have just not really been good neighbors in a lot of places in taking care of the public stewardship portion where many private landowners would. So I look forward to having those best management practices leading and inspiring the United States Forest Service to take pride in the way they would care for it, just as if it was their own.

Senator THUNE. Okay. Thank you.

I know this got touched on once already as well, but agriculture, of course, helps build a strong U.S. economy. It is a number one industry in my state, but I think it is critical to our national economy and especially in our rural communities. The RFS has been an essential driver of growth in rural areas of our country, and the certainty of the policy has created jobs and spurred added research and investment. Can you commit to ensuring that we will have a

strong RFS to provide economic security for these rural communities?

Mr. PERDUE. I can do that, and I am happy to have the—also the President's commitment, of his concern and interest in that area as well, so you absolutely can have that commitment.

Senator THUNE. Appreciate that.

My time has expired. I thank you again for taking this on. We look forward to working with you, and not only on, as I said, this Farm Bill, but the one to come, which we will be getting started on very soon. Thank you.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you, Senator.

Chairman ROBERTS. I thank the Senator. I know he has a date at high noon. So you can excuse yourself at any time.

Senator HEITKAMP.

Senator HEITKAMP. Terrific. Thank you, and I thank my colleagues who probably went out for a cup of coffee or something else, who stood ahead of me in line.

Governor Perdue, welcome, and welcome to your beautiful family. What a legacy you leave. I think there is someone who looks a whole lot like you back there. I kind of looked. You used to be a lot more handsome when you were younger, I think.

Mr. PERDUE. It was the first human cloning, I think, there.

[Laughter.]

Senator HEITKAMP. It is pretty remarkable. I was checking it out. I am thinking wow. That is—well, you used to be very handsome, I might add.

[Laughter.]

Senator HEITKAMP. I want to associate myself with the remarks of Senator Thune, who talked about the importance to really have flexibility as we implement the next Farm Bill. We saw some great flexibility, but then we ran into some roadblocks. I appreciate your commitment.

I also know that we were visiting, when you entered my office and you said three words, "Trade, trade, trade." I knew that you and I were on the same wavelength, that is a critical component.

But my concern is what we are seeing really out of the White House and out of the budget does not seem to be pro rural or pro agriculture, and so we need you to be an absolute voracious and active fighter on behalf of rural America in that White House and with other agencies such as EPA and OMB and the USTR. Can you commit to doing that?

Mr. PERDUE. Agriculture is in my heart, and I look forward to fighting for the producers of America, just because, as I said that, we know how vital it is, and I will absolutely be a tenacious advocate and fighter where necessary to do that.

Senator HEITKAMP. I hope that you will engage us. We are a very bipartisan, collaborative committee, and we all represent agricultural states, but we also know how vital—as Senator Thune said, how vital agriculture is to our national economy.

A couple unique North Dakota issues, we have a lot of prairie potholes. It is part of what we do in terms of the resource, and it provides for some great duck hunting and geese hunting, but we have a lot of farmers who would like an opportunity to farm their land and not just raise ducks. I think one of the problems that we

have—it is not only running into maybe an attitude sometimes, that the wetland is more important than the farmer, but also not having enough staff to do the work that needs to be done in order to make the determination within USDA. Can you commit that you will staff up so that we will not have farmers waiting to find out if they can tile their land?

Mr. PERDUE. Not only staffing up, but I also think the relationship, as we talked about earlier, with the Administrator of EPA to make sure that our producers and farmers do not get caught in some of these unintended consequences of rules that have gone awry in a confiscatory type of way, because that is very important. As they try to be compliant, sometimes they get caught into a web of rules that are very onerous, and I will not only try to provide the staff that they could do good conservation or good soil preservation, but to work with our Administrator at EPA to do that as well.

Senator HEITKAMP. We love our neighbors to the north, but sometimes we would like maybe a little tougher enforcement on some of the grain standards. We have been working on a project out of my office as it relates to the treatment of our grain, which becomes feed category as opposed to what it really is, which is good quality wheat. Of course, we offer a different opportunity for Canadian grain that comes south. Can you commit to working with the USTR to change their policies and to prevent discrimination against grain going to the north?

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly. I think this is one of those areas where many people have talked about the benefits of NAFTA. I think as we look at that, I think there are some inequities and some unilateral issues during that, cattle, and some milk products that we can look certainly to our neighbors to the north, which we have a great relationship, but we just want to make sure that it is a fair proposition for all.

Senator HEITKAMP. Great. The sugar program is critical. I am not sure—I have not been here for the whole hearing. I do not know if anyone has raised this with you, but it has been a program that has guaranteed a steady supply of sugar to this country. I think it is done equitably. It does not cost the United States taxpayer really anything, but yet it provides, a value-added opportunity in my community and my state and many states across the country. Will you continue to commit to supporting the sugar program as it has been in the past?

Mr. PERDUE. Senator, if confirmed, I will commit to you that I will look at that in the farm program going on and will commit to support the best benefit of that. I think also that is another issue where maybe trade to the south, we need to look at some of the issues over sugar inequities that may be coming into the country that have been harmful to your growers.

Senator HEITKAMP. I was kind of hoping for a yes, but I guess I got a maybe.

Thanks so much, Governor, and congratulations on your nomination.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you.

Chairman ROBERTS. Senator Perdue.

Senator PERDUE. Mr. Chairman, for the sake of the Republic, I am going to withhold questions today. Thank you.

[Laughter.]

Chairman ROBERTS. It would appear that it would be Senator Strange. Welcome to Committee, sir.

Senator STRANGE. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is an honor to be the first Alabamian in over 20 years to serve on the Agriculture Committee, and I look forward to serving with you and my colleagues on the Committee.

I am especially pleased to welcome you, Governor Perdue, this morning. It is nice to have a potential Secretary, I am sure future Secretary, who speaks the same language that I do, as your neighbor to the west. I have enjoyed watching you in your career, and I look forward to working with you.

I am going to also spare the Committee lengthy questions today. I have a number that we talked about privately.

I do want to just build on something that Senator Ernst mentioned. For the last 6 years, I was honored to be the Attorney General of our state, and I got to work very closely with our now EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. We spent a lot of time litigating against the Federal Government and its overreaching federal agenda, as we saw it. We were successful in a lot of cases. One of the things that I took away from that experience—and I have discussed this with Administrator Pruitt—is the lack of cooperation, if you will, between the federal agencies that affect the agriculture world and our constituents.

Agriculture is the biggest part of our economy in the State of Alabama, as you well know, because we share many of the same industries—forestry, catfish farming, and all types of other farming activities. The lack of cooperation between those agencies was very frustrating to our farmers.

What I am hoping that you will do is follow through with your commitment to Senator Ernst to make sure that you as the Secretary of Agriculture are communicating with Administrator Pruitt and others so that we are eliminating unnecessary, inefficient, and really inconsequential barriers to our farmers, so that they can produce the products that we need in this country and internationally.

So I appreciate your comments to her. I do not have another question for you right now. I can submit some others later, but that is of particular concern to me because it is a real-world concern to the people who have to live under the regulations that we pass here in Washington.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you, Senator. Just like I mentioned to Senator Ernst, if I am honored with confirmation, that is really one of the things I look most forward to because we have seen that, the harm that it causes when one agency looks like they are working at cross-purposes of another. I think from the—we are all Americans, and we are all beneficiaries with all these agencies. I really look forward to developing the relationships, mutual, respectful relationships with other Department heads and other agencies that can communicate possible unintended consequences, so thank you for mentioning that.

Senator STRANGE. I look forward to continuing to work with you as you assume your responsibilities.

I also wanted to welcome your family, your beautiful family, and thank you for your public sacrifice. The family is a partner in this venture, as I well know.

Thank you.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you.

Chairman ROBERTS. Senator Donnelly, you were AWOL last night at the marine mess night. So I want a written response back to me as an excuse, but I am going to recognize you, anyway. Senator Donnelly.

Senator DONNELLY. Well, I was afraid you were going to send me to Iwo Jima, sir, so—which would have been a great honor.

Governor Perdue, one thing I want to ask you, I noted that you played football for the University of Georgia, and on September 9th in the State of Indiana, in Notre Dame, Indiana, Georgia is playing Notre Dame, my alma mater. I want to invite you to the game. We would like to have you there. We will have a big pork barbecue in your honor. We will have all the Indiana farmers there, and you can see the Irish beat the Bulldogs. Would you like to come?

[Laughter.]

Mr. PERDUE. I will accept that invitation, except for the last clause there.

[Laughter.]

Senator DONNELLY. I wanted to talk to you a little bit about crop insurance. It is critically important to my state. It is something that we are going to be working on in the Farm Bill, and to my farmers in Indiana, that is something that they want to make sure stays strong and stays protected. I wanted to get your views on that.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you, Senator. I thought you all in the 2014 Farm Bill made a lot of progress in the crop insurance area.

Obviously, it can always be refined and be made better, but it is vital to farmers, good producers there that need that safety net of both the risk of production and pricing that you all did so well in that area, and I hope we can even continue that and enhance that and, as some of your colleagues have mentioned, look at risk management proposals and other commodities that make sense.

To me, I think the American taxpayer gets a good value for that, and hopefully, we can work together. I look forward to working with you all as we continue, if I am confirmed, to make sure that the crop insurance program is sound, solid, and a good economic value for both—not only the producers, but the taxpayers as well.

Senator DONNELLY. One of the things that we are all shooting for, I know in Kansas and Michigan and Indiana and Mississippi, is for growth of our rural areas and maximizing economic opportunities there. That is a passion of mine to make sure—we have 92 counties—that every county has a chance, every community has a chance, the chance to buy a home, raise a family, take a vacation, retire with dignity.

The Secretary of Agriculture plays a huge role in rural communities especially. We need to make sure our rural communities have broadband, so companies located there can compete with those across the world, and that they have the same access to educational opportunities that our children do, as in the cities, to expand market opportunities. I want to make sure that as Secretary

of Agriculture, you look at this in a way that you will be looking at things like broadband and others to maximize economic opportunities for our rural communities.

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly. Not only broadband, Senator, but the opportunity the USDA has in rural development in so many other areas. I mean, the vitality of our small communities around your state and all these states really depends on a strong agricultural economy, but the USDA has in the past with its Rural Development Program—has been able to help communities maybe just not—just get them over the line to do some things they wanted to do, whether it is health care or other types of things to do that. That is one of the great benefits that I look forward to being able to do, if confirmed, to make the lives of people across America, particularly in rural areas, better because of the presence of the USDA.

Senator DONNELLY. One other thing that—we work on a lot of conservation programs. We are very, very proud of our cover crop programs. I think we are first in the Nation with that, and as our Chairman and Ranking Member always talk about, nobody cares about the environment more than the farmers and the families that live there. We want to make sure that as you look at your job going forward, you are going to commit to work to support and improve the conservation programs as well.

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly. The NRCS is a big part of American agriculture, and as more farmers learn how to preserve and care and create clean water, reduce runoff, use more efficient use of water and irrigation and precision agriculture, those are the research arm of USDA and the extension arm pushing those—that education information out. It is critical to continue to improve.

The good thing, what I like about farmers is they are all about continuing improvement—

Senator DONNELLY. Right.

Mr. PERDUE. —and they are competitive. They want to do better each and every year.

Senator DONNELLY. I apologize. I am running out of time, so I wanted to ask one last thing. The USDA has worked to increase access to treatment for opioid and heroin abuse in rural communities. It is breathtaking. They have assisted in creating transitional housing, funded initiatives to improve education, and raise awareness to the dangers of this. Purdue has been an amazing partner in all of this, and I want to make sure that the USDA is our partner in this, in this critical battle against opioid and heroin abuse.

Mr. PERDUE. Secretary Vilsack and I had an extended conversation about the ability just to do that. That was one of the things that I was mentioning, an ability of USDA in its rural development program to add value in rural communities, even the areas of health care, so certainly.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, Marines are my heroes, and I would be honored to go to the mess with you. Anytime you want to bring me, I will be your wing man, sir.

Chairman ROBERTS. Semper Fi.

Senator Daines.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Stabenow.

Governor Perdue, thank you so much for your willingness to step up and to serve as our next Secretary of Agriculture. This is a big deal from my home State of Montana because agriculture is our state's number one industry. It is \$6 billion a year back home. Without agriculture, Montana does not have a strong economy.

Our farmers, our ranchers, they produce wheat, barley, cattle, sugar beets, pulse crops. In fact, we are the Nation's leading producer of pulse crops now, which has been an exciting development to see in our state as we diversify our ag portfolio. Our products play a critical role in not only feeding our country, but certainly feeding the entire world.

Ag production across our Nation is diverse. Montana ag presents some unique and especially specific challenges, but great opportunities. With that in mind, I want to make sure I extend an invitation to you, Governor Perdue, to come out to Montana. We are going to have an Ag Summit May 31st and June 1st in Great Falls, which is kind of Ground Zero of our ag economy in Montana. We would love to have you consider coming out. If nothing else, we do some preseason elk scouting there too for the fall, but we would love to have you come out.

Mr. PERDUE. Well, I welcome that opportunity.

Senator DAINES. Regarding trade, 95 percent of the world's consumers are outside the United States. Certainly, we have more spending power today on a per capita basis, but as we think about the longer term, as Wayne Gretzky famously said, "Skate to where the puck is headed, not where it is at," trade becomes very important, I think, not only for today's generation, but future generations of farmers and ranchers.

We are seeing low commodity prices, declining farm incomes. I had my barley and wheat producers in my office the last couple weeks, our cattle producers. It is a pretty tough climate right now because of low prices.

The access to foreign markets for long-term growth in ag, I do not think can be overstated. Vast amounts of our wheat, our beef, our barley, pulse crops are exported every year, and that helps us in this price arena, helps create jobs, helps grow our economy.

Governor, as Secretary, how will you ensure that Ag's voice is heard loud and clear within this administration, to fight for our farmers and ranchers, to ensure we have access to new markets abroad, and not face retaliation?

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you, Senator. I think the good news is we have got a growing middle class around the world that is hungry for those products, and food is a noble thing to trade. As I have indicated several times before, we have got a great story to tell. We have got producers here that can produce more than we need to consume. That is not the case in many parts of the world. So why don't we use that bounty to supply one of the fundamental needs of mankind around the world, and I will continue tirelessly to advocate that within our administration and in conjunction with you all in development.

I plan to be on site as USDA's chief salesman around the world to sell these products and negotiate these deals side by side with

USTR, side by side with Secretary Ross, and our whole team there. I believe that USDA will be intimately involved in the personal, on-the-ground, boots-on-the-ground negotiations at tables around this world with ag ministers and foreign dignitaries there selling our product.

Senator DAINES. I know that will be music to the ears of Montana farmers and ranchers to have an advocate like yourself, and I think as a governor, you bring that unique experience of having to be the chief salesperson certainly on behalf of your farmers and ranchers across the world.

I want to shift gears and talk for a moment about forest management and reform. Of course, we always refer to this Committee as the "Ag Committee," and that has always been one of our highest priorities, but it is the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee. Back home in my state, one of my highest priorities is restoring active management to Montana's national forests. Unfortunately, excessive federal regulations, laws, we have chronic litigation from extremist groups, have limited our management of our national forests, and a healthy forest is a forest that is actively managed.

Even projects that we move forward through collaboration, bringing sportsman groups, conservation groups, folks from the logging industry, we move forward and were litigated at the end and go—and oftentimes lose our cases before the Ninth Circuit, as they unfortunately have continuous litigation.

Unfortunately, we have a recent Ninth Circuit decision called the Cottonwood Environmental Law Center v. the Forest Service. It has added another layer of unnecessary red tape and is threatening dozens of forest management projects. The Supreme Court will not hear this case, unfortunately, but we think we can change the outcome here statutorily, and I have a bipartisan support for this legislation. I would ask, Would you work with me to reverse this disastrous decision that we have seen from the Ninth Circuit?

Mr. PERDUE. Senator, if confirmed, I would welcome the opportunity to work with you. I have seen your legislation, proposed legislation. I agree with it wholeheartedly. I think at some point, you have got to say the end is the end, and rather than stopping things that have been agreed to with continuing legislation—or litigation, rather, is just unproductive and creates what you talked about by unproductive and unmanaged forests. At some point, we have got to say, "That is it. We have done that. We have made a decision, and we are moving forward."

Many of your colleagues already have NEPA-approved projects that we have not gotten to yet. That is a top priority, but then to continue to move forward.

I am hopeful, Senator, that as we demonstrate good stewardship and good management of the U.S. forests, the litigators on the other side will see this is good, this is productive, forests are renewable, they are healthy, they are better. They are better for everyone when they are managed well rather than just to lie out there and die upon themselves. So, hopefully, we can do that.

Senator DAINES. Well said, Governor. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROBERTS. Senator Klobuchar.

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

Thank you, Governor. I enjoyed our meeting in our office, and as you know, Minnesota is fifth in the country for agriculture. We discussed the differences, which you are well aware of, of the Southern and Midwestern agriculture.

Some things in common, one of them may be birds. As you know, we were hit by the avian flu hard in the Midwest and around the country. As a result, almost 9 million birds died, causing economic losses of \$650 million. Given the recent detections in Tennessee, Alabama, and Wisconsin, are you prepared to respond immediately to prevent the possible spread of the disease, if and when you are confirmed as Secretary?

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly, Senator. As you know, the poultry production of this country is amazing. The whole ecosystem that has been developed around that protein, being able to export worldwide, whether it is eggs or poultry protein, is critical. I am very proud of the work that I have seen that the USDA has done in Tennessee in their very quick confinement and working cooperation with both States of Alabama and Tennessee, and I think the hard-working people in that animal health area have done a wonderful job. I think they learned a lot from the 2015 outbreak, where we might have been a little slow there. They got on this very quickly, and we are praying that that is confined. So, certainly, we cannot afford an industry such as our poultry industry and any sector to be affected by the damages of a very severe high-pathogen avian influenza.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. But what if the proposed 21 percent cut to USDA went through? Do you think this could still be the priority that it is? How would you manage it if it comes?

Mr. PERDUE. Well, I am hoping that we can work with you and the appropriators. We understand what the President's proposal is, but I hope that you all will help in looking at the keepers of the purse.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. A different amount of money, thank you; that is a good answer.

I am the lead sponsor of this Senate bill to end the embargo with Cuba, and how would you respond to farmers who are concerned about the administration cutting off opportunities for American business in Cuba or somehow changing President Obama's executive order? I mean, we would like to go further, of course, and pass legislation, but we are where we are right now.

Mr. PERDUE. Again, I have answered earlier that I think if we can get the private financing done there—and there are some proposals already to do that—I think American agriculture, both in the Upper Plains and the Gulf Coast and the East Coast have a wonderful opportunity. That is a country that is hungry.

I led a delegation there in 2010 from Georgia, and they wanted our product. They just could not afford it and pay for it there based on the financial crisis that they were in. So, hopefully, we can mitigate that.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. I know Senator Thune asked you about the RFS, and will you work to advocate for a strong renewable fuel standard during interagency review with some of your other Secretaries?

Mr. PERDUE. I will.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Okay. That is a great answer too.

The dairy program, what would you do as Secretary to ensure the resources needed are available for the Margin Protection Program to be a meaningful safety net for dairy farmers?

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you, Senator. I think we have—I have heard some recent ideas recently that, hopefully, will even enhance that Margin Protection Program with a risk management program for immediate relief as well as possible solutions for the 2018 Farm Bill. The volatility of the prices that we have seen in dairy are just unsustainable, and you have got not only family dairy farms, but large dairy farms that are just unprofitable. Many of them do not have the equity to continue in that area, and it will change their whole lives.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much.

Senator Daines was just discussing forestry with you. In the 2014 Farm Bill, I worked on expanding the Good Neighbor Authority that gives the Forest Service additional flexibility to work with willing state and private landowners to implement forest management practices. Will you commit to ensuring the Good Neighbor Authority and other tools to improve forest health from the 2014 Farm Bill are fully implemented and emphasized as we continue to work on the next Farm Bill?

Mr. PERDUE. I love that name, “Good Neighbor,” and that is what I hope that we can become. I think, again, where the U.S. Forest Service becomes a welcome part of the community in dwelling there and working with the private citizens there, not only for jobs, but for good forest management and just literally being good neighbors, there is not a better way to say that.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you.

Lastly, I am the Co-Chair of the Senate Broadband Caucus, and I also am on the Commerce Committee. You and I talked briefly in my office about the importance of broadband in rural areas. Do you want to just end with that and what you would like to see there coming out of USDA?

Mr. PERDUE. I would love to see it, get it done all across this country. With the infrastructure proposal, we are going to have a seat at the table there. The White House has already asked USDA for their ideas about that. That is number one——

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you.

Mr. PERDUE. —as well as water resources as well.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Okay, very good.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you.

Senator KLOBUCHAR. Thank you very much, Governor.

Chairman ROBERTS. Senator Hoeven.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Governor Perdue, it is great to see you. I want to welcome you and Mary and your beautiful family.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you.

Senator HOEVEN. Thanks for being here and for your willingness to serve.

I chair the Ag Appropriations Committee, and so I want to express my appreciation for Senator Klobuchar’s question, and even

more, I want to express my appreciation for your answer. I look forward to working with you on that very important issue.

Also, one of our former colleagues, Senator Mike Johanns, as you know, was an outstanding Secretary of Agriculture, and he visited North Dakota on several occasions. I want to ask if, in fact, you would be good enough to show up and visit our farmers and ranchers in North Dakota who do a fantastic job and would love to see you.

Mr. PERDUE. What is the record, Senator?

Senator HOEVEN. You know, I do not know, but I know Johanns was there multiple occasions, and you cannot let him show you up. So I need a commitment that you are coming.

Mr. PERDUE. I look forward to surpassing my mentor.

Senator HOEVEN. I appreciate it.

Can you build the coalition we need to build North, South, and Midwest to pass a strong Farm Bill that really works for our producers?

Mr. PERDUE. I believe we can. I think in working with you all and you working on behalf of your constituents, I think that we can.

I think there was a great progress made in the 2014 Farm Bill. We know that we have got a couple of areas that felt left out, and we talked about those today. I think that we can get ahead of that. It is even more critical today in the light of commodity prices and where they are that we get a safety net not only for our producers, but also our consumers in going forward. So that is a challenge I look forward to, Senator, if I am confirmed, to work with you all and providing the resources and enabling you all to get a Farm Bill that will be embraced by American agriculture.

Senator HOEVEN. But you agree it takes that North, South, Midwest coalition to get it done?

Mr. PERDUE. Oh, absolutely, as well as our nutrition people as well.

Senator HOEVEN. Do you also agree that it is the heart and the soul—and you kind of were going here in your answer, but the heart and soul of risk management comes down to that counter-cyclical safety net, building on ARC and PLC, and then making sure we strongly, strongly support crop insurance as a risk management tool. Do you agree with that, and do you see that as the heart and soul of risk management for our—

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly. Absolutely. A well-run, well-managed, well-designed, well-administered program in that, I think, gives farmers a lot of confidence.

Senator HOEVEN. Then talk a little bit about the importance of ag research. We have talked about the importance of trade, and I absolutely agree with that, but ag research is making such a difference in the crops we can grow, disease resistance, our yields, which lead to profitability. Talk a little bit about your willingness—and this goes back to the budget issue as well, but talk about your commitment to ag research.

Mr. PERDUE. You know, it is interesting. We talk a lot about high-tech manufacturing. I would submit to the President and anyone that our agricultural sector has been the highest-tech manufacturing industry we have had in this country for several years. The

phenomenal growth in productivity with less inputs and less water and better management, better soil preservation is actually phenomenal. It is really—it is really wonderful, and the basis of that, as you said, is not only good basic research in our land-grant universities and others, but the transmission of that information through our extension service as well.

Senator HOEVEN. Are you committed and willing to support the sugar program?

Mr. PERDUE. I have, as I mentioned earlier, and certainly, I think you all have done a great job in the past in the sugar program, and for those who grow the beets as well as the cane, I think you all—they have come together with a pretty unified front.

Senator HOEVEN. Talk about trade. I mean, it looks to me like we are in kind of a new era on how we are going to do trade. Clearly, the administration likes bilateral agreements over the larger group agreements, which can work, but really important that we continue to press the trade issue. How do you go about doing that as Ag Secretary leading the world of agriculture?

Mr. PERDUE. I think speedily, I think, because our farmers cannot—

Senator HOEVEN. Right.

Mr. PERDUE. —cannot wait very long. The TPP had been around for a while and negotiated, but the bilateral will take time, and we just need to get about the business of selling U.S. products.

So, if confirmed, my first stop is going to be at Mr. Lighthizer's office door. We have already discussed some of this, and he indicated to me that 80 percent of what he had heard had been about agriculture. So I thought that was good news, and we just got to get on it.

Senator HOEVEN. I think, obviously, with your background is so strong in agriculture across the board, but clearly, your background and your knowledge of trade, it is going to be very important that you are a lead player in negotiating those agreements.

Mr. PERDUE. We hope to be, Senator.

Senator HOEVEN. Great to see you. Thanks for being here—

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you.

Senator HOEVEN. —and for your willingness to serve.

Chairman ROBERTS. I remember well, back in 1918, when Senator Joseph France became a member of the Committee. He was a good man, very willing and able to work with. Ninety-nine years later, we have the benefit of Senator Van Hollen coming from Maryland to join us on the Agriculture Committee. Welcome, sir.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for noting that. I am very proud of the fact that I am the first Maryland Senator to serve on this Committee since back in 1922, I believe, if our math is correct.

Chairman ROBERTS. That is when he ended his service. He began in 1918.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Governor, it is great to see you—

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. —and I enjoyed our conversation as well. I want to pick up on one of the things we talked about, which is the Chesapeake Bay—

Mr. PERDUE. Yes.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. —which is a national treasure. It is also vital to the economy in the State of Maryland, having a healthy and clean bay, both for the watermen, the people who get the bounty of the bay, the oystermen, and the crabs, which many people around the country enjoy, to our tourism industry, where people from around the country come to the bay because of its beauty, and the boating industry. What we have worked in Maryland to do is work closely with our farmers to make sure that we have a vibrant farming industry on the Eastern Shore of Maryland along with a healthy bay, and so the conservation programs are very important to our state and the bay states, as many others.

In the 2008 Farm Bill, I worked very closely with our Ranking Member and others to create a Chesapeake Bay conservation program, and that became very popular. Other states with water bodies were understandably interested. It became the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and our conservation efforts also rely on the EQIP program and the Conservation Reserve Program.

My question to you is, Do you agree that these are important programs that we have got in place that we need to continue?

Mr. PERDUE. Senator, I certainly agree because we cannot continue the progress that has been made in the Chesapeake Bay, and you have articulated what a vital resource nationally it is and certainly for the people who live in that watershed and around the body of water for so many reasons. But I do not believe we can continue the progress that has been made, much to the credit of farmers, agribusinesses, and others who have acknowledged that the runoff of nitrogen and phosphorous has damaged that. Hopefully, we could continue by, again, the education and the national—NRCS there, that we could continue that program. So I certainly hope that we will be able to and even increase and continue the progress.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. I appreciate that, and as you indicate, we have worked on a very cooperative relationship with the farmers in connection with this particular program, and as stewards of the land, it is very important that we have a good working and cooperative relationship, which we have had.

I do just want to say, as a number of Senators have raised the issue of the proposed budget cuts to the rural water and waste disposal, the loan grant program. I listened carefully when the Chairman of our Committee said that the President proposes and the Congress disposes, and it is great to have the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee as well as the Chairman of the Subcommittee Appropriations for Agriculture. So we are going to, hopefully, work to make sure we address those issues.

I can tell you 15 of Maryland's 24 counties would be in really tough positions if they do not get the benefit of those loans.

I also say I look forward to working with the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee on the EPA budget. The Trump administration proposal wipes out the EPA's Chesapeake Bay program, which has had bipartisan support in our State of Maryland, so I do want to flag that issue.

Senator Donnelly and others talked about the crop insurance and dealing with risk. In Maryland, most of our farms are small-and medium-size farms, and especially with respect to specialty crops,

some of the way the crop insurance is currently designed does not fully meet their needs. So I just want to hear from you a willingness to talk and explore ways where we could modify some of those provisions to make sure we address the needs of some of the smaller, medium-size farms.

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly.

By the way, congratulations on your desire to be on this Committee. I think Maryland—many people do not understand the value of agriculture to Maryland, but it is significant in that way, and your smaller farms particularly. The 2014 Farm Bill recognized the need for crop insurance and specialty crops in many ways. I think that was a great beginning. Can we go further? I believe absolutely. If we look at how we can—what we learned from the 2014 Farm Bill, how we can continue to enhance that, and to make small or specialty crops of particularly smaller farmers a viable alternative for them.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. All right.

Finally, on the food and nutrition programs, I just want to add my voice to our Senators who have said how important that is to our states.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, if I could just say that we have in Maryland an 1890 land-grant HBCU, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, that is doing innovative work. You know that our HBCUs have faced significant challenges, including maintenance funds and others, and I know you have worked on this issue. I would just like to get your commitment to follow up in a conversation to try and address the issue of strengthening the 1890 HBCUs.

Mr. PERDUE. I would welcome that. We obviously have those in Georgia as well, and I think I was pleased to see our President welcome them as well and commit, to make commitments about those areas. So I look forward to working with you directly regarding your specific HBCU.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. We have a particular challenge and issue with one of our HBCU, 1890.

Mr. PERDUE. Okay.

Senator VAN HOLLEN. So thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman ROBERTS. Senator Brown.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, Governor.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you.

Senator BROWN. Nice to see you again, thank you.

My colleagues do not know, but during the Secretary-designee's time in the Air Force, Governor Perdue spent time at Lockbourne Air Force Base in Columbus, Ohio, now Rickenbacker. I am glad you will always put Ohio second, right after Georgia, so thank you for that.

Senator Van Hollen had a couple of points I want to reemphasize and then I'll go to a good handful of questions. One is the importance of the Chesapeake Bay. A lot of those same exact issues apply to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The President has proposed to cut it by 100 percent, which is just ludicrous.

Senator Portman and myself and Senator Stabenow, all of us in the Great Lakes states—the irony, it was the Great Lakes states

that really won him the election, and we have—I am old enough to remember—Senator Stabenow is not old enough, but I am old enough to remember what the Great Lakes looked like when I was a kid. It is one of the great accomplishments of government and communities and the Federal Government especially to clean this up, and we cannot backslide. So I would emphasize the importance of Great Lakes cleanup.

The Chesapeake Bay is pretty important. The Great Lakes, though, are the largest collection of fresh water in the world. Chesapeake Bay is not even fresh water, so anyway——

Senator VAN HOLLEN. Can I object to that?

Senator BROWN. You can object.

But he is a new member. He does not get to object.

[Laughter.]

Senator BROWN. Also, I want to emphasize and thank Chairman Roberts, his comments about ag and nutrition and the Farm Bill holding it together when there is always pressures to divide it. I know that the Governor has supported that too, but thank you, Chairman Roberts, for your statements about that and the statements of Senator Van Hollen on the Historically Black Colleges and Universities. It is really, really important, and I wanted—Central State is an 1890 in my state, so this is particularly important to me. I know you have worked with Georgia's HBCU as governor, and that Fort Valley State University in your home state is an 1890 land grant.

Thoughts? If you would give us, real briefly, because we are running out of time and a vote is coming, what specifically are your thoughts and ideas on the next steps you plan to take in support of these universities?

Mr. PERDUE. Again, I was pleased to hear the President welcome them and commit to do that. As you—I think you referred to Fort Valley State. They are in our adjacent county, and we know the work that they do as a land-grant university and unique niche programs there in the state. I look forward—they have got a value to serve, and I look forward to helping them with the research, providing—asking them for particular research projects with USDA that has the opportunity to do that, give them an opportunity to compete in those areas, and to listen and learn from them as well as they can provide good information for us in areas in which they operate.

Senator BROWN. I appreciate your sensitivity to the Historically Black Colleges, unlike your soon-to-be colleague in the Cabinet who said that they were about choice or something when it came to black colleges. It was a rather peculiar statement, but that is not you.

Senator Donnelly mentioned opioids. My state has more opioid deaths than any other state in the country. The repeal of the Affordable Care Act, there are 200,000—right now 200,000 Ohioans that are getting opioid addiction treatment that are on the Affordable Care Act. I know that is not your issue exactly, although it is your party's issue and the President's issue. I just ask if something happens and that insurance is taken away, as it would be with the House bill, for all those people that have opioid addictions and are getting treatment, I would ask you if you would go back

to OMB and the White House to protect funding used in the battle against opioid addiction in rural Ohio and rural America.

Mr. PERDUE. Yeah. I am not sure you were here when I had a great—when I mentioned the great conversation I had with Secretary Vilsack. He was very proud of the input the USDA had in the—on the sad opioid, and the sad thing about that, as you well know, Senator, much of this is in rural areas of despair, so I will—I will absolutely be an advocate of that for the betterment. Obviously, USDA does not have the basic capacity to supplant everything in health care, but it does have an opportunity to help in that regard. I would welcome doing that.

Senator BROWN. That again is why my Republican governor and my colleague in the Senate, Senator Portman, have both expressed great concern about the Affordable Care Act and what would happen to Medicaid. 700,000 Ohioans are on Medicaid expansion, and those are—it is pretty amazing to me that a bunch of us in this body who get government-supported insurance, whose taxpayers subsidize our health insurance, that people in this body and the other house want to take away insurance for a whole lot of low-income, working people. Those are the Medicaid expansion people, and I just needed to say that because it is such a big part of the opioid picture.

Last issue—and I know you are getting impatient, Mr. Chairman, but thank you. I worked with Senator Thune in on the last Farm Bill on the Ag Risk Coverage program. I mentioned that in our meeting, the ARC. The program protects against unforeseen declines when either prices are low or production is low because of unforeseen circumstances, it ensures that farmers have a safety net. The administration's budget proposal included sharp cuts to the National Ag Statistics Service, which raises real questions about USDA having the resources necessary to collect the independent unbiased price and yield data so that ARC, A-R-C, can actually be implemented with the proper information. One in seven jobs in my state depends on agriculture.

That is why I am on this Committee. I need to know that farmers can depend on you. I know that your specialty is not the same agriculture as most of the agriculture in the Ranking Member's, and my home states. I understand; I accept that. But I just want to know that you will work with us and use your authority to make sure that, A: we can find ways to carry out ARC, the Ag Risk Coverage program, and that B: you can help us provide short-term assistance for dairy farmers. I heard you mention them briefly, and I just need assurance on both of those issues.

Mr. PERDUE. Certainly. Let me just take the second one last. We have affirmed assistance on the dairy risk management, but farmers have to rely on the credibility of good independent data through the NASS to provide that, that information, because the ARC and the PLC program both depend on it. That is the independent source that is trusted worldwide, supply and demand and different things that move markets, so that is a critical, critical part of USDA, and I certainly will support that to the best of my ability.

Senator BROWN. Thank you. Governor, you can tell your children and grandchildren that your confirmation hearing was in the Kennedy Caucus Room, where the Titanic hearings were, the Water-

gate hearings, the markup of the Affordable Care Act—what else happened?—the McCarthy hearings in the 1950s. All were in this room. So if your children and grandchildren are here, now you know, and if they are not here, tell them. All right?

Mr. PERDUE. I think you just told them, Senator.

Senator BROWN. I think so. Thank you.

Chairman ROBERTS. Senator Stabenow.

Senator STABENOW. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to indicate—I know we have a vote coming, and that you are about to wrap up. I do have additional questions that I will submit for the record, as well as the letter that I referenced earlier regarding dairy. I would like those to be placed into the record. Thank you very much.

Chairman ROBERTS. All members should understand they can submit letters for the record.

[The following information can be found on page 104 in the appendix.]

Chairman ROBERTS. I do want to mention the fact that the Committee has received a number of letters in support of your nomination, including one from nearly 700—700 organizations across the agriculture and food value chain, as well as one from six former U.S. Secretaries of Agriculture representing both Republican and Democrat Presidents.

Governor Perdue, thank you for your willingness to be considered for service to agriculture and rural America as Secretary of Agriculture. This Committee has a history of working in a bipartisan fashion, as this hearing has demonstrated, as opposed to others that have been going on in the Senate while crafting legislation and considering nominations, and we will move as quickly as possible to consider your nomination. As you know, we will not be voting on your nomination today, but we will work to schedule a business meeting ASAP for a Committee vote.

Again, I ask members to submit any additional questions you may have for the record by five o'clock tomorrow, Friday, March 24. In addition, the record will remain open for 5 business days for members so submit a statement or additional materials.

Thank you to everyone for your time today. Young man with a red tie, who seems to be anxious to leave—

Senator STABENOW. We have got two red ties here.

Chairman ROBERTS. —we gotcha, man.

[Laughter.]

Chairman ROBERTS. We are adjourned.

Mr. PERDUE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Whereupon, at 12:22 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MARCH 23, 2017

**Testimony of Governor Sonny Perdue
U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Nominee
before the
United States Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
March 23, 2017**

Good Morning Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow, and distinguished Members of the Committee. It is an honor to be with you today as the President's nominee to serve as our nation's 31st Secretary of Agriculture. I know from visiting with you in your offices, there was some anxiety over whether there would be a Secretary of Agriculture nominee, but I must say with all humility I can muster, I think the president saved the best for last.

I'd like to thank each of you for making time to meet individually with me over the last few weeks to discuss the current state of our agricultural community and the issues we will face in the future. I hope and trust that these meetings will not just be introductory episodes, but ongoing opportunities to listen and learn from one another. And, I'd also like to thank each of you for the opportunity to be here today to answer all your questions as you consider my nomination and carry out the Senate's very important constitutional role in this confirmation process.

I think it is altogether fitting and proper that this Committee convenes this hearing

during the same week we celebrate National Agriculture Week. I hope that, by working together, we can continue our nation's agricultural preeminence, building the innovative progress of years gone by and growing to meet the needs and demands of customers and consumers here in America and around the world.

However, before I continue and address my priorities, I would like to take a moment and introduce my family members who are here with me today. I'm accompanied by my lovely wife, Mary. I had no idea, when we married 44 years ago, I was marrying such a prolific grandmother. As you can see, seated with Mary are our four children, their spouses, and 12 of our 14 grandchildren, all of whom are more familiar with my being called Big buddy, rather than any other titles I've had. I'm also pleased and frankly humbled, after seven years, to have over 40 of my former staff present, who labored side-by-side with me in serving the state and the people of Georgia.

You've all read my bio and poured over my personal and professional history, but if you'll indulge me, I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself.

As a youngster growing up on a dairy and diversified row crop farm in a rural area

of Georgia I never fully realized that the blessings of purposeful, meaningful work would serve me as well as they have in life. When I was a young boy feeding the calves and plowing the fields, I was an integral part of the workforce there on my father's farm.

My mother was an English teacher for 42 years, so I benefitted from her teachings as well ... not just by her raising me with the beliefs I hold so dear to my heart, but being an English teacher, she even made sure I knew all about dangling participles.

It was a great life. I had a blessed upbringing with wonderful memories. My favorite hobbies as a youngster were training bird dogs, riding my horse Trigger, and playing Little League baseball. Even as a youngster, I was determined and goal-oriented. Early on, I set my heart on becoming a veterinarian, so, after high school, I enrolled at the University of Georgia, where I also walked on to play football for the UGA Bulldogs. Play is probably not the operative word, but I was on the team! Realizing that my future was not on the football field, I decided to apply myself to my studies.

As I entered Veterinary school in 1967, Viet Nam was roiling, so I signed up for an

early commissioning program in the U.S. Air Force. As I finished my veterinary education in 1971, I began to fulfil the active duty service to which I had agreed. I was assigned to Columbus, Ohio as a base veterinarian, whose primary responsibilities were food safety, public health, and sanitation.

Following completion of my active duty commitment, I joined a small veterinary practice in Raleigh, North Carolina. I soon realized, even though our practice was thriving, that I missed the farm and my former agricultural way of life. So, in 1976, Mary and I and our two small girls moved back home where I partnered with my brother-in-law to build a grain elevator in my home county, which didn't yet have one. Sadly, he passed away in January of 1980 at the age of 43.

I've been in agribusiness since 1977. I am the founder and operator of three agribusiness and transportation firms serving farmers across the Southeastern United States.

Farming and farmers have been my life ever since. I have lived and breathed the exhilaration of a great crop and the despair and devastation of a drought. I learned by experience what my father had told me as a child, "If you take care of the land,

the land will take care of you”.

Let's fast forward to what you're probably more interested in, my years as a public servant. I want to be clear. Growing up, I wasn't one of those 16-year-olds who shook the hand of a president and was inspired to run for office. I was always tuned into current events, but I had no early interest in elected politics. I did understand we all have civic rent, so I agreed to chair our local planning and zoning commission.

After 10 years, a State Senate seat became open and I was asked to run for the seat. I initially declined but a pre-planned family trip to Williamsburg, Virginia changed my mind after observing the founder's goals of citizen engagement.

In 1990, the people of District 18 elected me to serve as a member of the Georgia State Senate. I served for 11 years and during my tenure, was elected by my colleagues to be Senate President pro Tem, the pinnacle of leadership in that body, from 1996 until 1998. You've probably heard, and it's interesting to note, that I served both as a Democrat and as a Republican while in the Georgia State Senate.

In 2002, I was elected the first Republican Governor of Georgia in more than 130 years. I assumed that office, believing that it was a big job, not a position. Our team worked diligently for eight years, striving to make Georgia the best managed state in the nation. As you remember, the period from 2003 to 2011, were not the best economic times for our nation. But, we learned, with the help of a joyful state workforce, we could continue to provide value to the citizens of Georgia, even in times of extreme budget pressures.

Even though Georgia may not compare to some of your states in some agricultural sectors, I am still proud to come from a state whose number one economic driver is agriculture. In Georgia, agriculture is one area where Democrats and Republicans consistently reached across the aisle and work together.

It's important to note that the makeup of this Committee speaks directly to the size, reach and diversity of America's agricultural sector and that reaching across the aisle is common practice within this Committee, where partisanship doesn't get in the way of good solutions for American farmers, ranchers, and consumers. And to that end, if confirmed as the Secretary of Agriculture, I look forward to working with you ... each of you ... to find solutions to the challenges confronting

American Agriculture.

Though I have a lifetime of experience with farming and agribusiness, I appreciate that the Department of Agriculture touches the lives of all Americans in many ways that go beyond farming itself, including, in a small way, improving the lives of the “least of these”.

As I answer your questions today, know that I approach this opportunity as I did when I was Governor. This is a big job with enormous responsibility, not just a position. Whether it’s communicating a vision for USDA, managing competing policy priorities within the Department and Agencies, or influencing the Farm Bill or budget discussions, I will dedicate my time as I said to each of you in our personal meetings ... through open, honest, and efficient communication.

If I am honored with Senate confirmation, I will work tirelessly to advance four primary goals. And each of those goals is focused on an important constituency, the stakeholders of American agriculture.

First, I will maximize the ability of the men and women of America’s agriculture

and agribusiness sector to create jobs ... to produce and sell the foods and fiber that feed and clothe the world ... and to reap the earned reward of their labor. We want to remove every obstacle, and give them every opportunity to prosper.

Second, for the American taxpayers – our customers – I will prioritize customer service every day. They expect, and have every right to demand, that we conduct the people's business efficiently, effectively, and with the utmost integrity.

Third, as our taxpayers are also consumers, they expect a safe and secure food supply and USDA will continue to serve in the critical role of ensuring the food we put on the table to feed our families meets the strict safety standards we've established.

I will never forget that we're the fortunate beneficiaries of past generations, who put a premium on smart stewardship, protecting, preserving, and entrusting us with those valuable resources.

And fourth ... American agricultural bounty comes directly from the land. And today, those land resources sustain more than 320 million Americans and countless

millions more around the globe. My father's words still ring in my ears, "Son, if you take care of the land, it will take care of you. Owned or rented, we're all stewards, and our responsibility is to leave it better than we found it".

Should I be confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture, we will safeguard that trust, maintaining always our responsibility as good stewards. That means supporting private landowners in their conservation efforts ... and managing the natural resources entrusted directly to the Department – including our National Forests – with sharp focus on renewability, sustainability, and most effective use. We will face the greatest challenges facing the agricultural industry and rural America while collaborating to make opportunities for the future.

Thank you for your time this morning. Rest assured that, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you and the dedicated men and women of the USDA who are committed to serving The People's Department.

I look forward to answering your questions.

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

MARCH 23, 2017

February 2, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

On behalf of the farmers, ranchers, hunters, forest owners, cooperatives, businesses, trade associations, and all other segments of the agriculture, food and nutrition, landscape, and conservation community represented by the undersigned, we write to urge your support for the expeditious confirmation of Sonny Perdue to be Secretary of Agriculture. We are looking forward to having his tested leadership and experience at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). There have been 30 Secretaries of Agriculture since the job was created in 1889, and though some were raised on a farm, only two actually lived and worked in agriculture as adults. If confirmed, Sonny Perdue will be number three.

Gov. Perdue has a proven record of effective governing and dedicated public service. Prior to his time as governor, he was a member of the Georgia State Senate for 10 years, being elected by his colleagues to serve a term as Senate President Pro Tem. As the 81st governor of Georgia, elected in 2002, he enacted meaningful ethics reform and reshaped state government. He engaged business leaders through the Commission for a New Georgia, and by 2010, Georgia was named Best Managed State in the Southeast. Governor Perdue served in 2006-2007 as Chairman of the Republican Governors Association.

Given his background of growing up on a diversified row crop and dairy operation in Central Georgia, his service in the United States Air Force, and his background in founding three agribusiness firms supplying services to farmers, Gov. Perdue is eminently qualified to lead USDA. Gov. Perdue was also a practicing veterinarian, and has a deep understanding of the issues important to animal agriculture. As the former governor of a state that produces billions of dollars in food, fiber, specialty crops, nursery crops, dairy products, poultry, and livestock each year, Gov. Perdue understands the critical role of feeding our country and the world. He is also keenly aware of the importance of agriculture in powering our nation's economy, providing jobs from farm to table. Finally, Gov. Perdue has proved to be a dedicated servant of the concerns of rural America with a long history of supporting rural infrastructure, agricultural water use projects, and proper forest management. This experience, along with a personal understanding of the unique needs of rural America, will undoubtedly benefit him as head of USDA.

We appreciate your dedicated leadership to the nation's agricultural community, and look forward to working with you as Gov. Perdue's confirmation moves forward.

Sincerely,

4Earth Farms
 A. Duda & Sons, Inc.
 Advance Trading Inc.
 African-American Farmers of California
 Ag Georgia Farm Credit, ACA
 Ag South Farm Credit
 AgChoice Farm Credit
 AgCountry Farm Credit Services, ACA
 AgFirst Farm Credit Bank
 AgriBank, FCB
 Agribusiness Association of Iowa
 Agribusiness Council of Indiana
 Agricultural Council of Arkansas
 Agricultural Retailers Association
 Agri-Mark, Inc.
 AgStar Financial Services, ACA
 Alabama Agribusiness Council
 Alabama Cattlemen's Association
 Alabama Farmer's Federation
 Alabama Forestry Association
 Alabama Nursery & Landscape Association
 Alabama Peanut Producers Association
 Alaska Farm Bureau
 All Fresh GPS
 Allen Lund Company LLC
 Allenberg Cotton Co.
 Almond Alliance of California
 AMCOT
 American AgCredit
 American Agri-Women
 American Association of Crop Insurers
 American Bakers Association
 American Bankers Association
 American Beekeeping Federation
 American Beverage Association
 American Cotton Shippers Association
 American Farm Bureau Federation
 American Feed Industry Association

American Forest and Paper Association
American Forest Foundation
American Forest Resource Council
American Frozen Food Institute
American Mushroom Institute
American National CattleWomen
American Olive Oil Producers Association
American Peanut Council
American Peanut Product Manufacturers, Inc.
American Peanut Shellers Association
American Pistachio Growers
American Pulse Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Sesame Growers Association
American Sheep Industry
American Society of Animal Science
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
American Sugar Cane League
American Sugarbeet Growers Association
American Veterinary Medical Association
American Wood Council
AmericanHort
Animal Health Institute
Archer Daniels Midland Company
Archery Trade Association
Arena Packaging, LLC.
Arizona Cattle Feeders
Arizona Cotton Ginners Association
Arizona Farm Bureau Federation
Arizona Grain, Inc.
Arkansas Cattlemen's Association
Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation
Arkansas Forestry Association
Arkansas Rice Council
Arkansas Rice Farmers
Arkansas Rice Federation
Arkansas Rice Growers Association
Arkansas Soybean Association
Associated Milk Producers Inc.
Associated Oregon Loggers, Inc.

Association of Consulting Foresters
Association of Equipment Manufacturers
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Attebury Grain
Baldor Specialty Foods
Barrett, Easterday, Cunningham & Eselgroth LLP
Bayer
BBC Land, LLC
Beachner Grain, Inc.
Belair Produce, Inc.
BiNational Softwood Lumber Council
Biotechnology Innovation Organization
Black Gold Farms
Black Hills Forest Resource Association
Bongards' Creameries
Boone and Crockett Club
Bunge North America
Cabbage, Inc.
Caito Foods, LLC.
Calcot
Caledonia Farmers Elevator Co.
California Ag Irrigation Association
California Alfalfa and Forage Association
California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers
California Association of Wheat Growers
California Bean Shippers Association
California Cattlemen's Association
California Cherry Export Association
California Citrus Mutual
California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association
California Forestry Association
California Fresh Fruit Association
California Giant, Inc.
California Grain and Feed Association
California Pear Growers Association
California Rice Commission
California Seed Association
California Specialty Crops Council
California State Beekeepers Association
California State Floral Association

California Strawberry Commission
California Warehouse Association
California Wool Growers Association
Calorie Control Council
Campbell Global, LLC
Canfor Southern Pine
Cape Fear Farm Credit
Cargill, Incorporated
Carolinas Cotton Growers Cooperative
Castellini Group of Companies
Catch-A-Dream Foundation
Catchmark Timber Trust, Inc.
CGB Enterprises, Inc.
Charles M. Farms, LLC
Chemstar Corp.
Choptank Transport, Inc.
Co-Alliance
CoBank
COFCO Agri Ltd.
Colorado Cattlemen's Association
Colorado Dairy Farmers
Colorado Farm Bureau
Colorado Livestock Association
Colorado Potato Administrative Committee
Colorado Sorghum Producers Association
Colorado Timber Industry Association
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Connecticut Nursery & Landscape Association
Conservation Forestry Partners
Cooperative Milk Producers Association
Corn Refiners Association
Cortland Bulk Milk Producers Cooperative
Cotton Warehouse Association of America
Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports
Countryside Cooperative
Crop Insurance and Reinsurance Bureau
Crop Insurance Professionals Association
Crop Protection Association of North Carolina
CropLife America
Crunch Pak
Dairy Business Association

Dairy Business Milk Marketing Cooperative
Dairy Farmers of America
Dairy Producers of New Mexico
Dairy Producers of Utah
Dallas Safari Club
Delta Council
Delta Waterfowl
Demeter Lp
Dole Berry Company
Dow AgroSciences
Ducks Unlimited
Due South Investments, LLC
DuPont
Earthbound Farm
Eastern Meat Packers Association
Elanco Animal Health
Ellsworth Cooperative Creamery
Empire State Forest Products Association
Enzyme Technical Association
Equipment Dealers Association
Expera Specialty Solutions
Far West Agribusiness Association
Farm Credit Bank of Texas
Farm Credit Council
Farm Credit East
Farm Credit of Central Florida
Farm Credit of Florida
Farm Credit of Northwest Florida
Farm Credit of the Virginias
Farm Credit Services of America
Farm Credit West
Farm Fresh Direct of America
Farmer Mac
Farmer's Best International L.L.C.
Farmers Elevator of Goodwell
Farmers Grain Terminal, Inc.
FarmFirst Dairy Cooperative
Federal Forest Resource Coalition
FFF Farms
Field Fresh Foods
First District Association

Florida Cattlemen's Association
Florida Citrus Mutual
Florida Farm Bureau Federation
Florida Forestry Association
Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association
Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association
Florida Peanut Producers Association
Florida Sugar Cane League
Florida Tomato Exchange
FMC Corporation
Foremost Farms USA
Forest Investment Associates
Forest Landowners Association
Forest Resources Association
Forestry Association of South Carolina
Four Seasons Produce Family of Companies
Freedom Freight & Logistics LP
Frey Farms
Frieda's, Inc.
Frontier Farm Credit
Gavilon
Georgia Agri-Business Council
Georgia Agritourism Association
Georgia Bankers Association
Georgia Cattlemen's Association
Georgia Cotton Commission
Georgia Farm Bureau Federation
Georgia Forestry Association
Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
Georgia Green Industry Association
Georgia Milk Producers, Inc.
Georgia Peanut Commission
Georgia Pecan Growers Association
Georgia Pork Producers Association
Georgia Poultry Federation
Georgia Rural Water Association
Georgia Urban Agriculture Council
Georgia Watermelon Association
Georgia/Florida Soybean Association
GeorgiaBev
Giustina Resources

Global Cold Chain Alliance
Global Forest Partners LP
Grain and Feed Association of Illinois
Green Crow
Green Diamond Resource Company
GreenWood Resources, Inc.
Greenyard USA
Greg Leger Farms, LLC
Grocery Manufacturers Association
Grower-Shipper Association of Central California
GROWMARK
Hancock Natural Resource Group
Hardwood Federation
Hardwood Plywood Veneer Association
Hawaii Cattlemen's Council
Hearst Forests
Heart of Georgia Peanut and Gin Company
Heeren LLC
Heinzen Manufacturing International
Houston Safari Club
Huber Resource Corporation
Idaho Cattle Association
Idaho Dairymen Association
Idaho Forest Group
Idaho Potato Commission
Idaho Woolgrowers Association
Illinois Beef Association
Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association
Illinois Green Industry Association
Illinois Soybean Association
Imperial Sugar Company
Independent Bakers Association
Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas
Indiana Beef Cattle Association
Indiana Corn Growers Association
Indiana Nursery & Landscape Association
Indiana Sheep Association
Indiana Soybean Alliance
Infant Nutrition Council of America
Intermountain Forest Association
International Association of Refrigerated Warehouses

International Dairy Foods Association
International Food Additives Council
Intertribal Agriculture Council
Iowa Cattlemen's Association
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation
Iowa Soybean Association
J&J Family of Farms
J.D. Heiskell & Co.
J.M. Longyear
JAB Produce
Jamestown Timberlands
JBS USA
Kansas Agribusiness Retailers Association
Kansas Cotton Association
Kansas Farm Bureau
Kansas Grain and Feed Association
Kansas Grain Sorghum Producers Association
Kansas Livestock Association
Kansas Sheep Association
Kansas Soybean Association
Kentucky Cattlemen's Association
Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation
Kentucky Forest Industries Association
Kentucky Soybean Association
Keweenaw Land Association, LTD
Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturer's Association
KiVAR Chemical Technologies
Lakeside Produce Distribution, Inc.
Land Improvement Contractors of America
Land O'Lakes Inc.
Landmark Services Cooperative
Landus Cooperative
Leger & Son, Inc.
Lewis Taylor Farms
Linn & Associates
Livestock Marketing Association
Lone Rock Resources
Lone Star Milk Producers
Lotscher Agri Service Inc.
Louis Dreyfus Company, North America
Louisiana Cotton & Grain Association

Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation
Louisiana Farm Bureau Rice Advisory Committee
Louisiana Forestry Association
Louisiana Independent Rice Producers Association
Louisiana Rice Growers Association
Louisiana Rice Mill
Louisiana Rice Producers' Group
Maine Arborist Association
Maine Forest Products Council
Maine Landscape & Nursery Association
Mann Packing Company, Inc.
Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association
Maryland Nursery, Landscape, and Greenhouse Association
Massachusetts Association of Dairy Farmers
Massachusetts Forest Alliance
Massachusetts Nursery & Landscape Association, Inc.
Mastronardi Produce
McEntire Produce
Mead Johnson Nutrition
Merrill & Ring
Michael Cutler Company
Michigan Agri-Business Association
Michigan Agricultural Commodities
Michigan Bean Shippers
Michigan Cattlemen's Association
Michigan Farm Bureau
Michigan Forest Products Council
Michigan Milk Producers Association
Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association
Michigan Sheep Producers Association
Michigan Soybean Association
Michigan-California Timber Company LP
Mid-West Dairymen's Company
Milk Producers Council
Minnesota Corn Growers Association
Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation
Minnesota Grain & Feed Association
Minnesota Lamb & Wool Producers Association
Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association
Minnesota Soybean Association
Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association

Mission Produce, Inc.
 Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation
 Mississippi Peanut Growers Association
 Mississippi Rice Council
 Mississippi Soybean Association
 Missouri Cattlemen's Association
 Missouri Corn Growers Association
 Missouri Farm Bureau
 Missouri Rice Council
 Missouri Soybean Association
 Missouri Wine and Grape Board
 Molpus Woodlands Group
 Monsanto Company
 Montana Stockgrowers Association
 Montana Wool Growers Association
 Mount Joy Farmers Cooperative Association
 Mountaire Farms, Inc.
 Mouzin Brothers Farms, LLC
 Nagel Farm Service
 National Alliance of Forest Owners
 National Association for the Advancement of Animal Science
 National Association of Conservation Districts
 National Association of Federal Veterinarians
 National Association of Landscape Professionals
 National Association of Professional Insurance Agents
 National Association of Resource Conservation & Development
 Councils
 National Association of State and County Office Employees
 National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
 National Association of State Foresters
 National Association of Wheat Growers
 National Automatic Merchandising Association
 National Barley Growers Association
 National Black Growers Council
 National Cattlemen's Beef Association
 National Chicken Council
 National Christmas Tree Association
 National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research
 National Confectioners Association
 National Corn Growers Association
 National Cotton Council

National Cotton Ginners' Association
National Cottonseed Products Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Crop Insurance Services
National Farmers Union
National Grain and Feed Association
National Grocers Association
National Lamb Feeders Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Onion Association
National Peach Council
National Pest Management Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Renderers Association
National Restaurant Association
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
National Turkey Federation
National Watermelon Association
National Wild Turkey Federation
National Wooden Pallet and Container Association
National Woodland Owners Association
NatureFresh Farms
Nebraska Agri-Business Association
Nebraska Cattlemen
Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation
Nebraska Grain and Feed Association
Nebraska Soybean Association
Nesei Farmers League
Nestlé USA
Nevada Wool Growers
New England Vegetable & Berry Growers' Association
New Hampshire Farm Bureau Federation
New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association
New Jersey Nursery & Landscape Association
New Mexico Cattlegrowers Association
New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau

New Mexico Sorghum Association
 New Mexico Wool Growers Association
 New York Farm Bureau
 New York Soybean Association
 New York State Vegetable Growers Association
 Nisei Farmers League
 North American Export Grain Association
 North American Meat Institute
 North American Millers' Association
 North American Raspberry & Blackberry Association
 North Bay Produce, Inc.
 North Carolina Cattlemen's Association
 North Carolina Cotton Producers Association
 North Carolina Forestry Association
 North Carolina Potato Association
 North Carolina Sheep Producers Association
 North Carolina Soybean Association
 North Dakota Stockman's Association
 Northern Seed Trade Association
 Northwest Dairy Association
 Northwest Farm Credit Services
 Northwest Grain Growers, Inc.
 Northwest Horticultural Council
 Nourse Farms
 Nutrition Council of America
 Ohio AgriBusiness Association
 Ohio Cattlemen's Association
 Ohio Dairy Producers Association
 Ohio Farm Bureau Federation
 Ohio Nursery & Landscape Association
 Oklahoma Agribusiness Retailers Association
 Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association
 Oklahoma Grain & Feed Association
 Oklahoma Sorghum Association
 Oklahoma Soybean Association
 Oneida-Madison Milk Producers Cooperative Association
 Oregon Association of Nurseries
 Oregon Cattlemen's Association
 Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
 Oregon Potato Commission
 Oregon Sheep Growers Association

Oregon Small Woodlands Association
Oregon Women in Timber
Oregonians for Food & Shelter
Organic Trade Association
Pacific Coast Fruit Company
Pacific Egg and Poultry Association
Pacific International Marketing
Pandol Bros., Inc.
PennAg industries Association
Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association
Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Pennsylvania Forest Products Association
Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association
Pero Family Farms
Pheasants Forever
Pingree Association
Plains Cotton Cooperative Association
Plains Cotton Growers, Inc.
Pollinator Partnership
Polymer Logistics
Pope Resources
Port Blakely Companies
Potandon Produce
Potato Growers of Idaho
Potlach Corporation
Prairie Farms Dairy, Inc.
Premier Milk Inc.
Premier Produce
Pro Citrus Network, Inc.
PRO*ACT, LLC
Produce Marketing Association
Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association
Public Lands Council
Quail Forever
Quality Deer Management Association
Railway Tie Association
Rayonier Inc.
Resource Management Service, LLC
Rice Producers of California
Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers
Robinson Fresh

Rocky Mountain Agribusiness Association
Rolling Plains Cotton Growers, Inc.
Safari Club International
San Joaquin Valley Quality Cotton Growers Association
Scioto Cooperative Milk Producers' Association
Seald Sweet
Select Milk Producers, Inc.
Sid Wainer & Son
Sierra Pacific Industries
Smithfield Foods
SNAC International
Society for Range Management
Society of American Florists
Society of American Foresters
Soil and Water Conservation Society
Solutions From the Land
South Carolina Cattlemen's Association
South Carolina Farm Bureau Federation
South Carolina Peach Council
South Carolina Sheep Industries Association
South Carolina Specialty Crop Growers Association
South Dakota Agri-Business Association
South Dakota Dairy Producers
South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation
South Dakota Grain & Feed Association
South Dakota Soybean Association
South Louisiana Rail Facility
South Texas Cotton & Grain Association
Southeast Milk, Inc.
Southeastern Cotton Ginners Association, Inc.
Southeastern Gin and Peanut
Southeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association
Southern Cotton Ginners Association
Southern Cotton Growers, Inc.
Southern Crop Production Association
Southern Peanut Farmers Federation
Southern Rolling Plains Cotton Growers Association
Southern Specialties
Southwest Council of Agribusiness
Southwest Georgia Farm Credit
Soy Transportation Coalition

Soyfoods Association of North America
St. Albans Cooperative Creamery, Inc.
Stapleco
Starker Forests, Inc.
Stewart Grain Co., Inc.
Stimson Lumber Company
Stratford Grain Co.
Strube Celery and Vegetable Co.
Sun World International
Sunburst Farms
Superior Pine Products Company
Sweetener Users Association
Swiss Valley Farms
Syngenta North America
Team Marketing Alliance
Tennessee Cattlemen's Association
Tennessee Forestry Association
Tennessee Soybean Association
Texas Ag Industries Association
Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association
Texas Cattle Feeders Association
Texas Citrus Mutual
Texas Cotton Ginners' Association
Texas Forestry Association
Texas Grain and Feed Association
Texas International Produce Association
Texas Nursery & Landscape Association
Texas Rice Council
Texas Rice Producers Legislative Group
Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers' Association
Texas Sorghum Producers
Texas Soybean Association
Texas Vegetable Association
The Conservation Fund
The Fertilizer Institute
The Forestland Group
The Langdale Company
The Lyme Timber Company
The Produce Mom LLC
The Sugar Association
The Wenger Group

The Westervelt Company
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Tillamook County Creamery Association
Timberland Investment Resources, LLC
Torrey Farms, Inc.
TRC Trading Corporation
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Canola Association
U.S. Cattlemen's Association
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Dry Bean Council
U.S. Industrial Pellet Association
U.S. Pecan Growers Council
U.S. Poultry & Egg Association
U.S. Premium Beef, LLC
U.S. Rice Producers Association
United Dairymen of Arizona
United Egg Producers
United Fresh Produce Association
United Poultry Growers Association
Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc.
US Sweet Potato Council
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Poultry & Egg Export Council
USA Rice Federation
Utah Onions, Inc.
Utah Wool Growers Association
Valent USA Corporation
Vermont Woodlands Association
Vidalia Onion Business Council
Village Farms International, Inc.
Virginia Agribusiness Council
Virginia Cattlemen's Association
Virginia Forestry Association
Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association
Vita Plus
Wada Farms Potatoes
Wagner Forest Management
Warrior MFG LLC
Washington Cattle Feeders Association
Washington Cattlemen's Association

Washington Farm Bureau Federation
Washington Forest Protection Association
Western Agricultural Processors Association
Western Growers
Western Peanut Growers Association
Western Wood Preservers Institute
Westlake Produce Company
Weyerhaeuser Company
Wheeler Brothers Grain Company, LLC
Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine
Wildlife Mississippi
Willacy Co-op
Wisconsin Agri-Business Association
Wisconsin Alliance of Forest Owners
Wisconsin Cattlemen's Association
Wisconsin Soybean Association
WoodWorks - Wood Products Council
Wyoming Stock Growers Association
Zeeland Farm Services
Zia Milk Producers, Inc.



February 6, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

I am writing to you to convey the support of American Frozen Food Institute (AFFI) for the confirmation of Governor Sonny Perdue to be Secretary of Agriculture. We look forward to working with him in his new role at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

AFFI is the national trade association that promotes and represents the interests of all segments of the frozen food industry. AFFI members manufacture and distribute frozen foods throughout the United States and globally. The frozen food industry is proud to contribute approximately \$56 billion to U.S. GDP and account for 670,000 jobs across 49 states. In addition to our strong role in economic growth, our members share a commitment to public health and appreciate sensible policies that reinforce the safety and integrity of the U.S. food supply.

As a former governor and farmer of a state that produces a diverse array of row crops, livestock, and specialty crops, Governor Perdue understands the critical role of feeding our country and the globe. He is also acutely aware of the importance of agribusiness in powering our nation's economy, providing jobs from farm to freezer to table.

The food and beverage industry offers the safest, most abundant and affordable food in the world and we strive to meet the needs of evolving consumer needs in the most efficient and economical manner.

We appreciate your leadership serving those in the food and agricultural community and look forward to working with you as the confirmation process for Governor Perdue moves forward.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Alison Bodor", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Alison Bodor
President & CEO



March 20, 2017

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

Dear Chairman Roberts:

The American Horse Council (AHC) supports the nomination by President Trump of Governor Sonny Perdue of Georgia to serve as United States Secretary of the Agriculture. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) plays a critical role in protecting and promoting the American horse industry.

The AHC is a Washington-based association that represents individual members and over 130 equine organizations before Congress and the federal regulatory agencies. AHC member organizations include breed registries, national and state equine associations, state horse councils, recreational associations, and organizations representing race tracks, horsemen, horse shows, veterinarians, farriers, rodeos, and other equine-related stakeholders. The AHC also includes individual horse owners and breeders, veterinarians, farriers, trainers, professional, amateur, and recreational riders, and commercial suppliers. Individually, and through our organizational members, the AHC represents hundreds of thousands of horse owners and others involved in all sectors of the horse industry.

The horse industry, in all its segments of racing, showing, recreation and work horses, involves 9.2 million horses, nearly 2 million horse owners, has a \$102 billion impact on the U.S. economy and supports 1.4 million full-time jobs. It involves agriculture, sport, entertainment, gaming, recreation, and work horses, all built on the breeding, training, use and enjoyment of horses and horse activities. The horse show industry by itself involves 2.7 million horses, has a \$28.7 billion economic impact and supports 380,416 jobs.

We hope to work with Governor Perdue on several priorities important to the horse industry including, the USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) equine health program, finalizing new Horse Protection Act regulations, and implementation of the National Forest Service Trail Stewardship Act.

The health of America's horses and economic welfare of the American horse industry are closely tied to the ability of the USDA to respond contagious equine disease outbreaks.

1616 H Street NW 7th Floor • Washington DC 20006 • 202-296-4031 • Fax 202-296-1970

Email: AHC@horsecouncil.org • Web Address: www.horsecouncil.org

Furthermore, research and grants provided by the Agricultural Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture are vital to the industry. We are very concerned that proposed cuts to the USDA could threaten its ability to perform these key functions important to the horse industry. We look forward to working with Governor Perdue and the Committee to make certain USDA continues to be an important partner of the horse industry and the entire agricultural community.

We look forward to working with him and the team at USDA to protect and grow the U.S. horse industry. We hope the Committee will confirm Governor Perdue quickly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie M. Broadway".

Julie M. Broadway CAE ®
President,

March 20, 2017

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

AMERICAN
QUARTER
HORSE
ASSOCIATION

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

On behalf of the members of the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) I would like to express our support for the confirmation of Sonny Perdue to be confirmed as the Secretary of Agriculture. At our annual convention this week, we were extremely happy to learn Governor Perdue is slated for a formal hearing later this week. We write to urge your support for the confirmation of Sonny Perdue to be Secretary of Agriculture.

AQHA and our members have faced a tumultuous decade as we have weathered a tough economy. However, our membership is resilient and we are always looking for opportunities for ourselves and our horses to share our love of our industry with others.

A bright shining light in our industry has been the focus of USDA helping agricultural producers develop, support and grow international trade opportunities. The Market Assistance Program and the Foreign Market Development Program within USDA offer our members the ability to market Quarter Horses worldwide. As a result we have seen a growing interest in the American Quarter Horse breed in South America, the European Union and other locations around the globe.

We look forward to witnessing Secretary Nominee Perdue's tested leadership and experience within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). He has a long resume of executive experience in and out of government office, and most importantly he knows the Agriculture industry from a first-person view. With the recent budget submission proposing over 20% reductions in USDA programs, the time to have a confirmed Agriculture Secretary is long overdue.

We won't highlight his entire resume, but of interest to AQHA is that Gov. Perdue has been a practicing veterinarian and has a deep understanding of the issues important to animal agriculture. As the former governor of a state that produces billions of dollars of agricultural products each year, including diverse livestock production, Gov. Perdue understands the critical role

agriculture performs both in feeding the world and allowing our members the joy of breeding, training, riding, showing and developing deep bonds with our horses.

Gov. Perdue understands the importance of agriculture in powering our nation's economy. Finally, Gov. Perdue has proved to be a dedicated servant of rural America. This experience, with a personal understanding of America's agriculture industry, will benefit USDA and our membership. We appreciate your continued leadership and focus on the nation's agricultural community, and look forward to working with the Senate Agriculture Committee as Gov. Perdue's confirmation moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Craig P. Huffhines". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large, stylized 'C' at the beginning.

Craig P. Huffhines
AQHA Executive Vice President



February 15, 2017

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

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

RE: Nomination of Sonny Perdue to the Position of Secretary of Agriculture

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

On behalf of our nation's veterinarians, who are dedicated to working in our agricultural communities to promote animal health and welfare and public health, we're writing to support the confirmation of Sonny Perdue as Secretary of Agriculture. His experience as a veterinarian, strong agricultural background, and record of public service indicate he is strongly qualified for this position.

Governor Perdue has worked extensively with agricultural communities and understands the importance of agriculture to our national economy. As governor of Georgia, he led a state with a diversified agricultural economy that produced products including food, fiber, specialty crops, nursery crops, dairy products, poultry, and livestock. He also has robust experience in agribusiness, having founded three firms supplying services to farmers.

In addition to these recommendations, Governor Perdue is a veterinarian. This qualification positions him exceptionally well to lead the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). As foremost experts in animal health, veterinarians play a vital role in protecting the safety of our food supply and public health. The work of dedicated veterinarians at the USDA ensures the agency successfully creates and executes effective policies – particularly on issues requiring veterinary expertise, such as animal health and welfare and public health. Considering these factors, it is judicious to position a veterinarian at the helm of the USDA.

As advancing technologies and science-based evidence shed light on the increased interdependence of animal health and human health, veterinary leadership at the USDA is of growing importance. Issues like food safety, zoonotic disease, and responsible drug use all require collaboration between veterinary medicine and other scientific, health, and environmental disciplines. Given Governor Perdue's veterinary background, his confirmation as Secretary of Agriculture will offer valuable opportunities for progress on these issues.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to continuing to work with the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and the USDA to promote animal health and welfare and public health.

**About the AVMA**

As one of the oldest and largest veterinary medical organizations, with more than 89,000 member veterinarians worldwide engaged in a wide variety of professional activities and dedicated to the art and science of veterinary medicine, the mission of the AVMA is to lead the profession by advocating for its members and advancing the science and practice of veterinary medicine to improve animal health and welfare and human health.

Sincerely,

Thomas F. Meyer, DVM
President

Janet Donlin, DVM, CAE
Executive Vice President and CEO



January 20, 2017

The Honorable Pat Roberts
Chairman, Senate Agriculture Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member, Senate Agriculture Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow,

The American Sheep Industry Association advocates for the nation's 88,000 farm and ranch families that produce America's lamb and wool. On behalf of these members and producers, we enthusiastically write in support of the confirmation of former Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue and urge your support for his confirmation as Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

During his term as Governor of the State of Georgia, Gov. Perdue brought common sense and sound business acumen to state government. His background of service to our country and his educational background as a practicing veterinarian gives our members and sheep producers throughout the country confidence he will understand the needs of agriculture and rural America as head of the USDA.

America's sheep producers continue a strong tradition of supporting wildlife habitat, natural resources and open space across the country, enabled by careful resource management while grazing our flocks on private lands and federal grazing allotments, allotments managed in part by the USDA's Forest Service. Our members support rural communities, the tax base, and local businesses, all while providing safe domestic food and fiber. From on the farm and ranch to the retail level, the sheep industry has a total annual economic impact of \$4.4 billion, and supports nearly 98,000 sheep-industry related jobs. Unfortunately, this significant economic impact has been threatened by the Forest Service's poor decisions to shutdown multi-generation family grazing allotments. Equally concerning is the proposed abandonment of the nation's sole sheep research station under the USDA's Agriculture Research Service.

We believe, that if confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture, Gov. Perdue will support a vibrant rural economy. Important components of that rural economy are a robust predator management program through USDA's Wildlife Services, support for the critical work carried out through the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station, strong international animal health safeguards, the reliance on sound science in international trade, and true multi-use management of federal lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service.

We appreciate your dedicated leadership to our nation's agricultural producers. Likewise, we look forward to supporting Gov. Perdue throughout the confirmation process and working with the United States Department of Agriculture under his leadership.

Sincerely,

Burton Pfliger
President, American Sheep Industry Association



CATFISH FARMERS OF AMERICA
1100 HIGHWAY 82 E. SUITE 202
INDIANOLA, MISSISSIPPI 38751
(662) 887-2699 • (662) 887-6857 FAX
catfishfarmers@bellsouth.net

March 7, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

On behalf of the Catfish Farmers of America (CFA), I write to strongly support confirmation of Sonny Perdue to be the next Secretary of Agriculture. Gov. Perdue has the life-long experience in agriculture and administration to provide strong leadership at USDA.

Gov. Perdue grew up on a dairy and row crop farm in Georgia. He earned his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the University of Georgia College of Veterinary Medicine and practiced as a veterinarian before founding several agribusiness firms, working directly with farmers throughout the Southeast. As Governor of Georgia, Perdue oversaw one of the Nation's largest and most diverse agricultural economies.

Through these experiences, Gov. Perdue has gained a tremendous knowledge of agriculture and the federal policies impacting farmers throughout the Nation. He has a strong grasp of the issues impacting rural America and has the leadership capabilities to protect and grow the safest, most affordable food supply in the world.

It is without reservation that CFA strongly supports the confirmation of Gov. Sonny Perdue to serve as the next Secretary of Agriculture. Please do not hesitate to call upon CFA if we may be of further assistance during your consideration of Gov. Perdue.

Sincerely,

Townsend Kyser
President, Catfish Farmers of America



Protecting Water for Western Irrigated Agriculture

P.O. Box 216 Klamath Falls, OR 97601
(541)-892-6244 www.familyfarmalliance.org

February 15, 2017

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

In anticipation of your upcoming confirmation hearing and on behalf of the Family Farm Alliance (Alliance), I appreciate the opportunity to strongly endorse Governor Sonny Perdue as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The Alliance is a grassroots organization of family farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts and allied industries in 16 Western states. The Alliance is focused on one mission: To ensure the availability of reliable, affordable irrigation water supplies to Western farmers and ranchers. We are also committed to the fundamental proposition that Western irrigated agriculture must be preserved and protected for a host of economic, sociological, environmental and national security reasons – many of which are often overlooked in the context of other national policy decisions.

We believe Governor Perdue is a strong leader, a person with vision and common sense. With his experience growing up on a diversified row crop and dairy operation in Central Georgia, his years of service in the United States Air Force, and his background in founding three agribusiness firms supplying services to farmers, Gov. Perdue is eminently qualified to lead the USDA. It is our hope and expectation that Gov. Perdue will bring a level of practical experience, empathy for rural producers, and intelligence into this position that will serve not only the interests of the Trump Administration, but also farmers and ranchers throughout the Western United States.

As the former governor of a state that boasts an agricultural economy measured in billions of dollars, Gov. Perdue understands the critical role of feeding our country and the world. He also knows well how important American farmers are to powering our nation's economy. Importantly, he has a history of supporting rural infrastructure and agricultural water use that will benefit the Department and the Nation as Secretary of Agriculture.

The Family Farm Alliance respectfully requests your support of Gov. Sonny Perdue's nomination as the next Secretary of Agriculture. We know he will serve our Nation well in this important position.

Sincerely,

Dan Keppen
Executive Director



March 21, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

I am writing to you today to express strong support on behalf of the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) for former Governor Sonny Perdue's nomination as Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

FMI proudly advocates on behalf of the food retail industry. FMI's U.S. members operate nearly 40,000 retail food stores and 25,000 pharmacies, representing a combined annual sales volume of almost \$770 billion. Through programs in public affairs, food safety, research, education and industry relations, FMI offers resources and provides valuable benefits to more than 1,225 food retail and wholesale member companies in the United States and around the world. FMI membership covers the spectrum of diverse venues where food is sold, including single owner grocery stores, large multi-store supermarket chains and mixed retail stores.

As Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue impressed the supermarket industry, bringing a high level of customer service to the state government operations. He was particularly effective in his work to improve and reform the Georgia WIC program – a program very important to our members and customers – under the federal purview of USDA. Governor Perdue's leadership earned the State of Georgia recognition by the Pew Center on the States and GOVERNING Magazine as one of the "Best Managed States in America."

With Governor Perdue's strong record of leadership and recognition of the importance of the work of USDA, we would look forward to working with him at the federal level on several critical issues for the food retail industry, including food safety and implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act; implementation of biotech disclosure; renewing the Farm bill; the food retailer partnership on the efficient distribution of SNAP and WIC benefits; and additional public-private efforts in reducing food waste.

FMI urges favorable consideration and approval of Governor Perdue's nomination by your committee and the United States Senate.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hatcher
Chief Public Policy Officer and Senior Vice President



February 8, 2017

Chairman Pat Roberts
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts:


Governor Sonny Perdue has our full support for Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture.

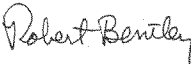
Governor Perdue has a long and personal history in agriculture, and his executive leadership as a Governor over a large agricultural state provides the management and expertise needed to be the next secretary of agriculture.


Clearly, Governor Perdue would hit the ground running. Farm organizations have lent support to Governor Perdue because they know, like we do, that he will prioritize this critical sector of our nation's economy that provides for so many families.

Thank you for the opportunity to support Governor Perdue.

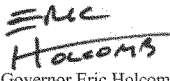
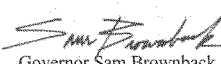

Sincerely,





Governor Scott Walker
Wisconsin


Governor Robert Bentley
Alabama





Governor Douglas A. Ducey
Arizona




  
 Governor Asa Hutchinson Governor Rick Scott Governor Nathan Deal
 Arkansas Florida Georgia

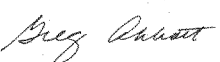


  
 Governor Eric Holcomb Governor Sam Brownback Governor Matt Bevin
 Indiana Kansas Kentucky

  
 Governor Paul R. LePage Governor Phil Bryant Governor Pete Ricketts
 Maine Mississippi Nebraska

  
 Governor Brian Sandoval Governor Chris Christie Governor Susana Martinez
 Nevada New Jersey New Mexico

  
 Governor Doug Burgum Governor Ralph Torres Governor John R. Kasich
 North Dakota Northern Mariana Islands Ohio

  
 Governor Mary Fallin Governor Dennis Daugaard Governor Bill Haslam
 Oklahoma South Dakota Tennessee

  
 Governor Greg Abbott Governor Gary R. Herbert Governor Matthew H. Mead
 Texas Utah Wyoming



March 22, 2017

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

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Ranking Member,
Senate Agriculture,
Nutrition, & Forestry Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

I am writing on behalf of more than 5,800 community bankers represented by the Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA) to relay our support for Sonny Perdue as Secretary of Agriculture. Since the committee has now scheduled a hearing on the Secretary nominee this week, we urge quick approval by both the Senate Agriculture Committee and the full U.S. Senate.

During his confirmation hearing, we are optimistic the committee can re-emphasize the importance of various farm bill programs as the committee has begun hearings on the next farm bill. Especially important to the thousands of community bankers serving rural America and our nation's farmers and ranchers are the crop insurance program, commodity price support programs, and the USDA guaranteed farm loan and guaranteed business and industry loan programs. In addition, rural development programs are very important to ensuring rural communities have access to the private sector capital they need to maintain and enhance vital services necessary to our rural citizens.

With Governor Purdue's background in the Georgia State Senate for a decade including serving as Senate President Pro Tem of that body, his experience as the governor of Georgia and the Chairman of the Republican Governors Association and his active, ongoing involvement in the agricultural industry, we believe he has the background to make a great 31st Secretary of Agriculture. We urge the committee and full Senate to act expeditiously to confirm Sonny Perdue as Secretary of Agriculture.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We look forward to working with Secretary Perdue and all members of the committee in writing the next farm bill and addressing issues important to rural America, our nation's farmers and ranchers and our nation's community banks.

Sincerely,

/Signed/

Mark Scanlan
Sr. Vice President Agriculture & Rural Policy

R. SCOTT HEITKAMP
Chairman

TIMOTHY K. ZIMMERMAN
Chairman-Elect

PRESTON L. KENNEDY
Vice Chairman

DEBRA B. WILLIAMS
Treasurer

CHRISTOPHER JORDAN
Secretary

REBECA ROMERO RAINEY
Immediate Past Chairman

CAMDEN R. FINE
President and CEO

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1615 I Street NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20036-5623 | 800-422-8439 | FAX: 202-659-1413 | Email: info@icba.org | Website: www.icba.org

March 13, 2017

Dear Secretary-Designate Perdue:

Congratulations on your nomination to serve as the 31st Secretary of Agriculture. We look forward to working with you to address the many challenges and opportunities facing rural America, and we would like to take this opportunity to remind you of the importance of crop insurance to rural economies.

The 2014 Farm Bill made a multitude of cuts to the farm safety net. In addition to these cuts, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is now projecting that crop insurance will come in more than \$20 billion under budget as compared to the costs projected at the time of passage of the 2014 Farm Bill. However, an overreliance on savings from the agriculture community in the future will greatly undermine rural economies that have faced an almost 50% decline in net farm income from over the past three years. In these challenging economic times, it is federal crop insurance that offers lenders the assurances they need to continue to provide capital to America's hard-working farmers and ranchers.

The 2014 Farm Bill placed greater emphasis on risk management than previous farm bills and in doing so protects the interests of the American taxpayer. Farmers spend approximately \$3.5 to \$4 billion per year of their own money to purchase insurance from the private sector. On average, farmers also must incur losses of almost 30 percent before their insurance coverage pays an indemnity.

Crop insurance allows producers to customize their policies to their individual farm and financial needs. Federal crop insurance is based on fundamental market principles, which means high risk areas and high value crops pay higher premiums for insurance. This emphasis on crop insurance and risk management has replaced the constant demand for ad hoc disaster assistance, which is subject to the whim of Washington, is paid for entirely by the taxpayer, and is not delivered in a timely manner.

All told, the 2014 Farm Bill is a careful balance of priorities and should not be reopened before its expiration in 2018 to achieve additional budget savings. Moreover, even in the 2018 Farm Bill, cuts to crop insurance during this difficult time for rural America should be viewed avoided. Farmers and lawmakers agree that crop insurance is a linchpin of the farm safety net and is crucial to the economic security of rural America. **We urge you to continue to be a voice for America's farmers and ranchers and oppose cuts to crop insurance during budget discussions as well as during the 2018 Farm Bill process.**

Sincerely,

American Agri-Women
American Association of Crop Insurers
American Bankers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Farmland Trust

American Insurance Association
American Malting Barley Association
American Seed Trade Association
American Sesame Growers Association
American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers
American Soybean Association
American Sugar Alliance
American Sugarbeet Growers Association
Association of Equipment Manufacturers
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
California Association of Winegrape Growers
Corn Refiners Association
Crop Insurance and Reinsurance Bureau
Crop Insurance Professionals Association
Ducks Unlimited
Farm Credit Council
Florida Sugar Cane League
Independent Community Bankers of America
Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America
National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies
National Association of Professional Insurance Agents
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Grain and Feed Association
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Peach Council
National Potato Council
National Rural Lenders Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Sunflower Association
National Young Farmers Coalition
Panhandle Peanut Growers Association
Pheasants Forever
Quail Forever
Reinsurance Association of America
Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers
Rural & Agriculture Council of America
Southern Peanut Farmers Federation

Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
United Fresh Produce Association
US Apple Association
US Canola Association
US Dry Bean Council
US Rice Producers Association
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Rice
Western Peanut Growers Association
Wildlife Mississippi



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March 1, 2017

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

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

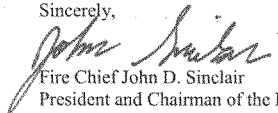
Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

On behalf of the approximately 12,000 chief fire and emergency service officers of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), thank you for the opportunity to recommend the confirmation of Governor George "Sonny" Perdue for the position of Secretary of Agriculture. The IAFC is pleased to see someone with such strong experience in wildland fire response and disaster mitigation be nominated to lead the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and, in particular, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The IAFC encourages your committee to support Governor Perdue's nomination and recommend he proceed to a full Senate vote for his confirmation.

Last year, wildland fires burned in all 50 states and endangered thousands of communities. The USDA, through the USFS, continues to serve as the primary federal agency charged with suppressing these dangerous fires. It is important that the USDA is led by an individual who understands the dangers of wildland fires and the need to continue the strong partnership between the USDA and local fire departments and national fire service organizations. During his tenure as the 81st governor of Georgia, Governor Perdue oversaw the state's response to the largest wildland fire in state history and devastating flooding and droughts. In 2008, Governor Perdue closely worked with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency to design the *Ready Georgia* campaign to improve disaster preparedness throughout the state. Governor Perdue also supported initiatives to enhance the leadership and training of the Georgia fire and emergency service. The IAFC is confident that Governor Perdue's passion for emergency preparedness and response will enable him to lead the USDA and USFS to confront the challenges that wildland fires pose across the nation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to support Governor Perdue's nomination to serve as the Secretary of Agriculture. Governor Perdue has a proven track record of supporting emergency preparedness and response and will succeed in leading the USDA to address the dangers of wildland fires. The IAFC is pleased to support Governor Perdue and looks forward to working with your committee to support wildland fire suppression and community preparedness efforts.

Sincerely,


Fire Chief John D. Sinclair
President and Chairman of the Board



**Michigan
Agri-Business
Association**

1501 North Shore Drive, Suite A
East Lansing, Michigan 48823

www.miabiz.org

Telephone (517) 336-0223
Fax (517) 336-0227

January 19, 2017

Dear Senator Roberts,

On behalf of the Michigan Agri-Business Association, I am writing to express our organization's strong support for Gov. Sonny Perdue to serve as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.

As a farmer and agribusiness owner – someone with solid, on-the-ground experience in our industry – Gov. Perdue is a sensible and immensely qualified pick to lead the Department. He brings decades of experience working with agribusinesses of all kinds, and will bring direct understanding to the table on how Federal programs and regulations impact our industry. He also has significant experience with agricultural exports, and we believe he will be a leading voice for agricultural trade that serves as a driver of our rural economy.

Gov. Perdue has demonstrated a willingness to listen to and work with agricultural stakeholders, and has been a proactive leader for our industry both as Governor and through participation in multiple industry organizations over the years.

There is no shortage of critical issues facing agriculture, and we count on leaders in Washington to work hard to understand the industry's unique needs, especially as work on the next Farm Bill begins. Having known Gov. Perdue for some time, I fully expect he will serve admirably and effectively, and be a strong voice for agriculture and trade in the new administration.

I urge you to support the nomination of Gov. Perdue to serve as Agriculture Secretary.

Sincerely,

James E. Byrum, President
Michigan Agri-Business Association
1501 North Shore Drive, Suite A
East Lansing, MI 48823



1101 30th Street NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20007
(202) 534-1440 | www.CandyUSA.com

January 30, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

I am writing to you today to express support on behalf of the National Confectioners Association (NCA) for former Governor Sonny Perdue's nomination as Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

The National Confectioners Association is the trade organization representing the \$35 billion U.S. confectioners industry. With members in more than 40 states employing approximately 55,000 workers in more than 1,000 facilities across the U.S., NCA exists to advance, protect and promote the confectionery industry. As the leading trade association for the industry, NCA is proud of the role it plays in the public's understanding and appreciation of candy's unique role in a happy, balanced lifestyle.

The confectionary industry is directly affected by many policies of the Department of Agriculture, including the federal sugar program. While NCA disagrees with the current structure and implementation of the sugar program, we welcome a new leader who will work closely with us and other stakeholders to craft a fair and balanced policy.

Governor Perdue is an excellent nominee to lead the Department of Agriculture. In addition to growing up on a farm, he successfully started and managed three agribusinesses, granting him firsthand knowledge of agricultural issues and challenges. He is a proven leader, earning the State of Georgia recognition as the "Best Managed State in America" under his stewardship. As Secretary, we believe he will bring clear vision and leadership, considering policy alongside the needs of all affected groups, without unfairly supporting one sector over others.

The National Confectioners Association hopes your committee will support Gov. Perdue's nomination and confirmation by the United States Senate.

Sincerely,

John H. Downs, Jr.
President & CEO



National Grocers Association

March 17, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Senator Stabenow:

On behalf of the nation's independent supermarket industry, I am pleased to write today in support of former governor Sonny Perdue's nomination to serve as our country's 31st Secretary of Agriculture.

The National Grocers Association (NGA) is the national trade association representing the retail and wholesale grocers that comprise the independent channel of the food distribution industry. An independent retailer is a privately owned or controlled food retail company operating a variety of formats. Most independent operators are serviced by wholesale distributors, while others may be partially or fully self-distributing. Some independents are publicly traded, but with controlling shares held by the family and others are employee owned. Independents are the true "entrepreneurs" of the grocery industry and dedicated to their customers, associates, and communities. The independent supermarket channel is accountable for close to one percent of the nation's overall economy and is responsible for generating \$131 billion in sales, 944,000 jobs, \$30 billion in wages, and \$27 billion in taxes.

Independent supermarkets have enjoyed a long partnership with USDA, especially when it comes to working with the Agency to administer benefits, including those provided by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). In addition, our member companies work closely with the Agency on numerous programs that support eliminating food deserts and expanding access to supermarkets for Americans across the country. We appreciate the work done by former Secretary Tom Vilsack to advocate for commonsense changes to food labels to create one federal standard for foods created by using genetically engineered ingredients, and applaud the work done in the previous Congress and by the Agency to ensure the food supply chain won't have to work around multiple different state laws regulating food ingredient labels. NGA encourages the Agency, under Mr. Perdue's leadership, to continue to work to promulgate rules to finalize policies that were included in S. 764 passed by Congress in 2016.

American businesses, including independent supermarkets, are facing significant challenges. Most prominently has been the growth of new federal regulatory burdens that are hampering our members'

ability to grow their businesses and ultimately create new jobs. Even more frustrating, many of these regulations are being issued by bureaucrats who simply do not understand how a supermarket operates. Mr. Perdue was an advocate for grocers during his tenure as Governor of Georgia and we look forward to working with him in this capacity to decrease the regulatory burdens placed on independent supermarket owners and operators, allowing our member companies the ability to continue to run their businesses with limited government interference and serve their communities.

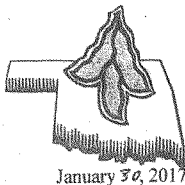
We are pleased to support Mr. Perdue and believe under his leadership NGA will continue to grow our close partnership with the Agency. We urge all Committee members to support Mr. Perdue's nomination.

Sincerely,



Peter J. Larkin
President and CEO
National Grocers Association

Cc: all Members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry



OKLAHOMA SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 578
CLAREMORE, OK 74018
(918) 343-2326

January 30, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

On behalf of the farmers, ranchers, agribusiness, and agriculture trade associations represented by the undersigned entities, we write to urge your support for the expeditious confirmation of Sonny Perdue to be Secretary of Agriculture. We are looking forward to his leadership at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

With his experience growing up on a diversified row crop and dairy operation in Central Georgia, his service in the United States Air Force, and his background in founding three agribusiness firms supplying services to farmers, Gov. Perdue is eminently qualified to lead USDA. Gov. Perdue was a practicing veterinarian, and as an in-depth understanding of the issues important to animal agriculture. As the former governor of a state that produces billions in row crops, specialty crops, nursery crops, dairy products, and livestock each year, Gov. Perdue understands the critical role of feeding our country and the world. He also knows well how important these Americans are to powering our nation's economy. Gov. Perdue has also proved to be a dedicated supporter of the concerns of rural America. He has a history of supporting rural infrastructure and agricultural water use that will benefit him as head of USDA.

We appreciate your dedicated leadership to the nation's agricultural community, and look forward to working with you as Gov. Perdue's confirmation moves forward.

Sincerely,

Rick Reimer
Executive Director



March 20, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

As former U.S. Secretaries of Agriculture, representing past administrations from President Obama to President Reagan, we support the confirmation of Sonny Perdue to be the 31st U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. We know firsthand the depth of understanding and the leadership capabilities necessary to effectively manage an agency with a \$150 billion annual budget and more than 90,000 employees located across every county in the U.S. in addition to those stationed around the world.

Governor Perdue has a long record of public service in Georgia with two terms as Governor and five successful terms in the State Senate. While governor, Georgia was recognized by the Pew Center on the States and Governing Magazine for management, receiving the highest ranking in the Southeast. We are confident that Governor Perdue can draw on his experience and expertise to effectively manage the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in the same way. Similarly, we believe that Governor Perdue's experience in agriculture, business and other areas equips him well to understand and lead the USDA and its diverse portfolio of issues and programs.

We are pleased to add our voices to the more than 600 organizations, associations and companies that have endorsed Governor Perdue's confirmation and respectfully urge your favorable consideration.

Sincerely,

Secretary Tom Vilsack (2009-2017)
Secretary Ed Schafer (2008-2009)
Secretary Mike Johanns (2005-2008)
Secretary Ann M. Veneman (2001-2005)
Secretary Dan Glickman (1995-2001)
Secretary John Block (1981-1986)

SWEETENER USERS ASSOCIATION

ONE MASSACHUSETTS AVE. NW • SUITE 800 • WASHINGTON, DC 20001 • (202) 842-2345 • (202) 408-7763 FAX

January 25, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Roberts & Ranking Member Stabenow:

On behalf of the Sweetener Users Association, I write to respectfully urge the favorable consideration of former Governor Sonny Perdue's nomination as Secretary of Agriculture. Gov. Perdue is eminently qualified by his background and life experiences for this critically important position.

Georgia was named the "Best Managed State in America" at the end of Governor Perdue's term. Raised on a diversified farm, he has had first-hand experience with America's highly productive farm sector. As the founder of three agribusinesses, he is acquainted with the realities of executing a plan, meeting a payroll and making investment decisions. Governor Perdue understands the critical role that our nation's farm and food sector plays in feeding not only our own people but hundreds of millions of others throughout the world.

The Sweetener Users Association comprises companies that are directly affected by many policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including USDA's administration of the federal sugar program. While we have often been critical of the structure of current sugar policy, we have also worked closely with USDA officials to encourage program administration that is balanced toward growers, refiners, users and other stakeholders.

Toward that end, it is important that the Secretary of Agriculture have a breadth of experience that permits him or her to take into account the needs of all affected groups, without unduly favoring one sector over another. We believe Governor Perdue's background and experience equip him to provide such leadership, and again encourage your favorable consideration of his nomination.

Sincerely,



Emily Russell
Chairwoman



The Fertilizer Institute

Nourish, Replenish, Grow

Chris Jahn
President

March 23, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

I am writing to you on behalf of the members of The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) to strongly endorse the nomination of Governor Sonny Perdue as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Gov. Perdue's vast experience as a successful businessman, state senator and the 81st governor of Georgia makes him uniquely qualified for this important position as an advocate for American agriculture.

TFI represents the nation's fertilizer industry including producers, importers, retailers, wholesalers and companies that provide services to the fertilizer industry. The U.S. fertilizer industry is one of the world's largest. The United States is the fourth-largest producer of nitrogen-based fertilizers in the world and the second largest producer of phosphate. The U.S. fertilizer industry generates more than \$155 billion in economic benefit and provides 88,643 direct jobs and 406,478 indirect jobs for a total of more than 495,121 U.S. jobs.

TFI members provide crop nutrients to help American farmers nourish the nation's crops, and ensure a stable and reliable supply of food, fuel, and fiber.

Fertilizer is a key ingredient in feeding a growing global population, which is expected to surpass 9.7 billion people by 2050. Half of all food grown around the world today, for both people and animals, is made possible through the use of fertilizer. As demand continues to grow, farmers around the world will continue to rely on fertilizer to increase production efficiency to produce more food while optimizing crop inputs. Fertilizers are also essential to replenishing nutrients in the soil that are used by plants each growing season, raising soil productivity, and improving soil health.

Nutrient Stewardship

The fertilizer industry is committed to promoting science-based, sustainable fertilizer best management practices through a voluntary program called the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Program. 4R Nutrient Stewardship is a framework designed to help farmers achieve cropping system goals such as increased production, increased farmer profitability, enhanced environmental protection and improved sustainability. The success of this program is highly dependent on partnerships between farmers, agricultural retailers, federal, state and local governments and environmental organizations all working together with a shared goal of ensuring that fertilizer is applied by using the 4R framework:

Right Source – Ensure a balanced supply of essential nutrients, considering both naturally available sources and the characteristics of specific products, in plant available forms.

Right Rate – Assess and make decisions based on soil nutrient supply and plant demand.

Right Time – Assess and make decisions based on the dynamics of crop uptake, soil supply, nutrient loss risks, and field operation logistics.

Right Place – Address root-soil dynamics and nutrient movement, and manage spatial variability within the field to meet site-specific crop needs and limit potential losses from the field.

In 2011, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) revised its standard for managing farm nutrients with a goal of encouraging farmers to employ new technologies to reduce nutrient runoff and improve water quality. We are pleased that the 4Rs are a component of this Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Practice Standard Code 590.

Nutrient Research

In addition to the 4R Nutrient Stewardship program, the fertilizer industry created the 4R Research Fund, a 5-year, \$7 million commitment from industry, to provide much needed resources to measure and document the positive economic, social and environmental impacts of 4R nutrient stewardship. Through public-private partnerships, including competitive grant funds through USDA, universities and federal researchers are able to help farmers overcome the increasing challenges of crop productivity.

As someone who grew up on a family farm and eventually operated several successful agribusiness companies, Gov. Perdue is keenly aware of the many challenges and opportunities faced by American agriculture. We are confident that he is the right man at the right time for the job.

Working in partnership with all stakeholders, we believe Gov. Perdue will ensure that American agriculture is provided the tools necessary to meet the many challenges ahead and continue growing the food, fuel and fiber to feed the world.

3

For the aforementioned reasons, we strongly support Gov. Sonny Perdue to be the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and we urge your support of his confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CJahn', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Chris Jahn
President
The Fertilizer Institute

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

The Honorable Pat Roberts
United States Senate
109 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20150

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
United States Senate
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20150

February 9, 2017

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow,

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership (TRCP), a national sportsmen's conservation organization, offers our support for President Donald Trump's nomination of former Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue for the next Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Perdue's background as a farmer, veterinarian, business owner, state legislator, and state executive plainly qualify him to lead the USDA, but we are especially pleased to support his nomination based on his record with land and water conservation, forest management, and outdoor recreation.

In Georgia and across the country, outdoor recreation powers an immense economic engine that employs millions of Americans and generates more than \$646 billion in spending each year, the majority of which powers rural communities. As an avid sportsman, Perdue understands that a balanced approach to private and public land management can simultaneously sustain and expand this valuable outdoor economy, protect our natural resources, and improve the productivity of America's farmland, ranchland, and forests. To that end, during his tenure as Governor, Perdue nurtured a culture of conservation: he implemented policies aimed at improving wildlife habitat and conserving water; created tax incentives for private land conservation; stimulated restoration of longleaf pine forests on public and private land; and opened tens of thousands of acres to hunting and fishing access statewide.

We are optimistic that Perdue will be a Secretary of Agriculture who balances the needs of production agriculture and National Forests with the needs of fish, wildlife, and sportsmen, while also supporting rural landowners and rural economies. Accordingly, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership urges you to support the confirmation of Former Governor Sonny Perdue for Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Whit Fosburgh
President and CEO
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership



February 1, 2017

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

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

Dear Chairman Roberts and Ranking Member Stabenow:

On behalf of the Western Growers membership – the Arizona, California and Colorado farmers who grow more than half of our nation's fruits, vegetables and tree nuts – I support the nomination of former Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue as Secretary of Agriculture and look forward to working with him to develop and implement the public policy priorities of the fresh produce industry.

I am encouraged by Governor Perdue's vast agricultural experiences and past efforts, both in the private and public sectors, on behalf of Georgia's family farmers. Throughout his career, Governor Perdue has proven to be a consummate champion for agriculture and will undoubtedly serve our industry well as its chief advocate within the new administration, guiding forward solutions to the most pressing needs facing American growers.

Given his background and leadership qualities, I am confident Governor Perdue will serve the U.S. Department of Agriculture and our members well, and urge his immediate consideration and swift confirmation.

Sincerely,

Tom Nassif
President & CEO
Western Growers



March 21, 2017

Michael Young
Acting Deputy Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Acting Deputy Secretary Young,

Over the past few years dairy farmers have seen prices for their milk decline sharply and remain at levels that are more than 30% lower. This prolonged period of low prices has meant that many dairy farmers have had to draw down their reserves and not had a chance to replenish them. Additionally, the new safety-net, the Margin Protection Program, has not provided adequate risk protection despite dairy farmers paying millions in fees and premiums.

While there are plans to improve the dairy safety net as part of the upcoming 2018 Farm Bill, we believe USDA has the authority to provide additional risk management tools for dairy farmers in the interim. The primary impediment to offering additional risk management options for milk production has been a cap on all livestock crop insurance policies of \$20 million.

While the Risk Management Agency has historically interpreted 'livestock' to include livestock products like milk, the statute does not mention or make reference to any livestock *products* in the definition. It reads (7USC1523(b)): *the term "livestock" includes, but is not limited to, cattle, sheep, swine, goats, and poultry.* The clear statutory language only includes the animals themselves and makes no reference to products produced by livestock or poultry such as milk or eggs. Therefore, USDA would be well within its authority to determine that livestock and the products that livestock produce are two distinct and different types of commodities.

Additionally, the board of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation has broad discretion to offer crop insurance on any agricultural commodity and recognize additional commodities for coverage (see 7USC1518). Since milk is recognized in many other contexts as an agricultural commodity, there is existing authority for USDA to offer additional crop insurance products related to risk management for milk production either through private submission or developed by the Risk Management Agency after appropriate review by the FCIC Board.

Given the flexibility outlined above and the need for more robust risk management options for dairy farmers, we urge you or, upon confirmation, the Secretary of Agriculture, to:

- Determine that milk is an agricultural commodity eligible for Federal Crop Insurance coverage that is separate and distinct from any livestock policy, and

- Direct the Risk Management Agency to work with the dairy industry to develop additional milk-related insurance products and expedite the review of any similar private submissions.

We encourage you to work with those representing the dairy industry to develop safeguards for the implementation of these programs.

Sincerely,

Roger Johnson
President, NFU

Zippy Duvall
President, AFBF

Jim Mulhern
President & CEO, NMPF

Cc: Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry; House Committee on Agriculture

March 22, 2017

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

Dear Chairman Roberts:

On February 1, 2017, a copy of my SF-278, Executive Branch Public Financial Disclosure Report, required in conjunction with my nomination to serve as Secretary for the United States Department of Agriculture was submitted to the Office of Government Ethics. That report contained all required financial information.

The Ethics in Government Act of 1978, as amended, also requires that I update certain information reported on the SF-278, i.e., that required by section 102(a)(1)(A) of the Act, respecting income (other than dividends, interest, rents, and capital gains) and honoraria, to date which occurs not more than five days before the date of the hearing to be held by your Committee to consider my nomination. The hearing to be held on my nomination is scheduled for March 23, 2017. The purpose of this letter is to report that since I filed that Financial Disclosure Report, I earned no such income or honoraria.

Additionally, in response to questions from Committee staff, I want to provide the following supplemental information:

- a) On my SF-278, question 1, item 5, I want to clarify that I became a member of the Board of Directors of the National Grain and Feed Association in March 2014.
- b) On my Committee Questionnaire, I want to clarify that my service on the U.S. Homeland Security Advisory Council from 2002-2008 was inadvertently listed on page 6, under question 6 (B), and rather should have been listed on p. 5, question 5 under Memberships. At no time during my tenure on the Council was my service rendered to a political party or election committee.

I trust that this letter satisfies the additional applicable reporting requirements contained in the Ethics in Government Act.

Sincerely,



George E. Perdue, III (Sonny Perdue)

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>
Secretary	

<i>Current Legal Name</i>			
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>
George	Ervin	Perdue	III

<i>Addresses</i>					
<u>Residential Address</u> (do not include street address)			<u>Office Address</u> (include street address)		
			Street: 803 Hwy. 247 South		
City: Kathleen	State: GA	Zip: 31047	City: Kathleen	State: GA	Zip: 31047

<i>Other Names Used</i>						
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<small>Check if Maiden Name</small>	<u>Name Used From</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
Sonny		Perdue			12/1946 <small>Est</small> <input type="checkbox"/>	Present <small>Est</small> <input type="checkbox"/>
					<small>Est</small> <input type="checkbox"/>	<small>Est</small> <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Birth Year and Place</i>	
Year of Birth (Do not include month and day.)	Place of Birth
1946	Perry, Georgia

<i>Marital Status</i>					
Check All That Describe Your Current Situation:					
Never Married	Married	Separated	Annulled	Divorced	Widowed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<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>
Mary	Ruff	Perdue	

<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>	<small>Check if Maiden Name</small>	<u>Name Used From</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
Mary	Ann	Ruff			8/1950 Est <input type="checkbox"/>	9/1972 Est <input type="checkbox"/>
					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Children's Names (if over 18)</i>			
First Name	Middle Name	Last Name	Suffix
Leigh	Perdue	Hunnicutt	
Lara	Perdue	Ghioto	
George	Ervin	Perdue	IV
Daniel	Steven	Perdue	

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 Georgia	college/university	8/1965 <small>Est <input type="checkbox"/></small>	6/1971 <small>Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/></small>	Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine	6/1971
Georgia College	college/university	1/1977 <small>Est <input type="checkbox"/></small>	1/1978 <small>Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/></small>		
		<small>Est <input type="checkbox"/></small>	<small>Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/></small>		
		<small>Est <input type="checkbox"/></small>	<small>Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/></small>		

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)
Self-employment	Perdue Business Holdings, Inc.	Managing Member	Bonaire, GA	1/2012 <input type="checkbox"/> Est	Present <input type="checkbox"/> Est
State Government	State of Georgia	Governor	Atlanta, GA	1/2003 <input type="checkbox"/> Est	12/2011 <input type="checkbox"/> Est
State Government	State of Georgia	Senator	Atlanta, GA	1/1991 <input type="checkbox"/> Est	12/2001 <input type="checkbox"/> Est
Self-employment	AGrowStar, LLC	Manager	Bonaire, GA	2000 <input type="checkbox"/> Est	2002 <input type="checkbox"/> Est
Self-employment	Houston Fertilizer & Grain Co., Inc.	Manager	Bonaire, GA	1977 <input type="checkbox"/> Est	2001 <input type="checkbox"/> Est
Self-employment	Quail Corners Animal Hospital	Veterinarian	Raleigh, NC	6/1974 <input type="checkbox"/> Est	12/1976 <input type="checkbox"/> Est
Active Duty	United States Air Force	Captain	Columbus, OH	9/1971	6/1974
Family Business	Perdue Farms	Farm Hand	Bonaire, GA	6/1965	9/1971

(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)
Houston County, Georgia	Planning and Zoning Board	1980 <input type="checkbox"/> Est	1990 <input type="checkbox"/> Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present
		<input type="checkbox"/> Est	<input type="checkbox"/> Est <input type="checkbox"/> Present
		<input type="checkbox"/> Est	<input type="checkbox"/> Est <input type="checkbox"/> 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.

- Georgia Trend: Georgian of the Year
- Honorary FFA Degree
- Technical College System of Georgia: Named annual outstanding college award the "Sonny Perdue Award" in recognition of his significant accomplishments in growing and supporting the Technical College System of during his time as Governor
- Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO): 2009 Governor of the Year

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>
Georgia Agribusiness Council	2011	Board of Directors/ Secretary
Southeastern Grain & Feed Association	1988- Present	President in 1988, Board Member
National Grain & Feed Association	1980 - Present	Board of Directors
UGA Gridiron	1976 - Present	Member
Bipartisan Policy Center	2012 - Present	Governor's Council
National Workforce Solutions Advisory Board	2012 - 2014	Chairman
Georgia Feed & Grain Association	1980 - Present	President/Vice President
Southern Regional Education Board	2002	Chair
Republican Governors Association	2002 - 2010	Chair
Southern Governors Association	2002 - 2010	Chair
National Assessment Governing Board	2013	Board Member
Southern States Energy Board	2002	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>
Governor of Georgia	Elected	2002	8 years
Georgia State Senator	Elected	1990	11 years

(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>
Homeland Security Advisory Council	Homeland Security	Member	2002-2008

(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.

[illegible]

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>
Opinion: Stop the politics and adopt the Common Core (with Jack Markell)	Newsday	February 10, 2014
The Common Core Blame Game	National Review	May 8, 2014
Transforming Teacher Pay	Governor's Office	February 9, 2010
The Tragic Cost of Sunday Alcohol Sales	Governor's Office	March 27, 2008
Governor Sonny Perdue urges "no" vote on health care bill	WLTZ News	March 21, 2010
Governors' Council Letter in Support of the Remote	Bipartisan Policy Center	June 24, 2015
Letter to Senators Alexander and Murray on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act	Bipartisan Policy Center	April 2, 2015
Common Core: A State Created Plan to Blunt Federal Intrusions	Bipartisan Policy Center	February 28, 2014
Common Core Isn't a Government Conspiracy	Bipartisan Policy Center	February 10, 2014
Support for S. 336, the Marketplace Fairness Act (with Jim Douglas, Linda Lingle, Mike Rounds, Ted Strickland)	Bipartisan Policy Center	April 22, 2013
Speeches	http://bit.ly/SPAgSecSpeeches	

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, I have not been a lobbyist.

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF
GOVERNMENT ETHICS

March 10, 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 George Ervin Perdue, III, who has been nominated by President Trump for the position of Secretary, 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,

**WALTER
SHAUB**Walter M. Shaub, Jr.
DirectorDigitally signed by WALTER SHAUB
DN: c=US, o=U.S. Government, ou=Office of
Government Ethics, cn=WALTER SHAUB,
c.2.5.4.19200300.100.1.1=6440700064035
Date: 2017.03.10 17:26:57 -0500

Enclosures



March 7, 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 Secretary of the 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.

I am the sole owner of Perdue Properties LLC and Perdue Real Estate Holdings LLLP. These entities are dormant and have no assets and generate no income. During my appointment to the position of Secretary of Agriculture, these entities will remain dormant. I will not perform any services for these entities, except that I will comply with any requirements involving legal filings, taxes and fees that are necessary to maintain these entities while they are dormant. As Secretary of Agriculture, 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 either of these entities, unless I first obtain a written waiver pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

Upon confirmation, I will resign from my positions with the National Grain and Feed Association, Perdue Management Holdings LLC, the Bipartisan Policy Center Governor's Council, the Georgia Agribusiness Council, and Perdue Business Holdings, Inc. 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).

My wife and I are co-trustees and sole beneficiaries of the Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust, and my wife is the trustee and one of the beneficiaries of the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust, an irrevocable trust. The Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust holds all of the voting stock in Perdue Business Holdings, Inc., and the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust holds all of the non-voting stock in Perdue Business Holdings, Inc. An appointment

committee of the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust has the power to appoint some part or all of the assets of that trust to my wife or adult non-dependent children, whether outright or in further trust.

Within 90 days of my confirmation, I will cause these trusts to be restructured such that I will revoke the Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust and transfer all of its stock in Perdue Business Holdings, Inc. into a new, irrevocable trust ("New Family Management Trust") that will not benefit me or my spouse. Neither I nor my wife will serve as trustee of the New Family Management Trust. Until the steps outlined in this paragraph are completed, 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 Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust or any of its underlying holdings.

Within 90 days of my confirmation, the appointment committee for the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust will appoint all of its stock in Perdue Business Holdings, Inc. to a new, irrevocable trust ("New Wealth Preservation Trust") that will not benefit me or my spouse. Neither I nor my wife will serve as trustee of the New Wealth Preservation Trust, and the trust document for the New Wealth Preservation Trust will expressly prohibit its appointment committee from appointing trust assets to me or my spouse. 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 Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust, or any of its underlying holdings, 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 currently hold a promissory note from AGrowStar, LLC, a company owned by Perdue Business Holdings, Inc. The Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust (and its successor the New Wealth Preservation Trust) will guarantee timely payments on this promissory note. Until this promissory note has been repaid in full, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the ability or willingness of AGrowStar, LLC, as guaranteed by the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust (and its successor the New Wealth Preservation Trust), to repay this note, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

I also currently hold a promissory note from the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust. Payment obligations on this promissory note will be transferred to its successor the New Wealth Preservation Trust. Until this note has been repaid in full, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the ability or willingness of the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust or its successor the New Wealth Preservation Trust to repay this note, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

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



George Ervin Perdue III

Nominee Report | U.S. Office of Government Ethics: 5 C.F.R. part 2634 | Form Approved: OMB No. (3209-0001) (March 2014)

Executive Branch Personnel

Public Financial Disclosure Report (OGE Form 278e)

Filer's Information

Perdue, George Ervin

Secretary, 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/ Perdue, George Ervin [electronically signed on 02/01/2017 by Perdue, George Ervin 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 regulations (subject to any comments below).

/s/ Bender, Stuart, Certifying Official [electronically signed on 03/10/2017 by Bender, Stuart in Integrity.gov]

Other review conducted by

U.S. Office of Government Ethics Certification

/s/ Shaub, Walter M, Certifying Official [electronically signed on 03/10/2017 by Shaub, Walter M in Integrity.gov]

1. Filer's Positions Held Outside United States Government

#	ORGANIZATION NAME	CITY, STATE	ORGANIZATION TYPE	POSITION HELD	FROM	TO
1	Perdue Management Holdings LLC	Bonaire, Georgia	Limited Liability Company	Manager	10/2010	Present
2	Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust	Bonaire, Georgia	Trust	Trustee	12/2010	Present
3	Bipartisan Policy Center Governor's Council	Washington, District of Columbia	Non-Profit	Council Member	8/2012	Present
4	Georgia Agribusiness Council	Commerce, Georgia	State Agriculture Industry Organization	Secretary	1/2015	Present
5	National Grain and Feed Association	Arlington, Virginia	Industry Association	Member, Board of Directors	1/2015	Present
6	Perdue Business Holdings, Inc.	Bonaire, Georgia	Corporation	Member, Board of Directors	12/2010	Present
7	Perdue Properties LLC	See Endnote	Limited Liability Company	Sole Owner	11/2010	Present
8	Perdue Real Estate Holdings LLLP	See Endnote	Limited Liability Limited Partnership	Sole Owner	11/2010	Present

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

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	Roth IRA	No			
1.1	Fidelity Government Cash Reserves (FDRXX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.2	Fidelity 500 Index Premium Class (FUSVX)	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		\$201 - \$1,000

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1.3	Baron Emerging Markets Fund Retail (BEXFX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.4	Columbia Dividend Opportunity CL A (INUTX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.5	Columbia Select Lrg Cap Growth CL A (ELGAX)	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.6	Delaware Value Fund CL A (DDVAX)	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		\$201 - \$1,000
1.7	Driehaus Micro Cap Growth Fund (DMCRX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.8	MFS International Value Fund CL A (MGIAX)	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		\$201 - \$1,000
1.9	T Rowe Price Growth Stock Advisor CL (TRSAX)	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.10	Ridgeworth Ceredex Mid Cap Value EQ I (SMVTX)	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		\$201 - \$1,000
1.11	T Rowe Price Intl Stock Advisor CL (PAITX)	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.12	TCW Relative Value Dividend Apprec CL N (TGLGX)	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		\$201 - \$1,000
1.13	Touchstone Focused CL A (TFOAX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.14	Touchstone Small Cap Value CL A (TVOAX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.15	Victory Global Natural Resources A (RSNRX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.16	Wasatch International Opportunities Fund (WAIIX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.17	Wasatch Frontier Emerging Small CO's (WAFMX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.18	Avenue Credit Strategies Investor (ACSAX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		\$201 - \$1,000
1.19	Doubleline Total RT Bond FD CL N (DLTNX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		\$201 - \$1,000

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1.20	Doubleline Low Durtn Emerg Mkts FIX Inc N (DELNX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.21	Dreyfus Bond Market Index Invs (DBMIX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		\$201 - \$1,000
1.22	Driehaus Event Driven Fund (DEVDX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.23	Driehaus Active Income Fund (LCMAX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		\$201 - \$1,000
1.24	JP Morgan Strategic Income Opport A (JSOAX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.25	Riverpark Strategic Income Fund Retail (RSIVX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.26	Riverpark Short Term High Yield Retail (RPHYX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
1.27	Rivernorth Core Opportunity FD L R (RNCOX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		\$201 - \$1,000
2	Georgia Legislative Retirement System (Defined Benefit Pension - Value not Readily Ascertainable)	N/A		State retirement payments. Filer receives \$326.71 per month.	
3	Bipartisan Policy Center, Inc.	N/A		Compensation for service as a Member of the Governor's Council.	\$30,000
4	Bipartisan Policy Center, Inc. - 7/26/16	N/A		Honorarium	\$10,000
5	Poplar Springs North Baptist Church - 2/17/16	N/A		Honorarium	\$300

3. Filer's Employment Agreements and Arrangements

#	EMPLOYER OR PARTY	CITY, STATE	STATUS AND TERMS	DATE
1	Georgia Legislative Retirement System	Atlanta, Georgia	I have a defined benefit pension from the State of Georgia. I receive \$326.71 per month. I will continue to participate in this plan.	1/1992

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

#	SOURCE NAME	CITY, STATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES
1	Bipartisan Policy Center, Inc.	Washington, District of Columbia	Service as member of the Governor's Council to help formulate bipartisan policy as well as honorarium.

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

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	Roth IRA	No			
1.1	JP Morgan Income Builder Fund C I C (INBCX)	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		\$201 - \$1,000

6. Other Assets and Income

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	U.S.bank account #1 (cash)	N/A	\$50,001 - \$100,000	Interest	\$201 - \$1,000
2	Residential real estate, Butts County, Georgia	N/A	\$500,001 - \$1,000,000		None (or less than \$201)
3	Undeveloped land, Osceola County, Florida	N/A	\$250,001 - \$500,000		None (or less than \$201)
4	Undeveloped land, Houston County, Georgia	N/A	\$250,001 - \$500,000		None (or less than \$201)

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
5	Undeveloped land, Houston County, Georgia	N/A	\$100,001 - \$250,000		None (or less than \$201)
6	TIAA Path2College 529 Plan	See Endnote	Yes		None (or less than \$201)
7	Note Receivable from AGrowStar, LLC	N/A	\$50,001 - \$100,000	Interest	\$50,001 - \$100,000
8	Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust	See Endnote	No		
8.1	FALF LLC	See Endnote	No		
8.1.1	Soque River Conservation LLC	See Endnote	N/A	Land rent and sale of conservation mitigation bank credits.	\$35,617
8.2	Perdue Business Holdings Inc.	See Endnote	No		
8.2.1	Legacy 13:22 LLC	See Endnote	N/A		
8.2.1.1	TW Rocky Mount Real Estate LLC	See Endnote	N/A	\$500,001 - \$1,000,000	None (or less than \$201)
8.2.1.2	TWAS Rocky Mount LLC	See Endnote	N/A	None (or less than \$1,001)	None (or less than \$201)
8.2.1.3	U.S. bank account #3	N/A	\$15,001 - \$50,000	Interest	None (or less than \$201)
8.2.2	Perdue Partners LLC	See Endnote	No	None (or less than \$1,001)	None (or less than \$201)
8.2.2.1	Perdue Consulting Group LLC	See Endnote	N/A	None (or less than \$1,001)	None (or less than \$201)
8.2.2.2	Benton Global LLC	See Endnote	N/A	None (or less than \$1,001)	None (or less than \$201)
8.2.2.3	Benton Logistics LLC	See Endnote	N/A	None (or less than \$1,001)	None (or less than \$201)
8.2.3	U.S. bank account #2 (cash)	N/A	\$250,001 - \$500,000	Interest	\$2,501 - \$5,000

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
8.2.4	AGrowStar LLC	See Endnote	N/A	Passive business ownership income.	\$15,326
8.2.5	Perdue, Inc.	See Endnote	N/A	Passive business ownership income.	\$598,591
8.2.6	Houston Fertilizer and Grain Co., Inc.	See Endnote	N/A	Passive business ownership income.	\$28,305
8.2.7	ProAg Products LLC	See Endnote	N/A	Passive business ownership income.	\$50,307
8.2.8	StarPort Logistics LLC	See Endnote	N/A	Passive business ownership income.	\$99,587
9	Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust	See Endnote	No		
9.1	Perdue Management Holdings LLC	See Endnote	N/A	None (or less than \$1,001)	None (or less than \$201)
9.2	Perdue Business Holdings, Inc.	See Endnote	No		None (or less than \$201)
10	Note receivable from the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust	N/A	\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	Interest	\$15,001 - \$50,000

7. Transactions

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

8. Liabilities

#	CREDITOR NAME	TYPE	AMOUNT	YEAR INCURRED	RATE	TERM
1	Citizens Bank of the South	Personal Loan	\$15,001 - \$50,000	2016	2.250%	12/2017
2	CB&T	Loan Guarantor 50%	\$500,001 - \$1,000,000	2013	3.25%	12/2021
3	CB&T	Loan Guarantor 50%	\$500,001 - \$1,000,000	2013	3.25%	12/2021
4	Morris Bank	Loan Guarantor	\$250,001 - \$500,000	2016	4.45%	192 Months

9. Gifts and Travel Reimbursements

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

Endnotes

PART	#	ENDNOTE
1.	7	Perdue Properties LLC is an empty company which has never held any assets nor engaged in any business.
1.	8	Perdue Real Estate Holdings LLLP is an empty company which has never held assets nor engaged in any business.
6.	6	This investment, the 100% EQUITY option, tracks the TIAA-CREF Equity Index Fund Institutional Class (TIEIX)
6.	8	Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust owns FALF and 100% of the non-voting stock in Perdue Business Holdings Inc.
6.	8.1	FALF LLC is a single member Limited Liability Company owned by Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust. FALF LLC is a holding company for Soque River Conservation LLC.

PART	#	ENDNOTE
6.	8.1.1	Soque River Conservation LLC is owned by FALF LLC. Soque River Conservation LLC is a passive landholding partnership on the Soque River in Georgia.
6.	8.2	Perdue Business Holdings Inc. is owned by the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust and the Perdue Family Revocable Trust. Underlying assets of Perdue Business Holdings are shown in Lines 8.2 through 8.2.8, and the value shown for the underlying assets is the full value for each holding.
6.	8.2.1	Legacy 13:22 LLC is a single member LLC owned by Perdue Business Holdings Inc. Legacy 13:22 is a holding company for TW Rocky Mount Real Estate LLC and TWAS Rocky Mount LLC.
6.	8.2.1.1	TW Rocky Mount Real Estate LLC is majority owned by Legacy 13:22 LLC. TW Rocky Mount Real Estate LLC owns the real estate in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, upon which the car wash owned by TWAS Rocky Mount LLC is being constructed.
6.	8.2.1.2	TWAS Rocky Mount LLC is majority owned by Legacy 13:22 LLC. TWAS Rocky Mount LLC is an operating business that owns a car wash that is currently under construction.
6.	8.2.2	Perdue Partners LLC is 25% owned by Perdue Business Holdings Inc. This consulting company is dormant.
6.	8.2.2.1	Perdue Consulting Group LLC is owned by Perdue Partners LLC. This business consulting company is not currently operating and has no current clients.
6.	8.2.2.2	Benton Global LLC is owned by Perdue Partners LLC. This is a trucking company that is not currently operating.
6.	8.2.2.3	Benton Logistics LLC is owned by Perdue Partners LLC. This is a logistics company that is not currently operating.
6.	8.2.4	AGrowStar LLC is a Qualified Subchapter S Subsidiary owned by Perdue Business Holdings Inc. AGrowStar LLC is a grain merchandising company.
6.	8.2.5	Perdue Inc. is a Qualified Subchapter S Subsidiary owned by Perdue Business Holdings Inc. Perdue Inc is a trucking company.
6.	8.2.6	Houston Fertilizer and Grain Co., Inc. is a Qualified Subchapter S Subsidiary owned by Perdue Business Holdings Inc. Houston Fertilizer and Grain Co. Inc. does not engage in agribusiness, it simply holds, manages and rents commercial real estate in Bonaire, Fort Valley, and Calhoun, Georgia.
6.	8.2.7	ProAg Products LLC is a single member Limited Liability Company owned by Perdue Business Holdings Inc. ProAg Products is a grain market trading business.
6.	8.2.8	StarPort Logistics LLC is a single member Limited Liability Company owned by Perdue Business Holdings Inc. StarPort Logistics LLC is an operating logistics company.
6.	9	Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust owns Perdue Management Holding LLC and 100% of voting stock of Perdue Business Holdings Inc.

PART	#	ENDNOTE
6.	9.1	Perdue Management Holdings LLC is 100% owned by the Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust. Perdue Management Holdings LLC is a holding company that is dormant and has no assets or holdings.
6.	9.2	Underlying assets of Perdue Business Holdings is shown in Lines 8.2 through 8.2.8.

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 reportable 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 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 services 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) at 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 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 travel; (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 children 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 of 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 primary use 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 applications 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 or the General Services Administration in records management inspections; (6) to the Office of Management and Budget during legislative coordination on private relief 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 office 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, and completing 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).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

MARCH 23, 2017

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Chairman Pat Roberts (R-KS)

1. Over the years, we have seen improved participation with producers of everything from commodities to specialty crops purchasing increased crop insurance coverage, leading to more policies purchased and acres covered. For example, in 2000, Georgia peanut producers purchased roughly 7,000 policies covering 473,000 acres. Fast forward to 2016 and producers in your home state purchased over 9,000 policies covering over 680,000 acres... a 44% increase in acres insured. As the Risk Management Agency, RMA, works to improve these products nationwide, would you agree that expanded coverage to more producers is a positive trend? And, will you work with us to continue this effort? RMA has shown positive results for producers and I look forward to continuing work on this effort.
2. In response to the recent wildfires in Kansas, producers need assistance to protect their property, livestock, and livelihood, including reimbursement for transportation and handling of feed, reimbursement for transportation of livestock to new grazing locations, reimbursement for fencing replacement, and for various means of getting water to livestock. If confirmed, will you commit to work with us on any flexibility that the Department can provide to producers who cannot implement all the requirements of their conservation program contracts or other USDA contract obligations as a result of the recent catastrophic wildfires? Yes.
3. The Agriculture Committee worked extremely hard to include regulatory flexibility for school meal programs in a bill that was unanimously reported out last year. Schools and those involved in school meals need flexibility and certainty moving forward. Will you work to provide that flexibility and certainty, particularly in the area of whole grain requirements and the sodium restrictions that are rapidly approaching? Yes.
4. During your time as governor, you highlighted the importance of agricultural education for students in Georgia. Many of the nutrition programs at USDA, from child nutrition to SNAP, provide opportunities to teach students and participants how to make healthier choices. What do you see as the role of education in encouraging healthier behavior, in light of the increases in chronic disease in the United States? Do you favor education efforts over state or federal government mandates restricting what people can eat? Nutrition education, if well designed and effectively implemented, can motivate students and consumers to change eating behaviors. It is important consumers have the knowledge and skills to make healthier choices while recognizing their unique lifestyles and family resources. I believe nutrition education is preferable to government mandates that prescribe what people can consume.
5. Formal rulemaking on the National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard has not yet begun. The Congressional intent of all aspects regarding the disclosure standard was to

minimize market impact. Will you commit to following Congressional intent throughout the statutorily prescribed rulemaking process? Yes.

6. The final rule, "National Organic Program; Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices," published January 19, 2017, contains onerous requirements that will put many producers out of business. Further, this rule could contribute to the spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza and unnecessarily expose poultry to this contagious and deadly disease. We spent nearly \$1 billion dollars on the last outbreak, and a new strain of HPAI has recently been discovered. Will you work to revise or retract this rule to address these concerns? All rules should come under scrutiny, particularly those that might have adverse impact on segments of the agriculture economy. I will undertake a detailed review of this matter with the concerns noted above in mind.
7. During your time as governor of Georgia, among other initiatives, you chaired the state's Rural Development Council to underscore your commitment to rural issues. Can you share some of the successes rural Georgia enjoyed during your administration, and whether any of the initiatives you spearheaded as governor might compliment some of the existing programs within USDA? As Governor, I undertook a number of rural development initiatives to help communities strengthen their infrastructure to attract and grow job opportunities. Initiatives included investing in critical infrastructure such as roads, airports, ports; implementing Georgia's first broadband infrastructure grant; creating a loan program for entrepreneurs and small business in partnership with the private sector; supporting good legislation such as the law that allowed rural electric cooperatives (EMCs) to use unused capital credits for education, economic development and philanthropic work in their rural communities; and finally implementing a workforce development program to help better prepare our citizens for 21st century jobs. As Secretary, if confirmed, I look forward to supporting the President's infrastructure initiative and advocating for investment in critical infrastructure for our rural economies such as broadband as well as infrastructure to support agriculture trade like ports, locks and dams.
8. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) suite of conservation programs has a long history of success and remains popular among farmers across the country to get best management practices on the ground. The success of these programs can largely be attributed to the voluntary nature of the programs and the emphasis of locally-led administration and delivery of these program dollars. In recent years, USDA conservation programs and USDA's conservation practice standards have come under more scrutiny, even with some interest groups advocating for stricter conservation requirements for producers. If confirmed, would you continue the tradition of administering USDA's conservation programs on a voluntary basis? It is my belief that farmers are some of the best stewards of the land and environment and that we can be the most impactful by sharing best practices and encouraging conservation practices on a voluntary basis.
9. After marked improvement, it is alleged that civil rights within U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) are suffering. This is disheartening considering the countless USDA employees who worked for years to reverse historic discriminatory practices. Yet, failures by USDA management, specifically within the U.S. Forest Service, have allowed a toxic culture of

discrimination and reprisal to fester. Further, there are signs the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights has failed to manage and adjudicate cases in a timely and appropriate manner. I appreciate that these issues are complex, and will require time to address – but please share your thoughts on how you will work to improve the culture across all USDA agencies to ensure all citizens, farmers, ranchers and consumers are treated fairly by USDA. I believe in an open door policy that fosters direct communication and look forward to spending my time with employees and customers alike to better understand the cultural challenges we have to tackle at USDA. I think it is important to set a culture of respect from the top and, if confirmed, I intend to lead the charge to ensure that employees and customers know that the expectation is that everyone should be treated fairly. There is no substitute for leadership and we will continue to find the best people with the strongest commitment to creating a work environment that will be the envy of the federal government.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue
to be Secretary of Agriculture
March 23, 2017
Questions for the Record

Ranking Member Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)

Ethics/Conflicts of Interest

1. Recent news articles have raised concerns about conflicts of interest issues in connection with your time as Governor of Georgia. Many of these criticisms stem in part from the fact that you ran your agribusinesses while you were serving as Governor, instead of opting to put them into a blind trust.

Describe the actions that you will take, following your agreement with the Office of General Ethics, to remove any conflicts of interest between your agricultural business interests and being the Secretary of Agriculture? Please see the letter dated March 7, 2017 addressed to Mr. Stuart Bender, the Designated Agency Ethics Official for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in which I agree to a series of steps recommended by Mr. Bender to avoid any actual or apparent conflicts of interest in the event that I am confirmed for the position of Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These steps are not limited to, but include, restructuring the Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust and transferring all of its stock in Perdue Business Holdings, Inc. into a new, irrevocable trust that will not benefit me or my spouse and to which neither I nor my wife will serve as trustees.

Will you play any role at all in providing information to or assisting in the operation of the assets that you have put into the new trusts? Will you recuse yourself from any matters? Should I be confirmed I will abide by the agreement dated March 7, 2017 with the Designated Agency Ethics Official for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

What, if any, restrictions will be on you regarding operation of the businesses placed in the new trusts? Please describe in detail. As per the letter dated March 7, 2017 addressed to Mr. Stuart Bender, the Designated Agency Ethics Official for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, below are 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 Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

- 1) 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.

- 2) I am the sole owner of Perdue Properties LLC and Perdue Real Estate Holdings LLLP. These entities are dormant and have no assets and generate no income. During my appointment to the position of Secretary of Agriculture, these entities will remain dormant. I will not perform any services for these entities, except that I will comply with any requirements involving legal filings, taxes and fees that are necessary to maintain these entities while they are dormant. As Secretary of Agriculture, 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 either of these entities, unless I first obtain a written waiver pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).
 - 3) My wife and I are co-trustees and sole beneficiaries of the Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust, and my wife is the trustee and one of the beneficiaries of the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust, an irrevocable trust. The Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust holds all of the voting stock in Perdue Business Holdings, Inc., and the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust holds all of the non-voting stock in Perdue Business Holdings, Inc. An appointment committee of the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust has the power to appoint some part or all of the assets of that trust to my wife or adult non-dependent children, whether outright or in further trust. Within 90 days of my confirmation, I will cause these trusts to be restructured such that I will revoke the Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust and transfer all of its stock in Perdue Business Holdings, Inc. into a new, irrevocable trust ("New Family Management Trust") that will not benefit me or my spouse. Neither I nor my wife will serve as trustee of the New Family Management Trust. Until the steps outlined in this paragraph are completed, 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 Perdue Family Revocable Management Trust or any of its underlying holdings.
 - 4) Within 90 days of my confirmation, the appointment committee for the Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust will appoint all of its stock in Perdue Business Holdings, Inc. to a new, irrevocable trust ("New Wealth Preservation Trust") that will not benefit me or my spouse. Neither I nor my wife will serve as trustee of the New Wealth Preservation Trust, and the trust document for the New Wealth Preservation Trust will expressly prohibit its appointment committee from appointing trust assets to me or my spouse. 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 Perdue Family Wealth Preservation Trust, or any of its underlying holdings, 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).
2. **Have you ever been disciplined or cited for a breach of ethics or unprofessional conduct? Please explain.** A third party complaint to the Georgia State Ethics Commission (Case No. 2004-0002) dated January 29, 2004 alleged that Perdue for a New Georgia campaign committee violated the Ethics in Government Act. In one instance, it was alleged that the committee accepted

excessive and unreported in-kind contributions from Perdue, Inc. through use of a company plane for campaign purposes. The corporation, Perdue, Inc., was owned by my wife, Mary Perdue. It was alleged that, while Mary Perdue could make unlimited contributions, a corporation owned entirely by her could not. The allegation was settled after I paid a \$1,000 penalty and the campaign paid \$12,155 to Perdue, Inc. for use of the plane. In another instance, it was alleged the committee received excessive campaign contributions. The consent order stated that two contributions were improperly re-designated for debt retirement and four contributions were improperly reported for the wrong election. I paid a \$900 civil penalty, and some refunds were issued.

It should be noted that, in a case involving a different candidate decided in Dec. 2016 (Case No. 2010-0054), the Commission reversed itself on part of the complaint issue, and ruled that a corporation owned by a candidate has no contribution limit to that candidate.

3. As Governor, your first Executive Order prohibited state ethics officials from receiving gifts worth more than \$25 from lobbyists. While Governor, did you receive any gifts worth more than \$25 from lobbyists in violation of your Executive Order? I did not violate my Executive Order.

Process/Responsiveness to Congress

4. 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 reasonable request for information from me or any duly constituted committee of the Congress? 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? Yes.
 - d. 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.

Farm Bill

5. During the 2014 Farm Bill, the House of Representatives attempted to split the Farm Bill into 2 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 of the United States is committed to keeping food and farm policy in the same legislation and will oppose any effort to sever the policy areas.

Food Safety

6. In 2009, during your second term as governor, a peanut processor in southwest Georgia was directly linked to a widespread salmonella outbreak. The processing plant not only failed to control the contamination, but “re-tested” tainted products and then continued to distribute them. Nearly 700 people fell ill across more than 40 states, and 9 deaths were linked to the outbreak. Due to lack of oversight and due diligence, the plant had to shut down and most of its work force was laid off. Additionally, at least 600 people fell ill in 2007 due to another salmonella outbreak linked to a different facility in Georgia. People not only lost jobs, but they lost their lives, and those who were lucky enough to live lost their faith and trust in the government that is supposed to keep them safe.

Seeing as USDA is responsible for ensuring the safety of all meat and poultry consumed in the U.S., will you commit to consulting both consumer and industry groups on the development of any new food safety policy or changes made to existing policies? Yes.

Will you commit to government transparency to ensure food safety? Yes.

Will you commit to supporting a budget with adequate resources to guarantee that U.S. citizens’ health and Food Safety remain top priorities during your time as Secretary of Agriculture? Yes.

7. 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.

Will you commit to maintaining and strengthening this relationship? How will you increase communication and cooperation between USDA and FDA on food safety issues?

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? One of the top agricultural priorities for this Administration is to improve and strengthen interagency cooperation. If confirmed, I will create a position in USDA that will be totally focused on improving these relationships. FSMA is comprehensive and, if confirmed, I will commit USDA to ensuring that all members of the agriculture community receive the support necessary to continue to support its mission and to feed the world.

Conservation

8. Water quality issues are on the top of the minds of many Michigan residents and farmers. Which voluntary agriculture conservation programs are the most successful at delivering the best use of taxpayer funds to address resource concerns like water quality? If confirmed, I look

forward to learning from the most recent available data about which programs can deliver conservation and water quality benefits most cost efficiently.

9. USDA agricultural conservation programs encourage farmers to undertake voluntary efforts to improve water quality, protect wildlife habitat, and preserve water resources on their operations. Unfortunately, the President's "skinny budget" targets the role of USDA in helping farmers do conservation. I'm very concerned the full budget proposal released in May will further target the voluntary conservation programs authorized by the Farm Bill. The 2014 Farm Bill included \$23 billion in deficit reduction, with \$6 billion in savings coming from conservation, including sequestration. The Agriculture Committee has already done its part toward deficit reduction.

Please explain how you will protect and defend the voluntary conservation programs from arbitrary cuts outside of the Farm Bill process if you are confirmed as Secretary. If confirmed, I will work within the administration and with the Congress to ensure that every effort is put forth to protect voluntary conservation programs.

10. President's Trump's budget proposes to "encourage private sector conservation planning." In my state of Michigan nearly one-third of conservation funding is for technical assistance and planning to help farmers address issues like the algae blooms in Lake Erie.

Can you elaborate on what this proposal means – is the intent to eliminate all USDA conservation planning and technical assistance for farmers? Will this change result in fewer farmers getting help to address issues of water quality and drought on their operations? Water quality is an essential underpinning of healthy living and must be the lynchpin of sustainable agricultural production. If confirmed, I will commit that it will not be USDA's intent to eliminate all USDA conservation planning and technical assistance for farmers.

11. The 2014 Farm Bill created the new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to promote locally-led, partnership-driven conservation efforts and leverage federal funding to address a variety natural resource concerns across the country. In my home state of Michigan, these innovative partnerships have been important to help address issues like water quality in Lake Erie and the Saginaw Bay.

If confirmed, will you be a champion for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program? How will you bolster the partnership model for conservation and ensure that the Natural Resources Conservation Service fully embraces this new, innovative approach to conservation in the field? Conservation of resources, especially our water, air and land, must be a top priority for USDA. Yes, I will make sure NRCS is in line with this commitment.

12. 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 fact, this agreement was critical to ensuring passage of the 2014 Farm Bill. I am concerned about any changes that could be made to this agreement that would go against Congressional intent.

If confirmed, will you commit to protecting conservation compliance in its current form and not rolling back these basic environmental protections that farmers agree to in return for receiving commodity and crop insurance support? Conservation is one of the mechanisms we must use to help keep agriculture sustainable for generations to come. Yes, I am committed to building upon our conservation efforts.

13. While Governor, you signed into law a bill authorizing a \$150 million trust fund and revolving loan fund to help purchase conservation easements. You also supported tax credits to incentivize donation of land for conservation uses. The USDA also runs an agricultural conservation easement program to help preserve working farmland and wetlands, authorized by the Farm Bill.

Do you believe the government should support the permanent protection of Ag land and wetlands through conservation easements? If not, please explain. If yes, will you commit to protecting funding for the Ag Conservation Easement Program at USDA? As stated above, I am fully committed to ensuring that conservation programs are strengthened.

Farm Safety Net

14. The 2014 Farm Bill represented a major shift in U.S. commodity policy by repealing the old system of direct payments and shifting toward more market-based programs that provide a safety net for farmers when prices or yields drop. Producers had the option of choosing between a revenue protection program, Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and a price-loss program, Price Loss Coverage (PLC). These options between the programs parallel the choice in Federal Crop Insurance between yield protection and revenue protection for many commodities that have been popular with farmers. The creation of “generic base” in the 2014 Farm Bill coupled with the reference prices set in the Farm Bill provided an incentive for farmers to plant certain crops on these acres, or “planting to the program.”

Do you support farmers having the choice, or perhaps even combined protection, so that both the risks from low prices or bad weather can be protected against? Do you commit to working with Congress in the development of the 2018 Farm Bill to ensure that producers have a strong safety net, while also preventing market distorting programs? If confirmed, I will pursue finding the best possible methods of providing safety nets to our agricultural partners. I want to work with Congress to seek workable, practical, non-market distorting solutions to these challenges.

15. 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 to you 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.

If confirmed, do you commit to continuing to expand risk protection and crop insurance options to new areas and commodities? 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? I believe in transparency and in making our best scientific and statistical data available to agricultural producers. Yes, I will work with Congress to find practical, affordable ways to expand the agricultural safety net.

16. The last Farm Bill made modifications to the actively engaged requirements that determine what amount of work a person must do to be eligible for up to \$125,000 in farm payments. Some critics believe that the rules are still too lenient.

Do you support the existing limitations and eligibility requirements? Are there areas you would scrutinize as Secretary? If confirmed, I will take this issue under study and will make the results of USDA analysis available to the Congress. Such information will help inform the formulation of the Farm Bill.

17. In 2015 and 2016, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) sought and used discretionary authority to offer and award cooperative agreements to form partnerships with a variety of universities and non-profit organizations to help the agency expand its outreach, technical assistance and financial assistance (see: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/cooperative-agreements/index>).

Do you plan to continue to offer these opportunities for public-private partnerships and help FSA reach underserved farmers and ranchers, including beginning farmers and veterans? I am committed to the support of beginning farmers, those underserved in agriculture and our veterans and will evaluate the tools referenced and others in order to strengthen the quality of the agency's outreach.

Forestry

18. In my view, the biggest challenge facing the Forest Service today is a broken budget. The agency is now routinely spending over half of their budget fighting wildfires, up from 16% in 1995. The last administration consistently supported legislation to enact a comprehensive fix to the Forest Service budget. I was heartened to hear your comments on this matter during the hearing.

Will you please confirm that you support a comprehensive fix to the Forest Service budget that both stops the practice of fire borrowing and addresses the long term erosion of the agency's non-fire budget? If so, and if confirmed, will you commit to advocating for such a comprehensive solution within the administration, with the President, the Interior Secretary, the OMB Director, and others? If confirmed, I am committed to working with Congress to identify a comprehensive fix to the Forest Service budget that both stops the practice of fire borrowing and addresses the long term erosion of the agency's non-fire budget. I am also committed to working across the Administration to build support for a comprehensive solution.

We are committed to finding best practices in land and forest management, particularly in our western states.

19. The Forest Service manages 193 million acres of public land on behalf of the American people. Some in Congress and elsewhere have suggested that the federal government ought to sell some of these lands to private parties or transfer their management authority to the states. The President opposed this idea on the campaign trail and Secretary Zinke, to his credit, opposed this idea as it related to Interior Department land during his confirmation process.

Will you commit to following the lead of the President and of Secretary Zinke, and oppose the sale of Forest Service lands to private parties or the transfer of management responsibilities to the states? I support the President and Secretary Zinke in this matter. The stewardship of the land is an awesome and sacred responsibility and if confirmed, I will commit USDA to partner with other agencies to find the best management solutions.

20. Secretary Zinke has been very public about his desire to see USDA's Forest Service moved to the Interior Department. The Forest Service comprises nearly a quarter of the overall USDA workforce and a significant amount of the agency's non-nutrition budget.

Will you commit to strenuously opposing efforts to move the Forest Service to the Interior Department – both in your capacity advising the President as part of his cabinet and in your testimony before Congress? The Forest Service provides stewardship to a major agricultural crop, and ultimately results in the harvest of forest products for a vast array of products. As an agricultural commodity, forests and woodlands should remain in the jurisdiction of USDA.

21. In 2004, you supported the Bush Administration's recommendation that 8,090 acres of Georgia's Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest be protected as wilderness. At the time, you said, "I want to thank President Bush and Secretary Veneman for seeking the input of state and local officials on decisions that affect our communities, the Forest Service sought input from numerous stakeholders in making this important decision to protect over 8,000 acres in North Georgia. This pristine forest land will now be protected for generations of Georgians to enjoy."

If confirmed, will you commit to showing similar support for wilderness – both in directing your Forest Service to recommend suitable wilderness areas to Congress for designation, and in testifying in support of locally-led wilderness bills that are heard by this Committee? If confirmed, I will support the Administration's effort to create a climate of shared stewardship of our forested lands. When stakeholders can agree on wilderness designations, I will lead the effort to get Congress to approve such offerings.

22. In 2004, your administration penned a letter, signed by your Natural Resources Commissioner, seeking Senator Isakson's and Senator Chambliss' support for the federal acquisition of two inholdings within the Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest using resources from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Do you support the mission of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was signed into law in 1965 after garnering bipartisan support in Congress? If confirmed, can we count on you

to be an advocate for the Fund in Congress and to oppose attempts to subvert the Fund's original purpose? Yes, I support the fund and yes, I will oppose any effort to subvert the Fund.

23. As Agriculture Secretary you'll oversee the 193 million acre National Forest System. In recent years, we've seen impressive data showing that public lands, including our national forests, provide substantial economic benefits through recreation activities like hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, skiing, snowmobiling, and others. One estimate suggests that outdoor recreation brings in \$646 billion a year to the domestic economy while sustaining six million jobs in the industry.

Can you describe how you will work with your Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment and your Forest Service Chief to ensure that our national forests and grasslands will be able to sustain this economic growth and continue creating new jobs? This Administration is committed to finding the best possible means of providing stewardship of our forested areas. I am committed to supporting the Administration in preserving the recreational aspects of Federal forest use.

Climate Change

24. Farmer, ranchers, and forestland owners across the country are seeing the effects of man-made climate change every day. As Governor, you spearheaded several initiatives to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy, and you even created the Georgia Carbon Sequestration Registry that helps Georgia landowners participate in carbon markets. However, you also penned a 2014 op-ed where you appeared to question climate science, a piece that has led some to label you a climate change denier. The 2014 op-ed was about Common Core State Standards and the quote in it has several times been taken out of context where I was drawing similarities between the exaggerated claims often made by both sides in the debates over Common Core and climate change. In fact, during my tenure as Governor, I issued a State Energy Strategy which stated that "strong scientific evidence exists that increasing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are affecting Earth's climate."

If confirmed, can we count on you to recognize the existence of man-made climate change and the threats that climate change poses to agriculture? Furthermore, can we count on you to continue the work started by Secretary Vilsack in making climate-smart agriculture and forestry a priority at USDA? I believe we have to take a consistent, common sense approach to adapting to a changing climate and focus on strategies that make financial and environmental sense such as conserving water, protecting sensitive public lands and identifying future energy sources. As the Secretary of Agriculture, I would be committed to helping farmers, landowners and foresters adapt to what the data is showing us about changes to weather patterns and temperature across the country.

25. Will you commit to this Committee that no career USDA personnel will be dismissed in the future because they participated in research or USDA programs that dealt with climate change issues under the last administration? Yes

26. In 2015 the USDA authored a report finding, among other things, that “Climate change is likely to diminish continued progress on global food security through production disruptions that lead to local availability limitations and price increases, interrupted transport conduits, and diminished food safety, among other causes.” Additionally, the World Food Program has said, “Food insecurity – especially when caused by a rise in food prices – is a threat and impact multiplier for violent conflict.” And recently your potential future colleague in the cabinet, Defense Secretary Mattis, said “Climate change is impacting stability in areas of the world where our troops are operating today,” and “climate change can be a driver of instability and the Department of Defense must pay attention to potential adverse impacts generated by this phenomenon.”

Do you agree with Secretary Mattis that climate change can be a driver of instability and can have adverse impacts in certain parts of the world? Disruptions to growing seasons, whether natural or man-made, are of great concern to me. Any event, action or phenomenon that leads to instability must be part of the calculus on how we face the challenge of feeding more than nine billion people by the year 2050. If confirmed, I will insist that our best science inform our decisions on to meet these challenges.

27. Many producer groups feel that Secretary Vilsack made a smart move by setting up the USDA climate hubs to help producers adapt their operations to a changing climate.

Will you commit to continuing the USDA’s Climate Hubs? I look forward to learning more about this program and giving it every consideration should I be confirmed.

GMO Labeling

28. On July 29th, 2016, a bill establishing a mandatory GMO labeling program at USDA was signed into law. The statute requires the program to be fully implemented within two years after bill passage, by July 29, 2018.

Will you commit to meeting this statutory deadline? Will you or your staff provide the Committee regular updates on implementation of this law? It is the law of the land and USDA will meet this requirement. Yes, I will provide updates, if confirmed.

29. On January 30, 2017, President Trump issued an executive order (EO), titled “Reducing Regulation and Controlling Regulatory Costs,” requiring that for every significant regulation issued by an agency, two regulations must be repealed. There has been considerable confusion over whether and how this EO would apply to the regulations implementing the GMO labeling program, which is required by statute to be fully implemented by July 29, 2018.

Can you explain how the EO will apply to the regulations, both proposed and final, for the GMO labeling program? If confirmed, I will insist that the department provide comprehensive analysis of the types and numbers of rules necessary to implement the statutory requirements of the legislation. I will be happy to report on those results once the analysis is complete.

GIPSA Rules

30. 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 vows 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 have seen, GIPSA recently promulgated a set of rules designed to protect poultry farmers against unfair business practices. Both the Farm Bureau and the National Farmers Union support the rules.

Consistent with President Trump's pledge to protect the little guy, do you intend to fully implement the Farmer Fair Practices Rules recently promulgated by GIPSA? The extended period for public comment on the "Farmer Fair Practices Rules" closed on Friday, March 24, 2017. If confirmed, I will ensure that the agency fully considers the comments submitted regarding the effectiveness and economic impacts of full implementation, including the views you have set forth here.

Agricultural Research

31. The U.S. faces economic, social, and environmental challenges that will require strong and innovative systems of food and agricultural science for answers and technology solutions. USDA is the nation's leading funder of agriculture research, education, and extension programs, funding on average \$1.3 billion per year to support the nation's agriculture sector. In 2015, Michigan received a total of \$54 million in competitive agriculture research grants to support Michigan's agriculture economy.

What research priorities regarding food and agriculture should the USDA focus on during the next four years? Given the cuts proposed by President Trump to USDA programs, how will the USDA be able to continue to support critical research on food and agriculture? Will you commit to supporting agriculture research programs? Given the importance of agriculture research to the entire agriculture industry, would you recommend increasing, decreasing, or keeping the same the research budget? I am fully committed to ensuring that the best science informs our decisions at USDA. To that end, I will seek to strengthen our financial commitment to research. Further, USDA has some of the top scientists in agriculture and food production available. I will seek their counsel on how best to meet the challenge of feeding a hungry world.

32. The 2014 Farm Bill provided significant investment in agriculture research by creating a new Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, designed to support innovative and important agriculture research ideas while leveraging federal and private funds to maximize investment. This week, the Foundation, in partnership with the Nobel foundation, announced a \$6.6 million investment in cover crop development to protect soil health. This is a great example of how public and private partnerships can fund important agriculture initiatives.

If confirmed, will you commit to supporting and continuing to work with the Foundation as an ex officio member? Will you commit to working with the Foundation to further enhance public and private partnerships in agriculture research? Yes and yes.

Scientific Integrity

33. In a January 2017 report, USDA received the highest possible rating for their Scientific Integrity Policy (SIP). In addition to having a top-rated policy on scientific integrity, the Department has taken actions to foster a culture of scientific integrity during the last administration. By articulating the principles of scientific integrity, USDA intends to instill public confidence in its research and science-based public policymaking.

If confirmed as Secretary, will you commit to upholding the policies and actions already in place to ensure scientific integrity within the Administration? Will you pledge to continue to publicly share allegations of compromised scientific integrity and research misconduct involving USDA conducted or supported scientific and technological activities, as has been done previously? Yes and yes.

Animal Health

34. Within the last year, the U.S. has seen outbreaks of avian influenza, New World Screwworm, and bovine tuberculosis. As a veterinarian, you understand the dangers of zoonotic diseases, and that most new human pathogens originate in animals. USDA is the primary government agency responsible for safeguarding animal health. A strong, quick response to disease issues as they arise is important not only for producers and consumers but also for maintaining U.S. trade relationships.

Given the steep cuts President Trump has called for from USDA, are you confident that we are fully prepared to meet any plant or animal disease challenges affecting American agriculture? Yes, but we must always remain vigilant to address emerging threats.

Specialty Crops

35. 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.

If confirmed, how will you ensure USDA supports all farmers including small and medium scale farmers, specialty crop growers, and organic producers? 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? If confirmed, I will ask that USDA engage in continual self-evaluation and seek input from outside stakeholders, including those focused on specialty crop production, to ensure that the entire agricultural spectrum is brought under the umbrella of the department. This includes seeking initiatives that will enhance urban farming and that will incentivize entry into farming. Broadening the agricultural base of the nation is the best insurance against food insecurity.

Pollinators

36. In 2015, the Obama administration led efforts to address the decline in U.S. honey bee health, and issued “The National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and Other Pollinators”.

If confirmed, will you commit to continuing the efforts outlined in the national strategic report? Will you also commit to holding a national summit on honey bee and pollinator crop protection with various stakeholders across the agricultural community? And finally, will you commit to working with the beekeepers, pollinator groups and other agriculture stakeholders to design a multi-year field study under the SCRI program? Yes, if confirmed. I look forward to reviewing the strategic report and working with the USDA team and stakeholders on this issue.

Organics

37. 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.

How do you plan to support organics in your new administration? Will you continue efforts to integrate and offer services to organic producers through the field based agencies like NRCS and FSA? How will you look for new market opportunities and ensure USDA resources are supporting organic agriculture? Will you commit to supporting organic exports and pushing for new international markets? In light of the hiring freeze and the President’s proposed budget cuts, how will you ensure the National Organic Program has adequate resources to enforce the organic label? Will you commit to collecting organic market data information? Will you commit to working with RMA to develop crop insurance tools that work for organic producers? Organic farming is an exciting and expanding area of agricultural production. The commodities produced through organic farming must be part of the overall strategy of feeding the world and of growing our local, state, and national economies. We need crop insurance tools that work for organic producers, and we need to explore international markets and remove barriers to them for our organic producers just as we need to do so for our other farmers. If confirmed, I will commit to seeing that organic products are an integral part of our overall food and trade strategy.

Civil Rights

38. USDA has a decades-long history of civil rights violations, as reported by GAO. In light of this, Secretary Vilsack made it a priority to build a new era for civil rights at USDA, ensuring that all employees and customers were treated fairly, regardless of their race, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, disability, or age. During his tenure, USDA corrected past errors, learned from mistakes, and charted a stronger path forward where all Americans are treated with dignity and respect. This included providing better service to

USDA customers, correcting past civil rights mistakes, improving outreach efforts, and cultivating a diverse and inclusive workforce.

If confirmed as Secretary, do you pledge to continue this progress toward ensuring that all USDA customers and employees are treated with dignity and respect and that such laws are properly followed? Specifically, will you continue with efforts to promote diversity on Farm Service Agency County Committees and on all USDA commissions and advisory boards?
Yes, yes and yes.

Beginning Farmers

39. 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.

What efforts will you take to ensure new farmers and ranchers have access to USDA programs and resources? Will you commit to continuing outreach and interagency coordination to reach new farmers? Will you commit to looking across all USDA programs and sure they are working in collaboration to meet the needs of new farmers? Will you commit to supporting youth programing like FFA, 4-H, and farm to school activities? If confirmed, I will have USDA develop and integrate a plan to continue to incentivize new entries into agriculture. Yes, I will meet the commitments of making USDA a valuable repository of tools and aids to ease entry into this industry. As for FFA, 4-H and farm to school activities, I can assure you that these programs have my full support.

40. 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? Yes, I look forward to identifying new opportunities to attract our veterans to USDA and agriculture.

Pesticides

41. The Environmental Protection Agency, the Fish & Wildlife Service, and the National Marine Fisheries Service are among a few agencies that play a critical role in supporting producer's access to safe and effective pesticide products.

With respect to the registration of pesticide products under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, & Rodenticide Act, please explain how you intend to do the following: (i) coordinate USDA efforts with other agencies that play a role in the registration and use of pesticide products; (ii) engage all stakeholders, including those that can provide scientific and technical input to regulators; and (iii) support science-based regulations that will provide certainty for farmers

and ranchers that rely on timely registration of pesticide products? If confirmed, I will ensure that all decisions in USDA are based on the best available science and data. I will also create an environment in USDA that will make interagency coordination a qualifying condition of all actions taken by the department. Good decisions cannot be made without input from all stakeholders.

International Food Aid/Food Security

42. The United States has a long history of leadership in lending a helping hand across the globe—not only as a compassionate response to alleviate hunger and suffering, but also to promote our own national security by creating a safer and more stable world. This is in part why Chairman Roberts and I recently led a bipartisan group of 30 Senators in a letter to OMB Director Mulvaney requesting full support for Food for Peace, which provides both emergency food assistance and development programs to strengthen food security. Unfortunately, President Trump’s budget makes substantial cuts to foreign assistance, which is particularly concerning given the current level of need around the world.

Do you believe that international food aid and food security are important to our national security? If confirmed, how will you ensure that USDA and the United States remain a leader in international assistance and development? Will you advocate for USDA to play a strong role in supporting the U.S. government’s global food security strategy, and will you commit the staff and resources necessary to ensure that USDA continues its important role in fighting global hunger? Ensuring food security should be a priority for USDA. Further, USDA should be a willing partner with other departments and agencies of the federal government in fulfilling our national security commitments. If confirmed, I will advocate that USDA be a partner in these efforts.

43. The President’s “skinny budget” proposal eliminated funding for the McGovern-Dole Food for Education program. This program funds nutritional support, literacy instruction, school infrastructure improvements, and other activities that help create stable, healthy communities in some of the world’s poorest countries. It not only helps fight hunger and strengthen food security, but also improves school attendance – particularly for girls, who have historically been excluded from education in many parts of the world. For example, one McGovern-Dole project in Pakistan increased girls’ school enrollment by 325 percent. In 2015, this program reached almost 3 million beneficiaries around the world – the vast majority of whom are children. It is also widely supported by American farmers, who provided over half a million metric tons of U.S.-grown commodities for McGovern-Dole projects between FY2010 and FY2015.

Do you support the goals of fighting childhood malnutrition, strengthening food security and community health, and improving literacy and school attendance around the world? Yes.

Trade

44. The global nature of commodity markets today makes the enforcement of our trade laws essential to protecting the livelihoods of family farmers and ranchers. In the sugar sector, the

unlawful, high-volume dumping of sugar from Mexico into the U.S. market has created very difficult business conditions for our producers.

Will you commit to working closely with our sugar producers to ensure that U.S. sugar policy is carried out effectively and, in collaboration with other government departments, be an active partner in addressing the industry's trade priorities? Yes.

45. U.S. exporters of soybeans, corn, and dried distillers' grains (DDGs) derived from biotechnology continue to experience trade barriers in overseas markets, especially in China, with systemic consequences throughout the U.S. agriculture value chain. Specifically, the government of China is slow to approve biotech products that have already been cleared in the U.S. for commercialization, jeopardizing China as a market for our growers and making it difficult for seed companies to continue innovating.

If confirmed, will you work closely with USTR and other government agencies and working groups as necessary to enhance the coordination of biotech product approvals in China and worldwide to work more favorably for U.S. agriculture? If confirmed, securing international and domestic markets for our science-proven commodities will be one of my highest priorities.

46. The Trump Administration often mentions its commitment to free, fair trade. Part of fair trade for the agriculture sector is working to ensure that imported farm goods are not produced with bad labor practices. According to the Department of Labor and outside reporting, cattle ranchers in Brazil have made use of forced labor to raise beef. Importing beef produced with forced labor into the U.S. not only rewards bad actors in Brazil, but it also puts U.S. producers playing by the rules and doing right by their employees at a significant disadvantage.

How do you plan to work across government and with industry to address bad labor practices among our trading partners and what steps will you take to address them when an instance of abusive practices is confirmed? International trade is about finding the level playing field for all participants. All partners in trade should gain benefit from the trade. That will require close coordination with the USTR, the Department of State and the Department of Commerce. If confirmed, I will make sure USDA has a role in determining the best trade outcomes for all participants, and will not hesitate to object when our trading partners engage in bad labor practices.

Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States

47. The farm sector is one of America's greatest strengths. We have affordable, safe food supplies and many of the great food and biotechnology companies are based in the United States. Agriculture is also the one sector of the U.S. economy in which we consistently hold a trade surplus. Even so, the industry has experienced significant consolidation over the years and farmers and consumers are increasingly focused on maintaining a strong, competitive marketplace. Amplifying concerns is the potential that the increasing volume of foreign acquisitions and of U.S. agricultural companies—especially acquisitions initiated by foreign government-linked entities—may damage our food markets and diminish our reputation as the leading producer of high-quality food and agriculture technology worldwide.

Will your department make a priority of monitoring foreign acquisitions and mergers in the agriculture sector, especially those linked with state-owned entities, and support making the Secretary of Agriculture a permanent member of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States? Yes. I plan to closely monitor mergers and acquisitions, and I believe the Secretary of Agriculture should participate on the Committee on Foreign Investment when mergers and acquisitions affecting agriculture are considered.

Family Safety Net

48. Although we have made progress in reducing food insecurity in the past 8 years, over 42 million Americans, many of whom are children, seniors and veterans, struggle to access adequate food for themselves and their families. Without strong, national nutrition safety net programs the rate of hunger in America would undoubtedly be far worse. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the National School Breakfast, School Lunch and Summer Meals programs, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program each play an important role in addressing improving the health and well-being of families and our economy.

If confirmed, will you commit to support full funding for these programs and work with me to protect access to these programs for all individuals in need and prevent structural changes that would reduce the effectiveness of these programs? I look forward to working with you and the Congress to ensure these programs remain viable and effective.

49. According to Mission Readiness, a nonprofit comprised of over 500 retired generals and admirals, nutrition is critical to our national security. According to the Department of Defense, over 70% of 18-24 year olds are ineligible to serve in the military and the primary reason is obesity. That is why Mission Readiness joined pediatricians, parents, principals, dieticians and others to encourage Congress and the Administration to preserve healthy meal standards established by the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act.

In order to ensure our national security interests are addressed, will you commit protect and defend science-based nutrition standards in school breakfast, lunch, snack and summer meals programs? If confirmed, I will ensure USDA continues to bring forward the best science informed data upon which to make decisions concerning our nutrition programs.

50. The Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) projects have been successful in providing access to summer meals for thousand children that rely upon healthy, free and reduced price meals during the school year, but have limited access to meals during the summer. In Michigan, Summer EBT has not only provided access to health meals to children in rural Michigan and Detroit, but also played a critical role in mitigating the impact of lead exposure for children in Flint.

If confirmed, will you commit to support continued funding for the Summer EBT projects and work with me to improve access to summer meals for children? If confirmed, I will continue to be committed to providing our children access to healthy meals.

51. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, updated every five years, serve as an important framework for nutrition policy at the federal, state and local level as well as an important educational tool for both public health professionals and average Americans seeking to improve their nutrition and health. The National Academy of Medicine is currently conducting a review of how the Dietary Guidelines are developed to ensure the integrity of the process.

If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that the Dietary Guidelines process remains science-based and transparent? Yes.

52. While poverty and food insecurity is often associated with urban communities, rural communities have been slow to recover after the Great Recession. SNAP is a critical lifeline for families in rural communities who continue to struggle to put food on their tables. While overall SNAP caseloads are declining because the economy is improving, this is not necessarily the case in many rural communities.

Does this Administration intend to prioritize the issue of rural poverty? If confirmed, will you commit to opposing cuts to SNAP that would harm rural communities and other communities in need? Food security is important to all Americans. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that all Americans have food security.

Local Foods

53. 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. USDA made significant investment in building infrastructure to support the local food economy. Since 2014, Cultivate Michigan's local food report indicated that schools, hospitals, long term care facilities, early childhood centers, colleges, and other businesses have purchased over \$3.4 million in local foods.

Will you commit to supporting these ongoing economic initiatives that support local food infrastructure and local economic growth and development? Will you commit to keeping the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" USDA working group intact and let them provide advice on local food development? Will you commit to supporting local food business throughout the supply chain, including support for value added agriculture, food retail outlets, and food hubs? What will you do to build, improve, and diversify efforts to ensure that direct marketing opportunities are available to all American farmers? If America is to lead the way in feeding the world, we must do all we can to make sure that as many farmers are involved as possible. This means supporting local food operations and sales. If confirmed, I will ensure that USDA remains committed to supporting local food production.

54. USDA Food and Nutrition Service has initiated a number of 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.

Will you commit to focusing on these issues to make it easier for direct to consumer sales? What will you do to support efforts that strengthen markets for small farmers? Yes, if confirmed, I will commit USDA to providing as many tools as possible, including enhanced technology, to ensure easy access to markets and marketing for small, local farmers.

55. 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.

56. In 2013, USDA and EPA launched a food waste reduction challenge to get entities across the entire supply chain to recover and reduce wasted food. Food waste is estimated at between 30-40 percent of the food supply. USDA Economic Research Service estimates 31 percent food loss at the retail and consumer levels, which corresponded to approximately 133 billion pounds and \$161 billion worth of food in 2010.

Will you commit to continuing efforts at USDA to reduce food waste? Yes.

Energy

57. For years, I have been a strong advocate for a “Grow it here, Make it here” strategy when we talk about the biobased economy. When we grow things and make things in Michigan, we create jobs in Michigan. Industrial biotechnology is enabling companies across the country to develop a robust biobased economy. Biobased production encompasses a complex value chain, from agriculture through the manufacture of consumer goods, that provides an alternative to the petroleum-based value chain and that brings environmental, economic and other benefits. For example, Zeeland Farm Services in Michigan processes soybeans into a biodegradable oil used to lubricate industrial chain saws. This biobased product was one of the first to be registered under USDA’s BioPreferred Program. Another Michigan company, KTM Industries, is making shipping coolers from biodegradable material created from corn. The biobased economy can generate new markets for agricultural producers, boost innovation in domestic manufacturing, and stimulate sustainable economic growth. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) energy programs and initiatives have been critical in driving investment and development of these technologies. As a result, biobased industry contributes \$393 billion to the U.S. economy annually and supports 4.2 million jobs. In 2014, biobased products replaced nearly 7 million barrels of oil.

Will you continue USDA's commitment to growing the biobased economy as Secretary of Agriculture? How will you lead the federal efforts to promote a biobased economy through the government's purchases, as well as energy and rural development programs? Will you commit to working with the Department of Defense and other government agencies to get them to buy biobased products? As with any advancements in science, products that become viable are those that find footing in markets where these products are demanded. The government can help in this endeavor by creating market entry opportunities for new products. Biobased businesses fit into this rubric and I look forward to working with partner agencies on this matter.

Renewable Fuel Standard

58. Congress established the Renewable Fuel Standard in 2005 and strengthened the law in 2007. As the Governor of Georgia, you were a national leader in supporting biofuels and biopower. The landmark Renewable Fuel Standard is a huge economic driver in rural America. However, the recently confirmed EPA Administrator and other administration officials have been hostile to the program in the past. Carl Icahn, whom President Trump has designed as a Special Advisor to the President on Regulatory Reform, in particular, has been a vocal advocate for changing the RFS by moving the point of obligation for compliance with the program. Mr. Icahn has an ownership stake in a refinery and would benefit from any such change, and thus has a conflict of interest in the matter.

Will you commit to exclude Mr. Icahn from any conversations or communications you have regarding the RFS given this conflict of interest? Will you agree to be an advocate for the continued implementation of the RFS within the Administration consistent with the goals Congress laid out in the statute? The RFS is good for American farmers and I look forward to supporting the Administration on this matter.

Immigration

59. The health of our agriculture industry is tied directly to immigration. Farmers frequently say that few, if any, American workers are willing to take on the most difficult low-level farm jobs – particularly the hand harvesting roles required to produce Michigan fresh fruits and vegetables. I am concerned by the Trump Administration's recent actions around immigration and the potential impact it has on America's farmers and rural communities. The President's interior enforcement Executive Orders seem to expand the definition of criminality and deportable actions to such a degree that those working on our farms across the country could be caught up in enforcement actions. For every foreign born farm worker 2-3 American jobs are supported.

Do you think that deporting farm workers is good for America's rural economy and what will you do to work with your colleagues across the Administration to minimize damage to American farmers? The President has a Constitutional obligation to enforce the law of the land. I support the President in that effort. If confirmed, I will work with the President, Congress, and stakeholders on both a short-term and permanent solution to agricultural labor needs that is reliable, secure, and legal.

Rural Water

60. The President's budget cuts vital services to deliver clean water to critical rural communities in need of water and waste water treatment programs. Just last year, an estimated 847,000 residents benefitted by receiving quality drinking water through this program in 498 communities. In your home state of Georgia, since 2009, approximately 382,000 rural residents have received new or improved clean water system. Since 2009, USDA water programs have invested \$273.7 million to build new or improved clean water infrastructure. Approximately 91% of these investments went to communities of 5,000 or less. The President's budget proposal calls these programs "duplicative" of EPA programs. The EPA water programs primarily serve urban communities, while the USDA water program serves rural communities most in need with populations less than 10,000 which are unlikely to receive financing or funding from other sources. USDA currently has a nationwide backlog of 955 small and rural community applications totaling \$2.5 billion. In your home state of Georgia, the projected backlog for water infrastructure projects is approximately \$85.5 million. The backlog truly represents rural and small community water infrastructure projects that can't access alternative sources of funding.

How does eliminating the USDA Water and Waste Programs align with your vision to support rural America? Do you agree, that by eliminating these critical USDA programs, rural communities will have to pay more for water infrastructure projects if they had to rely solely on commercial or private financing? Safe water and waste management should be available to all Americans. If confirmed, I will work with the EPA administrator and other federal agencies to ensure that rural water programs are given the appropriate level of interest.

Bovine Tuberculosis

61. 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.

Women in Agriculture

62. According to an analysis of data obtained by ProPublica, only 20 percent of the political appointees at the Department of Agriculture brought on in the first few weeks of the Trump Administration are women. However, women are playing an increasingly prominent role in American agriculture – as farmers, foresters, scientists, conservationists, educators, and agribusiness entrepreneurs. Today, nearly 1 million American women are farmers – including almost one-third of the farmers in my state, Michigan.

Will you continue the Women in Agriculture Initiative at USDA and encourage senior leaders to support this effort and allow their staff to participate? How will you elevate the role of women in agriculture and ensure that the Department reflects the diversity of American agriculture under your leadership? Yes. If confirmed, I will seek in my sub-cabinet and political staff as diverse a group of individuals as is possible. Fortunately, in the world of agriculture where both men and women play such a prominent role, the involvement and contribution of women is on the rise.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND)

1. In implementing farm bills, there are always hiccups where there are either varying ways to interpret the legislative language and intent, or when programs are administered in ways which may not work for some states. Two examples of this are when determining ARC yields. In 2014, I tried unsuccessfully to get USDA to not include prevented plant acres in the ARC-IC benchmark but to include them in the current year yields, even though we had clear legislative authority to do so and it would have greatly improved the program for North Dakota's producers. We also had an issue with ARC-CO yield sources, which I'm sure you've read all about. This issues isn't even legislative but rather about internal processes.
 - a. To what degree do you feel USDA should or could be flexible in interpreting language and implementing programs to maximize the risk protection for our farmers and ranchers? If confirmed, I will insist that USDA provide as much flexibility in programs as is allowed by law and rule.
2. In the hearing, we discussed how North Dakota is in the heart of the Prairie Pothole Region and is also experiencing a significant wet cycle. These two factors have led to an influx of wetlands which farmers would like to drain to protect soil health and manage water on their property. However, conservation compliance prevents them from doing so, and farmers much receive official determinations from the Natural Resources Conservation Service on what is and isn't a wetland before moving forward with tiling. This has created a huge backlog for determination requests which was around 600 at last count. This is creating great uncertainty and hardship for our farmers to operate on their own land.
 - a. You committed to providing additional staffing for wetland determinations to bring this backlog down. Are there any other steps you will take to bring down the backlog and provide certainty for North Dakota farmers, in line with statutory requirements for conservation compliance? Yes. If confirmed, I will ask for a complete review of the Wetlands program.
3. I've heard a lot from cattle ranchers in North Dakota about how volatility in the cattle futures market is making the contracts useless for risk management and instead causing harm to their bottom lines from price swings that vary from day to day and don't appear grounded in market fundamentals.
 - a. What role do you see USDA playing in helping provide greater market transparency and exposing potential problems in the cattle sector, whether they be anticompetitive practices or contracting practices which could harm ranchers? The USDA has a significant role in protecting and providing transparency in agricultural markets. To that end, USDA should make available as much market data as is possible.

- b. What steps will you take to further this goal? If confirmed, I will ensure that USDA makes available as much market information as is possible. I will work with USTR and the Department of Commerce to ensure that foreign markets are open to our exports and that stronger, more stable markets provide greater certainty in agricultural production.
- 4. USDA's field offices are critical to our farmers and ranchers. Whether it's signing up for Title I programs or seeking conservation technical assistance, these local offices are valuable resources. I'm concerned the Administration's hiring freeze will negatively affect the services North Dakota's farmers and ranchers receive.
 - a. How do you plan to prioritize hiring decisions as Secretary? I concur with your view on the importance of these positions. Within the confines of administration directives, if confirmed, I will work to maximize the ability to maintain the highest level of field service.
- 5. I've always been a strong proponent of mandatory country of origin labeling policies. Obviously, we lost a WTO case which required repeal of the mandatory program, but there is still strong desire from my ranchers and consumers to know where their meat comes from.
 - a. What are your views on COOL policies? This is a complex issue with many stakeholders who hold strong opinions on this issue. If confirmed, I will work with these stakeholders to come up with policies that are best for America and the American people.
 - b. If we renegotiate NAFTA, will you work with me and the USTR to provide for a meaningful COOL program? If confirmed, I am willing to partner with you to investigate options if we renegotiate NAFTA.
- 6. All North Dakota schools are meeting federal nutrition standards, but 74 percent of school districts in the state need new or improved kitchen equipment to better serve healthy meals. Last Congress the Senate Agriculture Committee passed a bill to reauthorize the school lunch and breakfast program, which included a version of a bill I cosponsored with Senator Collins to provide equipment to help schools serve meals and provide technical assistance to school meal staff.
 - a. How would you work with the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service to help serve healthier foods, improve school meals, and modernize our schools kitchen equipment? I believe it is important for school system to have the local control and flexibility to serve nutritious meals to their students as well as the predictability in understanding the requirements for each year. I look forward to identifying areas where USDA can be a better partner to school meal staff, if confirmed.
- 7. We need a Secretary at USDA who is going to work with the Under Secretary for Rural Development to prioritize Rural Development's housing products, and make sure that local Rural Development offices are equipped to do the same.
 - a. How do you plan to work with Rural Development to improve on-the-ground operations with respect to affordable housing programs? Staffing and technology improvement will go a long way in improving service. If confirmed, I will do all I can to ensure the proper resources are provided to the RD Housing offices.

- b. Will you work to provide more technical and marketing guidance to state offices that are struggling to use their 502 direct allocation, in an effort to help them improve their in-state network of developers and loan packagers? I look forward to reviewing this program and further discussing this opportunity with you.
- 8. In North Dakota, Rural Development has done a significant amount of important work with our state's tribes and on tribal land. What role do you see in the future for Rural Development in Indian Country? If confirmed, I will work with Secretary Zinke to make sure we are doing all we can to provide the best possible services to our Indian tribes.
- 9. Many folks would be surprised to know that North Dakota is the number one honey producing state in the nation. With over 200 beekeepers in North Dakota, these small business owners bring their bees on the road to pollinate over 90 crops found across the United State, including almonds, tree fruits, cotton, berries, and a wide variety of vegetables. These crops account for roughly 15 to 30 percent of the food we eat according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. However, beekeepers have experienced significant challenges over the past decade from colony collapse disorder, Varroa mites, hive beetles, fungal and viral diseases, and declining quality forage. While beekeepers and farmers oftentimes work together in finding ideal hive locations, further action is needed to better understand colony loss and improve overall pollinator health. Last June, the Pollinator Partnership Action Plan (PPAP) was published and both the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Environmental Protection Agency played a critical role in crafting this plan.
 - a. Do you support the PPAP as a step in the right direction when it comes to improving overall pollinator health? Additionally, what role would the USDA under your leadership play in researching colony loss and improving quality forage for pollinators? Yes. If confirmed, I will make sure that bee health and colony security receives the appropriate attention at USDA.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator John Boozman (R-AR)

1. Governor, I know you are well aware of the difficult economic situation facing cotton farmers. This is going to be the 5th year in a row that market returns are projected to be below the cost of production. If cotton production continues to decline, the infrastructure of the cotton industry will be lost as well. And, if we lose the infrastructure, cotton production is not likely to return. I believe there are policy adjustments that can be made in the short-term to improve the situation, until we can craft an effective, longer term policy for cotton producers in the next farm bill. Can you please share your thoughts on the current situation, and how will you and your team at USDA work with Congress to respond? The changes in cotton policy in the 2014 Farm Bill have not met the expectations of cotton producers. Cotton prices are currently higher than in recent years, but producers continue to struggle and the need to provide a strong safety net for cotton producers remains. If confirmed, I will have USDA review the authority of the Secretary to make changes to cotton programs, as well as explore other potential solutions to help cotton producers, consistent with budget limitations. In addition, the Committee has my commitment to provide it with any USDA resources it requires to help craft and implement effective short and long term solutions.

2. Governor, I'm one of the co-chairs of the Senate Hunger Caucus and reducing hunger is important to me and the farmers I represent. Humanitarian emergencies, like the famine in South Sudan, are still far too prevalent, and US agriculture plays an important role in our foreign policy by providing food to the world's most vulnerable populations. Since the end of World War Two, American food aid programs have saved millions of people from malnourishment and starvation. My state is the largest rice growing state in the country, and since 2007, over one million metric tons of rice have been delivered in the form of global food assistance. This has been a win-win for US farmers and those in need. In your view, what is the importance of US food aid? I believe that food aid can be an important instrument of peace. If confirmed, I look forward to representing USDA in Administration discussions on how best to effectively and efficiently deliver U.S. food aid.

3. Governor, most of Arkansas's forests are privately managed, but the Ouachita and Ozark-St. Francis National Forests have been, in the past, among the best managed National Forests in the country. However, timber outputs have dropped for the last three years. It's difficult to understand why this is the case because mills in Arkansas have been experiencing steadily rising demand for their products. Will you and your staff work with me to address this issue? If confirmed, I would look forward to working with you to increase the productivity of Arkansas's national forests. I believe scaling up forest management activities is an important priority.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

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March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)

1. Last September a brand new Poultry Testing Laboratory opened in Willmar, Minnesota, to enhance the state's ability to more efficiently diagnose and respond to future poultry disease outbreaks. Upon opening, the lab was officially designated as part of the United States Department of Agriculture's National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). NAHLN ensures the public health and the health of our national livestock and dairy herds through animal surveillance which detects and assists in the coordinated elimination of emerging animal diseases. This network helps preserve the more than \$100 billion value of our animal agriculture sector. Can you work to commit to fully funding these labs in the United States Department of Agriculture's budget? If confirmed, I will work with USDA's agricultural stakeholders to advise the Administration about what is important and work to ensure agriculture's needs are a priority.

2. The Renewable Fuel Standard is an important homegrown economic generator and has been essential to driving investment in rural communities across Minnesota and the country. To continue these investments, policy certainty is critical. That's why I was alarmed when reports surfaced last month that the administration was considering issuing an Executive Order to shift compliance under the program from oil refiners to fuel blenders and retailers – or changing the "point of obligation." I recently led a letter with Senator Grassley urging the President to reject such changes because they are unwarranted, would undermine the intent of the program, and would result in a massive, costly, time-consuming shift in compliance. Will you work to uphold the current structure of the Renewable Fuel Standard and work with your colleagues in the Cabinet to ensure the program continues to be implemented as intended? The RFS is good for American farmers and I look forward to supporting the Administration on this matter.

3. As a member of the conference committee that crafted the final version of the 2014 Farm Bill, I worked to include important provisions to boost beginning farmer and rancher programs. The provisions help beginning farmers and ranchers access land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) by waiving the 25 percent rental rate reduction for grazing and reducing the cost of crop insurance by 10 percentage points. These provisions were a good start but more needs to be done to encourage and invest in beginning farmers and ranchers as the average age of farmers continues to creep upwards. Do you believe that access to land and capital for young and beginning farmers is a problem and, if so, how would you build on USDA's current programs to support young, beginning, and disadvantaged farmers, especially small and medium-sized farmers? Initiatives like your proposals in the 2014 Farm Bill have made access to land and capital easier for young, beginning, and disadvantaged farmers. If confirmed, I will examine ways to build on the current USDA programs and initiatives designed to provide these farmers with a lower bar to entrance into the industry or to expand their existing operations.

4. Given all the challenges our farmers face, the last thing they need is the burden of anticompetitive markets. As you know, there has been a wave of consolidation in the agricultural industry. Currently, both the Dow-DuPont merger and Bayer's acquisition of Monsanto are pending before the Department of Justice. I have heard concerns about the impact these mergers could have on the prices farmers pay for certain seeds and on innovation. Do you agree that competitive markets benefit farmers? What do you see as the Department's role in ensuring farmers have the benefit of competitive markets both when they are purchasers and sellers? I agree that competitive markets both upstream and downstream benefit farmers. USDA and other federal agencies have specific statutory responsibilities to make sure markets are operating fairly and efficiently. I will work to ensure that USDA plays an appropriate role in ensuring competitive markets.
5. Under Secretary Vilsack, the United States Department of Agriculture made efforts to provide tools and resources to producers about combating the effects of climate change on their operations. Through their "climate hubs", the agency created comprehensive regional vulnerability assessments and has collaborated with land grant universities like the University of Minnesota to coordinate research and extension activities to producers. Do you agree that the planet's changing climate poses a threat to the productivity and longevity of America's farms and what do you see as the role of USDA in helping to mitigate against the effects of extreme weather events like drought, hail, floods, and extreme temperatures? All decisions associated with agriculture and food production should be based on the best available science. If confirmed, I will continue USDA's commitment to ensuring that science and data are at the forefront of any decision or program under the purview of the department.
6. Through the conference committee process on the 2014 Farm Bill, I worked closely with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to fully fund the energy title to promote homegrown energy and energy efficiency technologies. Farm Bill energy programs like the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) have become an effective driver of economic development in rural America. In 2015, REAP applications in Minnesota outnumbered awarded grants 3 to 1. Will you commit to maintaining support for mandatory funding levels for these popular energy programs in the 2018 Farm Bill? If confirmed I look forward to carefully reviewing this program and working with you to identify priorities, such as these, for the 2018 Farm Bill.
7. As Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, you will be responsible for inspecting about 20 percent of our nation's food supply. There have been recent food recalls and high profile incidents of food contamination, including several that have claimed the lives of Minnesotans. That's why I pushed to pass the Food Safety Modernization Act in 2010. What would you do as Secretary to ensure that our food safety system is protecting consumers? As I mentioned in my testimony, I have four primary goals if confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture, including ensuring a safe and secure food supply for our consumers. I would work tirelessly to ensure that USDA will continue to serve in the critical role of ensuring the food we put on the table to feed our families meets the strict safety standards we've established.
8. From 2010 to 2015, there was a large increase in Minnesota of citizens accessing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The number of seniors accessing the

program has nearly doubled in that time. While we've seen program participation decrease with the improving economy, there are still many experiencing food insecurity in my state. As Secretary of Agriculture, will you commit to supporting SNAP and the alignment of nutrition education programs so that SNAP participants can make healthy choices on a limited budget? Yes.

9. The United States Department of Agriculture has an important role in supporting the creation and maintenance of rural housing. I have seen the impact of the shortage of affordable housing in rural Minnesota. In Thief River Falls, for example, I have visited with manufacturers like Digi-Key and Arctic Cat who have good jobs available and no one to fill them due to the lack of affordable rental housing in the area. Will you commit to ensuring housing programs like the Section 515 program continue to receive support and are fully funded in your budget proposal to the President? The economic vitality of small towns across America is crucial to the future of the agriculture economy. I had no input into the President's proposed budget, however, I do have experience in managing through reduced budgets and producing a balanced budget. It is my commitment to be an advocate for the needs of rural America. If confirmed, I will undertake a review of the Section 515 program for affordable rental housing, taking your concerns in mind.
10. One of the mission areas of the United States Department of Agriculture is to perform research, collaborate with research institutions, and provide competitive grants to land grant universities like the University of Minnesota. These investments are critical to increasing our food production to meet the world's growing population. What ideas do you have to ensure that American agriculture remains competitive through investments in research? If confirmed, I support continuing USDA's research programs and their capacity to provide the agriculture sector with innovative tools and information to support their productivity and profitability.
11. Investments through the Land and Water Conservation Fund have contributed nearly \$30 million for public land investments in the Chippewa and Superior National Forests. These dollars have provided access to hunting for sportsmen, protected national trails, and helped maintain Minnesota's \$11 billion outdoor recreation economy. Do you believe that the Land and Water Conservation Fund should be permanently reauthorized and provided dedicated funding in order to provide for hunting and fishing access, outdoor recreation, and forest conservation? If I am confirmed, I am committed to undertake a review of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, in particular its reauthorization. I believe it is critically important that we accomplish the forest conservation work necessary to ensure our national forests continue to contribute to the economy and provide access to outdoor recreation, hunting and fishing.
12. The McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program has been providing school meals in 40 of the most impoverished nations in the world. Through the program, more than 40 million children have received school meals. These meals serve as a reliable source of nutrition for children in countries where rates of undernutrition are high. This program was eliminated in the budget proposal released from the Administration for Fiscal Year 2018. Will you review the information about the effectiveness of this program and advocate changing course on the

proposed cuts? If confirmed, I intend to review USDA's food assistance programs and gain a full understanding of the spectrum of U.S. food assistance programs. I anticipate representing USDA in Administration discussions on the effective and efficient use of resources for U.S. food aid.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator John Thune (R-SD)

1. Governor Perdue, as you know the remainder of the current farm bill will cover nearly two crop years. For the first three years of this farm bill USDA has been faced with numerous challenges to several of its administrative policies and decisions as it implemented Commodity and Conservation Title programs. As a result of USDA's past inflexibility, I as well as several of my colleagues on this Committee will be writing the next farm bill making certain program administration areas such as: 1) data used to calculate ARC payments; 2) CRP vegetative cover management practices; and 3) equitable CRP acreage distribution much more prescriptive – just to ensure the intent of Congress is followed by USDA. Governor Perdue, with two years left of 2014 Farm Bill administration will you be willing to me and my staff on these issues to make improvements in program administration over the next two years? Yes.
2. Gov. Perdue I know you are aware of the recent tainted Brazilian meat scandal which resulted in a USDA press release yesterday announcing additional steps USDA is taking to ensure the U.S. food supply is kept safe. Although none of the facilities implicated in the Brazilian scandal have shipped meat to the United States, according to USDA, do you believe accelerated testing of all incoming shipments or raw meat from Brazil will provide adequate protection? What do think should trigger USDA to impose an outright shutdown on unsafe meat? I believe FSIS is doing a good job with 100% inspection of meat entering the U.S. from Brazil, but will review the issue immediately if confirmed.
3. Gov. Perdue, you know, we both come from tree growing states, but the trees in South Dakota grow a little slower than your pine trees do. And for the last half decade, we've seen a rapid increase in mortality (up 53 percent) and a decrease in growth (down 69 percent). Unfortunately, our situation isn't unique, with over 82 million acres of National Forests under stress from fires, insects, or both. Can I get your commitment that you will focus on turning around the National Forests and expanding the management we need to create jobs and healthy stands of timber? Yes. If I am confirmed, I am committed to ensuring the National Forest System is actively managed to create jobs and healthy forests.
4. Governor Purdue, not only will you be finishing out administration of the current farm bill, you will also be overseeing USDA's efforts in providing technical assistance and ideas for the next farm bill. You and I have discussed my Soil Health and Income Protection Program called SHIPP which is designed for farmers who want an option to cropping their poorer producing land during these economically challenging times. I have ideas for existing programs as well that make them more farmer-friendly and flexible, and that place more decision making back in the hands of the farmer. Do you agree we need to simplify these programs and remove restrictive regulatory barriers in order help keep these programs more attractive to farmers and more affordable for taxpayers? I appreciate your sharing with me your ideas for the next Farm

Bill. If confirmed, I will work with the Committee and others to continue our dialogue and explore ways that we can work together improve the farm safety net for our nation's farmers and ranchers.

5. "Gov. Perdue, sound science including the use of biotechnology is critical to the production of a safe, sustainable and affordable food supply. According to the most recent report by the National Academy of Sciences, the risks presented by biotechnology are no greater than, and are comparable to, the risks presented by conventional crop breeding. At the same time, the regulatory system for agricultural biotechnology products is very burdensome, costly, and has been responsible for the demise of smaller biotech companies seeking to bring innovative technologies to the marketplace. After decades of growing and consuming biotech crops by people all over the world, there has not been a single documented instance of harm to human health or the environment, and yet regulatory costs have continually risen so that today it costs millions of dollars to meet the regulatory requirements. If confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture, will you commit to reducing the regulatory burden associated with bringing new biotechnology products to market, consistent with the potential risk of the product to human health? Would that be a priority for you? Lastly, will you make every effort to coordinate with the other federal agencies, including EPA and FDA? If confirmed, it will be my priority to reduce the regulatory burden for all producers. It is my goal to establish ongoing communications with each agency to give both producers and consumers a voice on the implementation of new regulations and avoid any unintended consequences associated with undermining our science-based approval process.
6. Agriculture helps build a strong U.S. economy—especially in our rural communities. The RFS has been an essential driver of growth in rural areas of our country and the certainty of the policy has created jobs and spurred added research and investment. Can you commit to ensuring a strong RFS to provide economic security for these rural communities? Yes.
7. Since the EPA proposed its flawed RVO with the distribution waiver in 2013, there have been zero commercial scale cellulosic projects announced in the United States, while projects are proceeding overseas in places like China. The 2017 RVO which fixed the problem is a chance to turn this around, as long as EPA stays the course with the 2018 RVO. Is bringing direct foreign investment to the United States a priority for the Trump Administration, and if so, how do you see the RFS playing a role? Yes, increasing foreign direct investment (FDI) is an important priority for the Administration. If confirmed, I will do all I can to see that FDI is directed to agriculture with an eye on supporting the RFS through that investment in the necessary infrastructure.
8. To help pass the last Farm Bill in 2014, a broad coalition of commodity, crop insurance and conservation leaders came together to support and defend crop insurance and relink conservation compliance to crop insurance. As Secretary, will you support these efforts to provide a strong safety net for our nation's producers, soil and wetland resources? Yes.
9. Most of your timber in Georgia is private, and you must count your blessings that timber creates jobs in logging and sawmills, rather than in bureaucracies and court rooms. How can we bring some of that entrepreneurial spirit to the management of our National Forests? These

are the only timberlands that the Federal government is solely responsible for managing, and it frequently shows. We need to remove the obstacles that have created an untenable situation for our Forest Service employees. Do you agree? Yes, I agree. If confirmed, I look forward to working toward removing the obstacles to active forest management. In doing this I will certainly bring a more entrepreneurial spirit to managing our national forests.

10. One of the problems with efficient government is getting different agencies to work together. USDA is like other federal departments that have multiple agencies. The FSA actually administers the Conservation Reserve Program and has been reluctant to allow installation of important conservation practices on land enrolled in CRP – structures such as Bio Reactors, Water Control Structures to manage tile drainage, and Saturated Buffers can all significantly improve water quality while protecting farm production and economic viability. But the FSA has been reluctant to allow these practices to be installed on existing CRP contract lands. It seems to me that we want to get the most we can out of conservation and conservation lands. Where we see an opportunity to “intensify conservation lands” it seems like we should be doing that. Can you help us get differing agencies to pull in the same direction to deliver more for conservation, the American Farmer and taxpayers on issues like this? I come from the part of the world that views our farmers as good stewards of the land. From a conservation perspective, we have given farmers many of the right tools to continue to do this. We have made progress in this area over the last several years. If confirmed, I will instruct USDA to look at ways to expand effective conservation practices within existing statute.
11. Last week several of my colleagues on this committee participated in a Finance Committee hearing for USTR nominee, Robert Lighthizer. We all very strongly urged him that in light of the loss of TPP and this administration’s concerns with NAFTA, if bilateral trade agreements are the goal – then these must be negotiated with utmost urgency and focus on protecting U.S. agricultural exports. Will you commit to working with the USTR and others in this administration to ensure agricultural trade is not sacrificed, but instead enhanced, in the path forward on negotiating or renegotiating trade agreements? Yes, I can reaffirm the commitments I made at my nomination hearing. The relationship between the USDA and USTR, as well as Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross will be vital. I plan to be on site as USDA’s chief salesman around the world for U.S. agricultural products, to negotiate deals side by side with USTR, side by side with Secretary Ross, and with our whole team.
12. Gov. Perdue, I look forward to working with you on a number of issues should you hopefully be confirmed as our next Secretary of Agriculture. A fast-growing segment of South Dakota agriculture is dairy, and last year was a difficult year for our producers. The challenges in the dairy economy helped to shine a light on the need to reform the Margin Protection Program, and we look forward to that undertaking here in this committee as part of the next Farm Bill. Like others here, I would look forward to working with you, whenever you have the ability, to make sure programs and policies give our dairy farmers maximum flexibility when it comes to managing risk. Can you commit to working closely with us on this committee on dairy policy? Yes.

13. If confirmed, will you work with your colleagues on the Cabinet to ensure that President Trump's support for the RFS is realized in the Administration's policy and regulatory decisions? Yes.
14. Will you oppose legislative changes to the RFS and support its implementation according to the law as Secretary of Agriculture? Yes. I will support its implementation according to the law and diligently review any proposed legislative changes to conclude if it strengthens or weakens the program.
15. Since the EPA proposed its flawed RVO with the distribution waiver in 2013, there have been zero commercial scale cellulosic projects announced in the United States, while projects are proceeding overseas in places like China. The 2017 RVO which fixed the problem is a chance to turn this around, as long as EPA stays the course with the 2018 RVO. Is bringing direct foreign investment to the United States a priority for the Trump Administration, and if so, how do you see the RFS playing a role? Yes. increasing FDI is an important priority for the administration. Investment in all programs, especially those that benefit agriculture should be encouraged. If confirmed, I will do all I can to see that FDI is directed to agriculture with an eye on supporting the RFS through that investment in the necessary infrastructure.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA)

1. SNAP: Many of the programs the federal government offers today to support folks living in poverty have a sharp decrease in benefits when beneficiaries reach a certain wage threshold, which are known as cliff effects. The result is that, when offered additional work or raises, folks must examine their budget see if the increased wage would help or hurt their ability to make ends meet.

Will you work with Congress and state and local officials to identify areas in programs administered by USDA to remove barriers to opportunity for hardworking folks? Yes.

2. Rural Development: A core component of the USDA's mission is to promote opportunity in rural America by supporting the needs of local communities.

Will you work to address programmatic duplication between federal, state, local, and non-government spending to ensure taxpayer dollars are not being wasted? Developing relationships with agencies is key to ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in our commitment to integrity regarding tax payer dollars.

3. Biotech Approvals: As you know, China has at times drug its feet in approving our ag biotech traits. Will you commit to working with Congress, future Ambassador Branstad (if confirmed), your partners in the administration, and other ag stakeholders to address this issue? This is a critical issue for U.S. agriculture and I share your concern. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress, our future Ambassador to China and others to address China's slow and unpredictable biotech approval process to protect the integrity of science and fair market access.

4. 100% Pure Breed Labeling: The USDA is currently enforcing two separate and conflicting 100% pure breed animal breed claims; one jointly through the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and a separate one through Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS).

In an effort to eliminate waste and avoid consumer confusion, will you commit to finding a single 100% pure breed standard across USDA? If confirmed, I commit to conduct the people's business efficiently, effectively, and with the utmost integrity with USDA. The American taxpayers are our customers and I will work every day to prioritize customer service.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator John Hoeven (R-ND)

1. Through USDA child nutrition programs like the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, the federal government is an important partner in ensuring that students are able to receive a nutritious meal during school hours. While we all share the goal of ensuring that students are able to access healthy school meals, I have heard concerns from schools and school nutrition professionals in North Dakota that certain federal regulations have presented significant challenges. Particularly, federal mandates pertaining to whole grains and impending changes to sodium content have caused concern from schools that have had difficulty procuring items that both fit these federal requirements and are appealing to students. Will you commit to working with school districts to ensure that they have the necessary flexibility to both meet their budgets and serve nutritious meals that students will choose to eat? Can you pledge that under your leadership, USDA will work closely with school districts and school nutrition professionals so that they are aware of their federal requirements as well as any options that may be available to them, such as waivers, that would provide them with additional flexibility in administering their nutrition programs? Yes, I believe it is important for school system to have the flexibility to serve nutritious meals to their students as well as meet their budgets. School systems need both flexibility in serving their children and predictability in understanding how to properly prepare for the upcoming school year. I look forward to providing leadership at USDA and working with Congress to help them meet these needs.
2. Each day, more than 30 million students are served through the National School Lunch Program. In North Dakota, 75 percent of students participated in the National School Lunch Program in 2015 and nearly 35 percent of the school lunches served that year were free or reduced price. Can you commit that as Secretary, you will continue to ensure that the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs remain priority programs within USDA and that students will continue to be adequately served under the programs? As Secretary, will you pledge to work with schools, districts, and school nutrition professionals to provide them with the flexibility necessary to allow them to meet the needs of their students? Yes and yes.
3. In order to effectively implement and administer certain federal laws, USDA must often work with other agencies and departments such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Food and Drug Administration. As Secretary, will you make interagency coordination a priority? Will you pledge to work closely with your counterparts like Secretary Price in order to effectively and efficiently provide the guidance and rules necessary to implement food labeling laws such as the National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Act of 2016, as well as updates to the nutrition facts label? Can you also commit to work with stakeholder groups to take into account their comments throughout the rulemaking process? A priority of the Administration is to take down barriers between agencies so that those departments and

agencies with common interests should seek common solutions that serve the American people. If confirmed, I will support the Administration in this effort. As for rulemaking, all stakeholders should be heard in the rule making process.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

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March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator Steve Daines (R-MT)

1. Undersecretary for Trade: As you know, the 2014 Farm Bill established an undersecretary for trade. This position can play an integral role in ensuring that USDA has a coherent, coordinated, and consistent voice in trade policy in this administration and can help streamline efforts to address any issues or barriers to trade that arise. Unfortunately, the previous administration failed to fill this office. Will you commit to filling this office as quickly as possible? Yes. If confirmed, I will ask that a plan of implementation be developed and I will report that plan to Congress.
2. Trade Agreements: Previous trade agreements or proposals have oftentimes expanded access to foreign markets and have been broadly supported by farmers, ranchers, and ag groups. With that in mind, will you commit to fighting to ensure that any trade agreement pursued by this administration will place ag in a better, or at least no worse off, position than in existing agreements or prior proposals? Yes.
3. Brazilian Beef: Recent developments in Brazil have resulted in several meatpacking companies being investigated for corruption and fraudulent inspections of meat intended for foreign markets. Do you agree that maintaining a safe and secure food supply is essential to the mission of the USDA and that it is imperative that all appropriate and legal means necessary are utilized to ensure that U.S. consumers are not at risk to any tainted imported meat from Brazil or other countries? Yes.
4. Sound Science: As the only chemical engineer by training in Congress, I understand the importance of utilizing sound science in our decision-making processes. And as you well know, there was an extended and vigorous debate surrounding the mandatory labeling of biotechnology last year and we were thankfully able to prevent a discriminatory and harmful law from being implemented nationwide. As Secretary, will you commit to ensuring that USDA's 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? If confirmed, I assure you, the rest of Congress and the American people that the best available science and data will inform all decisions made at USDA.
5. U.S. Sheep Experiment Station: In the FY 2016 President Budget Request, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) proposed to close the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station (USSES) in Dubois, ID, and combine its functions with other facilities, which was an alarming action. The USSES is a 100 year old research station that has demonstrated a tremendous impact to all of agriculture, especially the nation's sheep industry. Its 48,000 acres of land provides a unique location and is exclusively positioned for

collaborative large-scale integrated livestock, wildlife, and rangeland research. The station also has provided irreplaceable Sage Grouse rangeland data through almost 50 years of population and habitat research.

Can I count on your continued support of the USSES and the important research that it provides the nation's sheep industry? Yes.

6. Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee: In previous years, there was an extensive collaborative effort, known as the Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee, that brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, USDA, and Interior. This working group improved communication and furthered efforts to provide sound science surrounding wildlife and disease management throughout the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA).

Unfortunately, this effort lapsed in 2006 and no similar working group has filled that void. I have heard concerns from farmers, ranchers, and other stakeholders that the result has been a deterioration in communication between the various agencies and jurisdictions, both federal and state that have authority over bison and disease management in the GYA.

Would you be supportive of re-establishing the Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee, or something substantially similar? Yes.

7. Select Agent and Toxin List: As USDA and HHS periodically conduct reviews of the Select Agents and Toxins list, I write in support of providing an exemption for the brucella abortus bacteria from the select agent list for research related to agriculture. This classification has unduly hindered critical research into brucellosis, which endangers cattle herds of farmers and ranchers in Southwest Montana and elsewhere in the West.

I recognize the importance of protecting humans, animals, and our national security by restricting access to certain bacteria, infections, or other diseases due to transmissible characteristics. The regulations surrounding such agents, however, should provide sufficient flexibility to allow for legitimate research into diseases that impact the ability of Montana's farmers and ranchers to ensure their herds, and our nation's food supply, remain healthy and disease-free. I am concerned that the classification of brucella abortus as a select agent significantly burdens research into possible vaccines or remedies to mitigate the impact of brucellosis.

Would you be willing to work with me to consider ways to allow legitimate research on Brucella abortus, particularly surrounding agriculture, with an appropriate exemption? Yes.

8. Bighorn Sheep Allotments: About half of all domestic sheep spend time grazing on federal lands, specifically rangelands managed by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Can we count on the USFS to work with sheep ranchers, state departments of agriculture, and other Federal, State, local and private stakeholders before making decisions based on the goal of protecting the health of bighorn sheep populations? Yes.

Will you work with me and the committee to consider ensuring that alternative sheep grazing allotments are made available prior to the dislocation of a sheep rancher and his or her family? Yes.

Can you commit that the USFS will use the principle of multiple-use in its land management decision-making process? Yes.

9. Industrial Hemp: As you may know, pilot programs related to industrial hemp and its production were authorized in the 2014 Farm Bill.

As Secretary, would you support continuing these pilot programs and looking at ways to encourage industrial hemp production in the U.S.? Yes.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator Luther Strange (R-AL)

1. Over 800,000 people in my home state of Alabama participate in SNAP. Of these folks, around 40,000 are able-bodied adults without dependents, or ABAWDS. We ended our state-wide ABAWD work requirement waiver at the beginning of last year. Since then, we have seen SNAP participation decrease by over 6 percent. I am eager to help SNAP participants get back to work and off of federal assistance. Will you work with me as we take a look at how best to do that in the context of the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization? Yes.
2. The long leaf pine initiative is an important program designed to help producers in several southeast states, including Alabama, rebuild the population of this species. Indeed, Alabama had the largest number of contracts in 2015. Will you assure the committee today you will continue to support this program with adequate funding and technical assistance? Yes.
3. Wild hogs are affecting producers across the southeast and especially in southern Alabama. One study estimated that wild hogs cause more than a billion dollars annually damage in the agriculture sector. Alabama has enjoyed a cooperative relationship with USDA in fighting this problem. Will you continue to support these efforts to address this issue? Yes.
4. There have been multiple recent cases of low pathogenic avian flu discovered on farms in Tennessee and Alabama. Based on your conversation with folks USDA, how do you think the department is better prepared to respond this issue and assist producers in those states compared to the outbreak in 2015? Based upon my observations and the reporting about these incidents, it appears USDA has been swift in supporting state and local governments and private producers in controlling and eliminating these outbreaks.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS)

1. Governor Perdue, I appreciate your knowledge of the agricultural and economic issues of importance to Mississippi and rural America. The forestry and forest products industry in Mississippi represents a significant agricultural sector in my state. Healthy forestlands contribute to the overall quality of life in rural America and landowners depend on strong markets for their trees. Across the Southeast, wood pellet manufacturing has emerged as a vital source of demand for landowners' low-grade wood, as Europe and other international markets import U.S.-produced wood pellets to generate reliable, renewable electricity on an industrial scale. The U.S. Forest Service and the Foreign Agricultural Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture have been very helpful in quantifying the impacts on forests and the benefits to landowners, loggers, truckers and local economies. These agencies also work actively to ensure strong export market access for domestic wood pellet manufacturers. As Secretary, what commitments can you make to assure my constituents and others throughout rural America, who are already creating domestic jobs by exporting these forest products overseas that you will actively support expanded markets for wood pellets? If confirmed, I will direct a complete review of our forest management plans and will do all I can, through our new Under Secretary for Trade, to gain access markets around the world.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator Robert P. Casey (D-PA)

1. According to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, in FY 2015, 1.9 million people or 919,000 households in Pennsylvania received some level of SNAP assistance. This includes Americans with disabilities, families with children and the elderly.
 - a. Do you see supporting nutrition assistance programs like SNAP as a priority issue? Will you support maintaining funding for SNAP? Yes and if confirmed, I will order a review of SNAP administration and will recommend to the President and Congress what the department thinks is the best approach to ensuring the program remains robust and accessible to all who need it.
 - b. If so, will you publically oppose any efforts, including from the House of Representative, the Senate or the Administration, to undermine the SNAP program or reduce funding? I will order a review of SNAP administration and will recommend to the President and Congress what the department thinks is the best approach to ensuring the program remains robust and accessible to all who need it.
 - c. How do you intend to work with the House and Senate to provide a robust nutrition title in the Farm Bill? If confirmed, I will support the administration's commitment to keeping food and farm policy together in the Farm Bill. Food security is important to all Americans and USDA will support those efforts under my leadership.
2. According to a recent report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, SNAP has been proven to respond to changes in the economy as the program was designed. During times of economic recession, we have seen SNAP participation and spending grow to respond to the increased need, and have seen those participation numbers fall as the economy has improved. Any attempt to block grant SNAP will take away the ability of the program to respond appropriately to increased need as the program was intended.
 - a. What is your stance on efforts to block grant SNAP? If confirmed, I will order a review of SNAP administration and will recommend to the President and Congress what the department thinks is the best approach to ensuring the program remains robust and accessible to all who need it.
 - b. Do you agree that the SNAP program is working as intended and should be maintained in order to continue to serve its intended function of providing hungry people with food? After review of SNAP administration, I will recommend to the President and Congress what the department thinks is the best approach to ensuring the program remains robust and accessible to all who need it.
3. Our nation's foodbanks, food pantries and soup kitchens play a critical role in responding to the immediate need for nutrition assistance in their communities. However, if SNAP funding is cut, our food banks alone will not be able respond to the increased need for nutrition assistance. The Emergency Food Assistance Program, or TEFAP, supplies nutritious food

purchased by USDA to food banks, purchases bonus commodities which stabilizes markets, and provides funding to defray storage and distribution costs.

- a. As Secretary, how will you use your authority to ensure that USDA is using all possible resources to ensure a reliable stream of TEFAP commodities to our nation's food banks? I support our critical food bank partners on the front lines fighting hunger and will commit the Department to taking all necessary measures available to be the best partner we can be.
4. Child nutrition programs are critically important for children's health. For many children, the school breakfast, school lunch and snacks they receive during after school programs are the only meals they might access.
 - a. Will you commit to implementing child nutrition programs as directed by Congress? If confirmed, I will follow and support the law.
5. There is a lot of evidence that school breakfast programs not only feed hungry children but boost test scores and school achievement, help with concentration, reduce nurse visits and discipline problems, and can reduce obesity. But a February 2017 report from the Food Research and Action Center notes that while participation in the School Breakfast Program has grown over the past few years, only 56 low-income children get school breakfast for every 100 who get school lunch.
 - a. Would raising that number be a priority, and how can we increase that participation number so more children can get the day off to a good start? The Department should explore options so that guardians of eligible children have information and assistance available to elect to participate in this important program.
6. According to the USDA 2012 Census of Agriculture, the average age of farmers in Pennsylvania is about 56 years old. It is critical that we support the next generation of farmers as this generation nears retirement age. I have heard from numerous new and aspiring farmers about the challenges they face when trying to get started in agriculture.
 - a. How do you intend to support new and beginning farmers, who often face barriers to entry such as a lack of access to affordable farmland, capital or markets? If confirmed, I will ask the department to develop a comprehensive plan for beginning farmers. We will gain coordination across the federal government for this program and report to Congress on how best to meet this need.
7. Only a small percentage of principle operators of farms are women or people of color. How will you support opportunities for diversity in the agriculture industry and rural America? Gaining entry into farming should be available to everyone. I am committed to seeing that every person who wants to farm has the opportunity to do so.
8. Many of our nation's rural areas are losing populations as residents move to cities and suburbs. Many of these rural areas lack the infrastructure and jobs to attract new inhabitants. How do you intend to invest in our rural communities and reverse this trend? If confirmed, I will work with governors and state legislatures to support their development efforts. USDA's Rural Development leadership and staff will be willing and aggressive partners in this endeavor.

9. Pennsylvania ranks fourth in the nation for egg-laying hens and Lancaster County, Pennsylvania is home to more laying hens than any other county in the Nation. Fortunately, and unfortunately, Pennsylvania has experience in dealing with highly pathogenic avian influenza due to the avian flu outbreak in the Mid Atlantic in 1983-1984. Therefore, Pennsylvania has learned from that experience.
 - a. Will you commit to closely coordinating with states and industry to prepare and respond to any future outbreak of high path avian influenza? Yes.
10. Cooperative Extension has the vital role of helping translate knowledge gained and discoveries made through scientific research into practical applications for not only farmers and ranchers, but small business owners, consumers, and families in both rural and urban areas. A recent Penn State University study found that Cooperative Extension has been critically important in stemming the ongoing decline in the total number of farmers. Specifically, between 1984 and 2010, more than 137,000 farmers stayed in farming as a result of Cooperative Extension and associated research programs.
 - a. Please share your views about Cooperative Extension and whether we can expect continued support for Extension if you're confirmed. As a Georgia farmer, I understand the value of the Cooperative Extension. If confirmed, I will continue my personal commitment to ensuring the program remains robust and engaged.
11. Our agricultural system has benefited greatly from the results of agricultural research, especially research done at land-grant universities. Studies have shown that every dollar invested in agricultural research returns over \$20 to the economy. Unfortunately, the Administration's FY18 budget blueprint merely proposes to "continue to support farmer-focused research and extension partnerships."
 - a. I would like to hear your views on agricultural research and whether you intend to continue the historically strong support for these programs if confirmed. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that the best available science and data are supported and at the forefront of all efforts in USDA. We cannot make informed decisions about the future of feeding the world without the best science available.
12. Today there are fewer than 50,000 dairy farms in the U.S., compared to over 600,000 in the 1970s.
 - a. What are your views on a dairy pricing formula that accounts for dairy farmers' cost of production and that includes a supply management program? As you are aware, there are currently multiple "milk marketing orders" that have brought stability to milk pricing for producers and first buyers. Such efforts have been supported by USDA, and, in fact, are often initiated through the department. If confirmed, I will commit to ensuring that the best possible market conditions exist for our milk producers.
13. The recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans encourages consumption of more low-fat and fat-free milk. A few years ago, USDA established new requirements that go beyond the Dietary Guidelines and say that if schools offer flavored milk it must be fat-free, it cannot be low-fat. This requirement goes beyond the Dietary Guidelines. Again, there is nothing in the Dietary Guidelines that says flavored milk has to be fat-free.

- a. Will you agree to take a new look at this policy, especially since we continue to hear reports that milk consumption in schools has fallen? Yes.
 - b. Do you agree that increasing school milk consumption would be beneficial for nutrition and public health? Yes.
- 14. I routinely meet with producers who are proud of what they do, but say that they are discouraging their children from farming because it has become too difficult to make a living.
 - a. What can be done to strengthen the viability of the type of small and mid-size operations that are common in Pennsylvania? Viability in commodity market circumstances are best enhanced through increased demand for those commodities. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly to ensure that domestic and foreign markets are open and fair for our producers.
 - b. What role do you see for local foods in keeping small farms in business? Local food operations are vital to completing the agricultural continuum in supplying food to a hungry world.
- 15. Pennsylvania is the Chesapeake Bay watershed state with the most significant and demonstrated need for federal assistance with pollution reduction from agriculture. Pennsylvania makes up over one-third of the entire Chesapeake Bay Basin, more than any other state. About half of Pennsylvania (52 percent) lies within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The state contributes an estimated 36 percent of the nitrogen and 25 percent of the phosphorus entering the Bay.
 - a. Pennsylvania can only meet these commitments with a sustained commitment from USDA, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service in particular.
 - b. Do you support increasing or at least maintaining funding for Farm Bill Conservation programs? This includes programs such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and others. Yes, in general. The relative component levels of funding I believe should be informed based on cost and benefit data we learn over time.
 - c. The 2014 Farm Bill eliminated a number of region-specific conservation programs and established a new, national program: the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. This program has not worked as well for the Bay as many had hoped. Will you ensure that USDA is engaged with stakeholders on the ground so that Pennsylvania can submit strong applications for RCPP funding in the future? Will USDA provide feedback to stakeholders if a grant is not accepted? Yes and yes.
- 16. APHIS published the final rule on December 20, 2016, following an extensive, decade-long process of analyzing Argentina's pest control and phytosanitary practices. USDA's review also included site visits in 2007, 2015 and 2016, for the purpose of observing firsthand the production and packing practices of Argentina's lemon producers, as well as Argentina's traceability system. Implementation of this rule has now been delayed twice.
 - a. As APHIS' decision to permit imports of lemons from Argentina was based on sound science, and was made only after thorough review by technical experts, will you commit to moving forward with implementation? I look forward to reviewing this matter should I be confirmed.

17. Pennsylvania's agricultural economy is a diverse one, and the state is home to many specialty crop producers. Pennsylvania is a leader in farm to consumer sales. In 2002 there were 63 wineries doing farm to consumer sales in Pennsylvania, today that number is close to 200. That increase is in many ways thanks to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.
 - a. Can I count on your support for programs that are vital to health of specialty crop producers and rural economies in my state, specifically Specialty Crop Block Grants, Value Added Producer Grants and the Farmers Market Promotion Program? I look forward to reviewing these programs should I be confirmed.
18. As I am sure you are aware, pollinators are tremendously important to our food supply. Studies have shown that 75% of all crops used for human food worldwide depend on pollination, primarily from honeybees, and USDA has estimated that one in every three bites of food we eat are thanks to pollinators. Unfortunately, on average, 30% of U.S. honeybee colonies have died each winter over the last 8 years, which is an increase of about 50% in lost colonies vs. the prior 8 years.
 - a. Please share your views about the rapidly declining health of pollinators, specifically about what role you think the federal government should play in addressing this issue. If confirmed, I will ask the department to study and working together with EPA, provide options for addressing this challenge.
19. I was disappointed to see the proposed drastic cuts to U.S. international food assistance programs in the President's budget. These programs provide invaluable assistance to millions of children around the globe.
 - a. If confirmed, will you commit to advocating for robust funding of international food assistance programs? I believe that food aid can be an important instrument of peace. If confirmed, I look forward to representing USDA in Administration discussions on how best to effectively and efficiently deliver U.S. food aid.
20. Last year, USDA's Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA) finalized rules aimed at leveling the playing field for pork and poultry producers. These rules make it easier for producers to show they have been unfairly treated and to seek legal remedies.
 - a. If confirmed, will you implement and enforce these rules? This is a complex issue with many stakeholders holding strong opinions. Before final implementation, I will ask the department to provide me the best available information and our decision will be based on the best available science and data and what is best for the American people.
21. Climate change leads to unpredictable weather patterns, increased drought, flooding and storm events. All of which affect our farmers ability to plan, grow and harvest their crops.

How do you intend to work with the Administration to address the issue of climate change so that our farmers can continue to grow the food, feed, fiber and fuel on which our nation and world depend? I believe we have to take a consistent, common sense approach to adapting to a changing climate and focus on strategies that make financial and environmental sense such as conserving water, protecting sensitive public lands and identifying future energy sources. As the Secretary of Agriculture, I would be committed to helping farmers, landowners and

foresters adapt to what the data is showing us about changes to weather patterns and temperature across the country.

22. Organic agriculture is a significant industry in my state and throughout the country.
 - a. If confirmed, how will USDA, under your leadership, support continued growth in the organic industry? Organic food production is a growing, exciting addition to the agricultural continuum. USDA should do all it can to support market access for organic producers.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA)

1. The agriculture industry is highly concentrated. This is especially true in the meat industry. And pending mergers and acquisitions in the seed and chemical industry could increase the concentration of input suppliers for grain farmers as well.

To address injustices in the meat industry, the Department of Agriculture proposed the Farmer Fair Practices rules to clarify certain powers under the Packers and Stockyards Act. These rules aim to create a more level playing field for farmers who must deal with the outsized influence of packers.

What do you feel the role of the Department of Agriculture, also known as the People's Department, should be in maintaining a fair and level playing field for producers under the Packers and Stockyards Act? If confirmed, and as a Georgia farmer, I will ensure the department does all it can to work with the rest of federal government and producers to ensure that access to all markets are available. Fair and free markets are a cornerstone of this administration's commitment to the American people and I support that agenda wholeheartedly.

2. Over the last several years, an increasing number of trade problems have developed because other countries have delayed approvals of new biotech traits for grain crops. These problems have resulted in bureaucrats from other countries controlling what farmers in the U.S. are allowed to plant in their fields.

What can the United States do to better coordinate approvals of biotech products around the world so our producers can use the best available technology in their fields? If confirmed, I will insist that USDA be more aggressive in supporting advancements in biotech that help Americans produce more and better food. We must work with other departments in the federal government to ensure that agriculture interests are at the forefront in any discussions or negotiations. We cannot feed the world if we do not have access to the best markets and technology available.

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Questions for the Record

Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH)

1. In 2014, we had a devastating harmful algal bloom in the Western Lake Erie Basin that shut down the City of Toledo's water supply for over 48 hours—which resulted in 500,000 people being without drinking water for more than two days. This is unacceptable and we must do everything in our power to ensure that this doesn't happen again – whether to Toledo or to any other American city. We know both that excessive phosphorus contributed to the bloom and that the agriculture community must play a critical role in addressing this problem. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has played a key role in helping protect and restore the watershed. Under your predecessor, Secretary Vilsack, funding and technical assistance in the watershed was increased—and I believe that this will pay dividends for us in the future. And yet we see in the President's proposed budget that the funding for USDA field offices is to be cut. And targeted funding to help Lake Erie is eliminated in the Trump budget proposal. So, I would like to know if you support on-farm conservation that results in clean water and a quality environment and what you will do to make sure we continue to provide our agricultural producers with the financial and technical assistance they need? I do support on farm conservation programs, because our first priority is to protect our resources—water, land and air—so that sustainable agriculture will be able to feed a hungry world. If confirmed, I will work to maximize the efforts of USDA to continue to support wise conservation programs within the constraints that exist.
2. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) plays a crucial role in ensuring that school-age children do not go hungry when school is out of session. It can be harder to reach children in rural areas, a gap I have worked on with members of this committee to close. Will you commit to working with me to expand the reach and accessibility of the Summer Food Service Program? Yes.
3. USDA is a vital resource for rural communities building and maintaining their water infrastructure. The Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program benefitted more than 1.4 million rural Ohioans between 2009 and now, supporting almost one hundred water infrastructure projects. Yet the Administration's proposed budget would eliminate these programs, which have a small impact on the Federal budget but a large impact on rural areas. Ohio has a \$235 million backlog of Rural Utilities Support-qualified projects that need federal support. Will you fully support USDA programs that help fund rural water infrastructure projects? I believe that USDA and the Secretary of Agriculture should play a significant role in the development and implementation of an infrastructure package and that investments in broadband, water and wastewater systems should be included in such a package. If I am confirmed, I will work with the President and the Administration to push for these priorities.

4. In order to better understand the diversity of Ohio's agriculture, I would like to welcome and host you in Ohio so you can see the dynamism of our state in person. Will you commit to visiting the state in the next year? If confirmed, I would welcome a visit to Ohio!
5. This Administration has proposed making significant cuts to Rural Development programs in its FY18 budget proposal. These programs provide critical funding for community resources, like the Avita Health System medical facility in Ontario, Ohio. Through a Community Facilities grant with USDA, Avita was able to repurpose a shopping mall into a hospital that created more than 350 jobs and brought improved healthcare access to the region. Rural Development funding ensures that rural areas have the necessary facilities and public services to support local communities, while also spurring economic development. Can you assure me that as Secretary you will make rural economic development a priority? Yes. As Governor I was committed to rural development and will continue that effort, if confirmed, as Secretary of Agriculture.
6. Rural counties account for 85% of our country's persistent poverty. Smaller tax basins and stretched resources, not to mention larger areas, makes addressing rural poverty especially difficult. In 2010, Secretary Vilsack created the Strikeforce initiative to combat rural poverty by combining USDA resources and targeting counties with endemic poverty. Ohio was added as a Strikeforce state in 2016. This is an important anti-poverty resource focused on 11 rural counties in Ohio that need our help, and has invested \$23.5 billion to support high-poverty rural counties around the country since the program's inception. This program, while new, has been a success in rural Ohio. Will you commit to continuing the Strikeforce initiative begun under Sec. Vilsack? I have not been fully briefed on the Strikeforce initiative but look forward to reviewing the program and its results. I am committed to promoting economic development opportunities across rural America and helping to end poverty.
7. A declining number of families rely on farm income as their primary source of income, and the average age of farmers in the U.S. is unsustainably high. What do you plan to do as Secretary to assist new and beginning farmers? What current USDA programs do you believe work well to support these farmers? If confirmed, I will ask the department to review and revitalize all programs that lower barriers to entry for those who wish to be involved in farming. As I gain more familiarity with department programs, I can then assess where we get the most return on investment and then reinforce those efforts. Farming should be accessible to all, and I am committed to seeing that happen.
8. Will you ensure that President Trump's nominations to USDA represent the diversity of American agriculture? Yes. Fortunately, the agriculture bench is deep so finding a diverse subcabinet is my goal and should be easy to accomplish.
9. Will you work with me to strengthen Ohio's agricultural exports? How can USDA better support American agriculture exports? Yes. Only by opening more markets to more commodities will we be able to ensure strong, secure markets with operational and financial security for our producers. The Farm Bill calls for the creation of a new Under Secretary for

Trade at USDA that will ensure we have a seat at the table when trade negotiations are involved.

10. Demand for organic food is up: a recent report by the Nielsen Homescan Panel shows that 82% of households have purchased organic products. What role do you believe USDA should play in helping farmers transition from conventional agriculture to achieve the organic standard? How do you propose helping the growing organic market more generally? There are already mechanisms available to help certify conventional farming operations transform to organic production. Also, many organic operations also are involved in conventional farming. Organic operations provide commodities to consumers who demand them and working to provide markets for these producers should be a priority for USDA. If confirmed, I will support these endeavors.
11. The Value-added Producer Grant Program (VAPG) has been an important resource for Ohio farmers, and has provided more than \$1.3 million in funding for Ohio since 2009. USDA is supposed to publish the VAPG Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) each December, but has not yet done so for FY17. Will you commit to ensuring that the FY17 NOSA will be published in the Federal Register within a month of your confirmation? Will you commit to publishing the VAPG NOSA each December so that Ohio farmers will have sufficient time to submit applications before the growing season begins? If confirmed, I will make sure that necessary rules and notices are published in a timely manner. Within budgetary constraints, I will commit to ensuring this program remains vital and that solicitations are published each December.
12. In light of recently announced agribusiness mergers, what will you do as Secretary to ensure competition and fairness in the marketplace for farmers? I have heard from farmers that are increasingly concerned about what the lack of competition in the marketplace could mean for the price of inputs. Do you believe that increased consolidation – like the proposed merger between Monsanto and Bayer – benefit farmers' bottom line? I believe that we need to carefully review these mergers and consider their impact on the producers and the consumers. I look forward to study each case as it comes up and providing my best advice and counsel to the President on the matter.
13. How will you balance the demands of an increasingly consolidated agribusiness industry with the needs of small-scale farmers? I will work to keep markets open, fair and free. If confirmed I will work to the best of my ability to ensure that barriers to entry are lowered, not raised.
14. The Community Eligibility Program (CEP) helps reduce paperwork for struggling families, and lessen the administrative burden for schools in impoverished areas. It also benefits hundreds of thousands of kids in poor Ohio neighborhoods. Will you commit to working with me to keep CEP as a part of the National School Lunch Program? If I am confirmed, I will work with Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate funding for the health and nutrition programs administered by USDA.
15. Schools across the country have made great progress on making school meals healthy and nutritious. What can USDA do to encourage school districts to better use local sourcing for its

food? I believe the Farm to School Grant Program has been successful in Georgia and in other states in promoting locally sourced food and we look forward to exploring this and other ideas to help our children enjoy the local harvest and receive nutritious meals.

16. What do you believe states can do to encourage more widespread attendance for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)? How can local communities broaden access to SFSP in rural areas? I understand the Ag Committee has ideas to share on this topic and I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that during the summer months children have access to nutritious meals.
17. What can USDA do to better support local and regional food banks? USDA can provide expertise and tools that make acquisition and distribution of food easier so as to reach a broader, deserving clientele.
18. What role should USDA have in reducing the inappropriate use of antibiotics in livestock? USDA should use the best science and data to inform decisions and work with FDA, Veterinarians and the states to monitor and enforce compliance.
19. What are your thoughts on the implementation of the *Global Food Security Act*? What role do you believe USDA should play in our international food aid? What role do you view international food aid plays not only in alleviating humanitarian needs around the world, but in U.S. national security policy? As I mentioned during my confirmation hearing, I agree that international food aid is a critical tool in the United States' foreign policy and I look forward to working with the Administration on this matter should I be confirmed.
20. The FY 2018 budget proposed eliminating the McGovern-Dole school lunch program. This program feeds hungry children across the world and has been shown to encourage school attendance. Do you believe this program should be eliminated? As I mentioned during my confirmation hearing, I agree that international food aid is a critical tool in the United States' foreign policy and I look forward to working with the Administration on this matter should I be confirmed.
21. Can you assure me that USDA policies will consult with and include the input of the scientific community, and will be based on sound science and data—including the well-established data on climate change? If confirmed, I can assure you that all decisions at USDA will be based on the best available science and data.
22. Do you agree that climate change – whether through drought or an increase in the frequency of severe weather events – poses a threat to American agriculture? Natural phenomenon will always pose challenges to agricultural production. Through the use of the best available science and data, USDA will work to help our producing partners maintain sustainable production from generation to generation.
23. Our land grant universities play a major role in agriculture research, like the Ohio State University's Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, Ohio. What

relationship do you envision for USDA and our land grant universities to collaborate on agriculture research? How will you focus USDA resources to further research on highly pathogenic avian influenza, biotechnology, transition to organic farming, innovative conservation techniques, water quality monitoring, and combating invasive species? If confirmed, I will be totally committed to strengthening our scientific outreach through our land grant institutions and other academic enterprises. It is only through the best science and data that we can make informed decisions about the future of agriculture in America and the world.

24. Do you support the proposals from the Obama Administration's Pollinator Partnership Action plan? What role do you believe USDA should have in addressing the declining pollinator population? Yes. If confirmed, I will have department resources focused on working with the community in finding mitigation to the many challenges this segment of agriculture production faces.
25. I have heard praise for how USDA has implemented the Agriculture Wool Apparel Manufacturers Trust Fund program. This program has helped manufacturers in Ohio and elsewhere compete with foreign corporations. Will you commit to working with me to ensure this program is a part of the next Farm Bill? I have not been briefed on this program but will commit to learning about it and discussing it further with you.
26. Will you direct the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services to increase their scrutiny and expand inspection of Brazilian beef imports, given recent reports of Brazilian producers bribing health inspectors? I believe FSIS is doing a good job with 100% inspection of meat entering the U.S. from Brazil. I am concerned that an embargo would cause retaliation against U.S. industry but will review the issue if confirmed.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George “Sonny” Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)

1. As everyone knows, our nation’s farms depend on immigrant labor in our fields and orchards to plant, pick, and process the food we eat. While many farmers use the H-2A visa program to recruit temporary workers, this program is cumbersome, and occasionally results in farmers not getting labor in time for planting or pruning, and never meets the needs of farmers who require year-round labor, like dairy.

Given the extraordinary cuts to the Department of Agriculture and Department of Labor contained in President Trump’s budget, how will you ensure that the H-2A program works for our farmers and that they are not forced to recruit workers by other means? The President has a Constitutional obligation to enforce the law of the land. I support the President in that effort. If confirmed, I will work with the President, Congress, and stakeholders on both a short-term and a permanent solution to agricultural labor needs that is reliable, considers year-round solutions, secure, and legal.

2. With the announcement of President Trump’s Executive Orders on immigration and subsequent implementation of enforcement priorities by the Department of Homeland Security, I am hearing great concern from farmers all across NY State about potential labor shortages. The National Agricultural Workers Survey estimates that more than half of all farm workers in the United States are immigrants, and I am deeply concerned that many of these hard-working farm workers will be subject to deportation under the new enforcement priorities.

Have you spoken to President Trump and Secretary Kelly about the effects the immigration enforcement priorities will have on the agricultural sector? If confirmed, I will engage with the President and Secretary Kelly about labor needs in the agriculture segment of the economy.

What steps will you take to ensure that farms across the country do not face economic instability due to diminished access to labor resulting from the Administration’s enforcement priorities? The current system is broken and has been for some time. If confirmed, I will move swiftly to review options. Then I will work with the President, Congress, and stakeholders on both a short-term and permanent solution to agricultural labor needs that is reliable, perhaps even year-round, secure, and legal.

3. New York is a border state and a dairy state, and the 3rd largest exporter of dairy products in the US. Recently, Canada has moved to restrict the use of ultra-filtered milk – UF 85 – in their cheese production, a move that will effectively shut the door to a \$135 million dollar export opportunity for New York producers.

Given that President Trump’s commitment to trade is as questionable as his commitment to the American farmer, how will you convince him that trade is vital to our dairy industry? Fair

and free trade is at the heart of a healthy agricultural economy. If confirmed, I will ensure that agricultural interests have a seat at the table for all trade operations. Fair and free trade will help sustain and support commodity prices for American farmers.

What steps will you take to work with the President in coordinating with the US Trade Representative (Lighthizer), the White House National Economic Council (Navarro), and the Secretary of Commerce (Ross), to make certain that enforcement of existing trade deals, and any future negotiations, work for New York dairy producers? If confirmed, I will be an aggressive partner in making sure that all of American agriculture is represented in our trade efforts.

4. Farm incomes and wealth have decreased significantly over the past three years and many farmers face low commodity prices, weak export markets, and high land rents. The dairy industry in New York continues to face significant hardship. While milk prices have started to recover slightly, they are only at the breakeven point for most farmers, and remain well below the prevailing prices in 2014.

If confirmed, what steps would you take to stabilize and support milk prices to enhance incomes of dairy farmers and improve the rural economy? As you are aware, Dairy provisions in the 2014 Farm Bill have not worked for producers. I look forward to reviewing some of the innovative suggestions Senator Stabenow and others have raised and I intend to work with Congress to produce a reliable long term approach.

Will you commit to attending a field hearing in New York to hear from my dairy farmers about ways we could address milk pricing and improving market transparency? Yes.

Will you consider taking administrative action to make real risk management tools – such as expanding access to LGM as mentioned by Senator Stabenow – available to dairy producers until we can fix the failed MPP program? Yes.

5. Small and mid-size family farms are the backbone of our rural economies. Between 2007 and 2012, the United States lost nearly 56,000 of these farms. And our farmers are getting older—the most recent USDA census reported that the average age was 58.3 years—and many lack retirement or succession plans. We need a new generation of farmers or our rural communities face extinction.

What steps would you take to support small and mid-sized family farms and rural economies? The President has advanced a tax plan and trade initiatives that will help secure the future of farmers and ranchers. Many farmers have left active farming but still control the land upon which crops and livestock are nurtured. I support the administration's efforts to bring more economic security to all Americans. If confirmed, I will make sure that USDA works to lower barriers to entry at every level for those who wish to engage in farming.

How would you prioritize programs that assist new farmers, connect these new framers with retiring farmers, and revitalize the rural economy by investing in local food systems that bring more value directly to farm families? If confirmed, these programs will receive my full attention as they are the future of agriculture in America. I think our system and the demands

of the future best suit an all-of-the-above approach where we support those who identify high margin local consumer driven markets as well as those producing the safe abundance necessary to meet the economic and humanitarian challenge of providing for the food insecure.

6. Title Four of the Farm Bill contains many critical food and nutrition programs including SNAP, SNAP-Education and other nutrition education programs, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, and programs that provide healthier foods for food banks, low-income seniors, and Indian reservations.

Given the enormous impact of food and nutrition programs at USDA, what will be your nutrition priorities and how will you protect the most vulnerable Americans? If confirmed, I will work to keep food and farm policy areas joined in the next farm bill. Further, I will make sure we carefully examine the administration of SNAP and other food programs to make sure that those who are eligible for the programs have access to the programs.

7. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is the largest of the federal nutrition assistance programs, and serves as a critical food security safety net that helps to lift millions of working families and individuals out of poverty across the country. Error rates in the program have been decreasing nationally, and have hovered at below 4 percent since 2010. During your time as Governor of Georgia, your administration received an award from USDA for low error rates when determining SNAP payments and eligibility. While program integrity is very important, I am concerned that during this time only 68 percent of eligible low-income Georgians participated in the program compared to 86 percent participation in neighboring Tennessee.

Do you believe that program oversight should come at the expense of limiting those who are eligible from benefitting from the program? I believe the American taxpayer expects us to deliver efficient, well-run programs. In Georgia we worked hard to ensure that we did this but it was not the goal to limit program participation for qualifying applicants. I can assure you that as governor, I expected the program to be administered so as to reach the most eligible participants possible. I look forward to working with states to ensure this is their goal as well.

How would you ensure that USDA makes certain that every low-income person that is eligible, actually receives these important benefits? If confirmed, I will have USDA work with the states, where the program is administered, to ensure that the best technology and practices are available for implementation.

8. SNAP, not only benefits the most vulnerable, but also contributes to the economic stability of both local businesses and farmers. Each dollar invested in new SNAP benefits generates \$1.70 in economic activity, and last year, redemption of SNAP benefits at more than 260,000 businesses, including 80 percent small and local businesses, contributed over \$66 billion into the economy. Without SNAP dollars, many small and local retailers and farmers would lose a critically important economic market.

As head of USDA what steps would you take to ensure that the economic opportunities created by SNAP continue to benefit small and local businesses? SNAP, like many other programs, is most effective if administered in a way that reaches as many participants as eligible while

controlling for fraud and abuse. Control measures are important to ensure that American taxpayers have good stewardship of resources. To the extent allowed by law, USDA will do its part to make sure that SNAP is an effective and efficient program.

How would you ensure that programs that enhance the purchasing power of Seniors, WIC, and SNAP beneficiaries at farmers markets continue during and at the completion of the transition to electronic EBT systems? If confirmed, I will put the resources of USDA to the task of ensuring a safe, smooth and secure transition.

Will you commit USDA resources and provide enhanced technical assistance to farmers markets that continue to accept these EBT benefits? I am inclined to support both producer and consumer choice in most regards, but I need to better understand these programs and implementations before making a final commitment.

9. Beginning in January 2017, 21 states reinstated the three-month time limit on SNAP benefits for unemployed adults who are not disabled or raising minor children. While this limit is appropriate in some instances, in many others, it is not, especially when employment opportunities are not available or when beneficiaries are not able to work. Many states report difficulty providing sufficient

How would USDA, under your leadership, work with other agencies and states to ensure that non-working, able bodied adult SNAP beneficiaries are provided opportunities so they can continue to receive SNAP while seeking employment that pays a living wage? If confirmed, I will work with states to make sure that SNAP support and implementation meets state needs.

10. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010 made unprecedented improvements to the nutritional quality of meals served in the National School Lunch (NSLP) and School Breakfast Programs (SBP) and for competitive school snacks and beverages. As a result of the HHFKA, children are being served school meals with more whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and less salt, and healthier snacks and beverages. Today, almost all school districts in my state and more than 98 percent of school districts nationally are meeting the new school meal standards—up from just 14 percent in 2010 when the legislation passed. That is a huge improvement for the 31 million children participating in the NSLP each day, most of whom (over 70 percent) come from low-income families.

As Secretary, how will you continue the progress on healthy meals, snacks, and beverages in schools? If confirmed, I will have USDA work in support of local decisions about meal provision to children in public school districts. These decisions must be done at the local level, but USDA can provide support in helping implement compliant programs.

11. The Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) has been wonderful tool for many high poverty districts in New York, in your home state of Georgia, and in states across the country. It eases the administrative burdens and paperwork requirements for schools and is targeted exclusively to those schools in high poverty areas. CEP ensures that school nutrition staff can focus on feeding the neediest children instead of filling out reams of paperwork.

How would you support and promote the use of the Community Eligibility Provision to further help schools in high poverty areas and ensure children have access to the healthy and nutritious school meals and snacks they need to thrive? If I am confirmed, I will work with Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate funding for the health and nutrition programs administered by USDA.

12. For many low-income children, in both rural and urban communities, the National School Lunch Program represents an important source of quality nutrition. Schools need creative strategies to encourage students to make healthy choices.

Do you support current, innovative USDA sponsored programs, such as Smarter Lunchrooms, that promote efficiency, decrease waste, and encourage students to select and eat healthful choices such as fruits and vegetables by making those more convenient and attractive? Yes, as long as program decisions are held at the local level.

13. Many summer and afterschool programs in New York and across the country have expressed difficulties in operating summer feeding sites for the children in their communities after school and during the summer because they have to operate as two different programs, with separate paperwork.

Would you support policies that ensure access to nutritious meals for children afterschool and in the summer by easing paperwork burdens for providers and allowing them to operate as seamless programs? Yes. Anything that reduces unnecessary paperwork will be a top priority.

14. Diet-related diseases, such as heart disease, stroke, and hypertension add billions of dollars each year to our national health care bill. In 2010 they cost an estimated \$130 billion, and costs are projected to more than triple by 2030. Increasing access to healthy food has been proven to have a major impact on improving diet quality and in reducing the economic costs of chronic disease.

If confirmed would you support important programs like the Healthy Food Financing Initiative that works to improve health outcomes and invest in local economies by building public-private partnerships to increase healthy food access in low-income communities? Yes.

15. Robust evidence has linked excess sodium intake with high blood pressure, which is one of the major risk factors for heart disease. High blood pressure also increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, and heart failure, and is the leading risk factor of women's deaths in the U.S. and second leading risk factor for death for men. One-third of American adults currently have high blood pressure and 90 percent will develop it in their lifetime. In Georgia alone, 36.2% of adults have high blood pressure.

How will you continue effort that USDA has been leading with other agencies to reasonably decrease sodium in the food supply to safe, healthy levels to help efforts to combat chronic disease and death? If confirmed I will support educational outreach efforts that inform Americans about health risks associated with their dietary decisions.

16. Despite the work of the FDA and USDA, many gaps persist in our understanding about the use of medically important antibiotics in food animals. A report that I requested from the Government Accounting Office (GAO) found that USDA should work to increase on-farm data collection and improve collaboration with FDA and CDC during investigations of foodborne illnesses.

How should USDA collect data on antibiotic use on the farm and in large-scale operations in collaboration with FDA? Data driven research and the advancement of agriculture science are at the top of this administration's priorities. If confirmed, I will support and aggressively pursue programs that allow us to have access to the best information concerning agricultural issues.

How long would you give the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to complete the development of performance measures and targets for collecting on-farm data? If confirmed, I will confer with APHIS and have them develop a plan that will satisfy the need for data collection and for advancing our science in this area.

Would you support the establishment of Memorandums of Understanding between USDA and HHS to conduct on-farm investigations, with clear roles and reporting mechanisms, in the event of a multi-state outbreak of foodborne illness? If confirmed, I will work with all appropriate agencies to gather this data.

17. As a veterinarian, you are aware of how the overuse of medically important antibiotics can lead to the development of antimicrobial resistance. Health officials at the CDC and the World Health Organization, have warned that the development of antibiotic resistance is resulting in human infections, some of them food borne, that are difficult or impossible to treat. The National Action Plan for Combating Antibiotic Resistance calls for USDA to evaluate and implement programs to restrict use of medically important antibiotics, foster stewardship of antibiotic use in animals, and identify and support research into alternatives to antibiotics.

Will you commit, as Secretary of Agriculture, to continuing these initiatives? Yes, in accordance with the best available science.

How will you ensure that producers further reduce inappropriate use of antibiotics in food animal production? USDA will work with FDA, Veterinarians and the states to monitor and enforce compliance.

18. USDA has played an important role in conducting research on the spread of antibiotic resistance on farm and on identifying alternatives to antibiotics used on farm.

Under your leadership, how would the USDA continue to fund external and internal research on ways to slow the spread of resistance to antibiotics on farm and in food? If confirmed, I will direct appropriate sub-agencies to develop plans to implement a comprehensive research program.

In your opinion, what programs and funding sources should be enhanced to meet research needs into antibiotic alternatives and social drivers of antibiotic use in livestock? If confirmed,

I will do all I can to support these initiatives within the constraints of the budget authority available to USDA.

19. President Trump's Fiscal Year 2018 budget request to Congress included the elimination of USDA's critical water and wastewater programs. In New York, \$64.4 million in funding from this program has brought water and wastewater services to over 107,000 rural New Yorkers since Fiscal Year 2014. Without this USDA funding, rural communities across the country will face the prospects of polluted water and inadequate infrastructure to support new businesses and new jobs. In justifying this elimination, the budget states that "rural communities can be served by private sector financing or other Federal investments in rural water infrastructure, such as the EPA's State Revolving Funds (SRF)," but this would mean that rural cities, towns, and water districts would have no affordable option other than to stand in line to compete against big cities for SRF funding or pay big banks and Wall Street hedge funds high rates and fees to fund projects.

How does eliminating an effective USDA program help address the significant infrastructure challenges faced by rural communities across New York and the country? Having served as a governor in a balanced budget state I understand the need to make difficult budget decisions. In addition, I understand the annual budget and appropriations process is iterative. If confirmed, I will do my best to support USDA programs within those constraints. Further, I intend to press for consideration of rural needs in the infrastructure package the Administration is formulating.

20. The tremendous water infrastructure needs of rural America are reflected in the large backlog the USDA water program has. Nationally, there is a backlog of \$2.5 billion in eligible, quality projects that cannot be funded due to a lack of federal resources. In New York, that backlog features 70 requests for \$134.5 million. These are projects that are critical to the economic development and quality of life of our rural areas.

How do you plan to address these backlogs? If confirmed, I will do my best to support USDA programs within budget constraints. Further, I intend to press for consideration of rural water, broadband and other infrastructure needs during the planning process of the President's infrastructure package.

21. As governor you presided over the country's most deadly outbreak of foodborne illness in history resulting in 9 deaths and illness for 714 people due to contaminated peanut butter.

How does the peanut butter experience inform your approach to food safety and government regulation? Food safety is a top priority of USDA and I will support the funding of it.

Will you ensure that that Food Safety funding at USDA will not be subject to federal spending cuts? As the top priority of the Department, I will insist that the budget reflect its criticality.

22. Nationally, New York is a top tier specialty crop producer of fruits, vegetables, maple, and wine. These producers rely on the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops growers with diverse projects ranging from food safety to market access, to crop development and distribution.

As Secretary, how will you work to enhance the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and ensure that it continues to fund relevant specialty crop research? Yes.

23. The White House Rural Council was established by executive order in 2011 to address the unique needs of rural communities, who supply our food, fiber, and energy, safeguard our natural resources, and are essential in the development of science and innovation. USDA plays a key role in promoting the priorities of the Rural Council to ensure economic growth and innovation, improve access to health care and education, and expand outdoor recreational activities on public lands, you will work across executive departments, agencies, and offices to coordinate federal programs and investments aimed at promoting.

If confirmed, will you encourage President Trump to continue the work of the White House Rural Council and set strong priorities for investments in rural America during his administration? Yes.

What steps do you propose for enhancing executive department, agency, and office coordination to promote economic prosperity and increasing the quality of life for rural communities? If confirmed, I will make interagency coordination a hallmark of my management of USDA. This is critical if we are to address the needs of rural America and to find the best and most efficient use of our limited resources. We have common interest with many federal agencies and we should work to lower barriers to cooperation.

24. As you know, broadband is not a luxury, but has become a “must have” infrastructure service for both rural and urban Americans. Access to the Internet is as important for our job growth and quality of life as access to electricity, access to roads, or access to a telephone.

Will you commit to continuing to support USDA Rural Utilities Service’s (RUS) broadband programs, which have strong bipartisan support in Congress and a long history of helping promote advanced communications services in rural areas? Yes.

25. Small telecommunication companies have often shown a great willingness to build out broadband service in rural communities. We have heard concerns from these small businesses that loan financing alone is not helpful enough to meet the high costs of providing service to rural areas, and that some grant funding is needed to make these projects financially feasible.

Do you believe RUS should consider the use of grant funds in combination with loan financing to build out service to unserved rural communities? Access to broadband in rural America must be part of an overall strategy of providing broadband access to all Americans who desire that access. The FCC has a powerful program with enormous resources. If confirmed, I will work to seek partnership with the FCC to support expanded access to broadband in rural areas.

26. As you know, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is responsible for preventing the introduction and spread of plant pests. However, in recent years, more than 20 previously undetected pests have been detected in the country each year with hundreds of shipments of goods entering the country each year contain plant pests.

What strategies would you promote to reduce the introduction, spread, and impacts of invasive species? If confirmed, I will commit to bringing the necessary resources to bear to ensure priority pest control.

27. In some cases, APHIS has been hesitant to use its authority to penalize importers who routinely receive shipments that violate plant pest regulations. For example, 11 years ago the U.S. implemented regulations requiring that wood packaging (crates, pallets, etc.) be treated in order to minimize the risk that pests will be introduced via this pathway. However, pests continue to be detected in wood packaging arriving at U.S. ports, due in part because importers know they will not be penalized due to APHIS's current policy of only imposing penalties if a specific importer has been caught 5 times in a single year with non-compliant wood packaging.

What steps will you take to instruct APHIS to use its legal authority to impose civil penalties to deter continuing violations? If confirmed, I will instruct APHIS to examine their enforcement protocols and will seek to tighten our scrutiny as necessary to reduce the risk of imported pests coming into the country.

28. The integrity of food safety inspection in Brazil has recently been called into serious question through allegations of corruption, fraud, and failures of oversight at many levels.

How frequently and to what degree should USDA re-evaluate the equivalency designation it confers on the food safety inspection systems of other nations when serious deficiencies are found? It has been reported that USDA will conduct a 100% inspection of all meat products coming into the United States. If confirmed, I will immediately review our procedures and protocols on inspections to make sure we have the safest food possible.

In your opinion, does USDA have the statutory authority necessary to unilaterally revoke an equivalence designation and at what degree of risk to the American consumer would such action be appropriate? If confirmed, I will seek the opinion of General Counsel before making such a determination.

29. The Food Safety Inspection Service has encountered some difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified inspectors in certain parts of the country. These rates of understaffing has led to inspectors who are not able to complete their inspection assignments in a timely fashion. The USDA FY2017-FY2021 Strategic Plan acknowledges these staffing issues and recommends measures to alleviate the shortages.

How would you ensure that the workforce needs of FSIS are met in a timely fashion and that there is no risk to the public health due to insufficient staffing at processing facilities? I will work to ensure that our hiring of food inspectors is not constrained in any fashion, including the temporary federal hiring freeze.

30. New York is 63 percent forested and the forest industry contributes \$4.6 billion annually to the state's economy. The majority of New York's forest land (74 percent) is privately held and managed by nearly 700,000 land owners. In addition to supporting the forest industry, these private forest lands deliver important public benefits, like protecting water quality and providing important wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, increasing demands for development are

placing financial pressure on forest land owners, resulting in the conversion of private forest lands to non-forested uses. This conversion threatens the survival of the U.S. forest industry and eliminates the public benefits that private forests provide. The U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program, funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, is an important tool in addressing this problem.

Will you commit to supporting forest land owners and help curb the conversion of private forest land to non-forested uses by advocating for robust annual funding for the Forest Legacy Program, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund? If confirmed, I will order a complete review and revision of the Forest Service's forest management plan. This will include reviewing and revitalizing support for the Legacy program and the conservation fund.

31. The plight of domestic pollinators and commercial honey bees threatens the sustainability of our natural environment and the profitability of our nation's farms. In 2016 the White House Pollinator Task Force released the Pollinator Partnership Action Plan. USDA was involved in the development of this Plan and would be responsible for many elements of its implementation.

Will you support the continuation of the Pollinator Partnership Action Plan and what actions would you take to foster cross-agency collaboration to advance its stated goals? I have not been briefed on the Pollinator Partnership Action Plan. If I am confirmed, I will work with the USDA staff to review this plan and take appropriate actions to promote the health of bees and other pollinators.

Will you work to identify opportunities within existing conservation programs to improve pollinator habitat such as the prioritization of pollinator friendly planting mixes in cover crops, in riparian buffers, or on lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program? Yes.

32. New York features robust farm based distilling and brewing industries. This has greatly increased the regional demand for hops, small grains, and malting facilities to support further expansion. We have worked with great success to expand the coverage of conventional barley crop insurance but the lack of a Northeastern malting barley insurance program stands to limit the growth of this important growth sector.

Would you direct Risk Management Agency staff to work with New York barley growers, researchers, processors, malters, and quality assurance laboratories to establish a Northeast malting barley endorsement that could serve as the basis of a malting barley crop insurance program? Yes.

Would you direct the National Agricultural Statistics Service to resume surveys of the New York barley crop to ensure that baseline production levels are available to serve as the basis for any future crop insurance product? Yes.

33. According to the National Institute of Food and Agriculture at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an estimated 57,900 high-skilled jobs in the U.S. agriculture sector will open annually in the next five years, but there will be only 35,400 new U.S. graduates to fill these

positions, resulting in an annual short fall of 22,500 agricultural professionals. The National FFA Organization, Discovery Education, and AgCareers.com have joined forces to create a robust career website to help students explore more the 235 unique careers in the business, communications, technology, and science of agriculture.

In your opinion, what is the role of U.S. Department of Agriculture in preparing and recruiting young professionals to careers in agriculture? USDA has a key and leading role in bringing great young people to careers in agriculture. If confirmed, I will support outreach and human capital enhancement programs that reach into every community to attract people to agriculture. Most importantly, I will always promote economic opportunity and growth in modern agriculture so that more high-skilled, high-paying jobs continue to be in demand.

34. National FFA members participate annually in hands-on work experiences, often called supervised agricultural experiences.

Knowing that the average age of the American farmer is quickly rising, and that we will need these young people to pursue agricultural pursuits, both on and off the farm, how can USDA help to incentivize hands-on work experiences like these to create more opportunities for young people in agriculture? If confirmed, I will lead an outreach effort that will create programs and incentives so that any individual who wants to participate in agriculture will have that opportunity, whether it is in education or in a hands on environment.

How will you commit to better recruit and retain young people back to the farm or other agricultural pursuits? If confirmed, I will lead the effort to build programs and provide resources that will create incentives for individuals to explore and pursue careers in agriculture. Again, the most important feature of recruiting and retention will be the economic promise of agriculture.

35. In 2010, the Office of Inspector General at USDA released a report on the administration of the Horse Protection Program. The OIG's findings indicate that the current method of administration by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is "not adequate to ensure that [horses] are not being abused." As a result, USDA developed a rule modifying the Horse Protection Act (HPA); however, this rule was not finalized before the end of the previous Administration, and the rule was officially withdrawn on January 23, 2017.

With more than 42 Senators, 182 Representatives, and 100,000 members of the public writing in support of this rule, will you commit to finalizing this rule within the first year of your leadership, should you be confirmed? If confirmed, I will commit to reviewing the program and will, based on the best science and data available, advance rules that are defensible and enforceable. Yes, I will complete this task in the first year I am in position.

36. In October 2015 a study supported by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) was published by Sightlines, LLC indicating that the price tag for deferred maintenance at colleges and universities of agriculture all across the country, including your alma mater, is a startling \$8.4 billion. With increasing international trade and globalization it is important that U.S. colleges and universities remain globally competitive and able to provide 21st Century research and education. It is imperative that the research infrastructure at U.S.

schools of agriculture, much of which was built in the 1950s and 1960s, is maintained to allow for cutting-edge research and education activities.

Given this Administration's commitment to addressing infrastructure needs all across the country, do you think that addressing the issue of deferred maintenance at schools of agriculture should be a priority of USDA's? If confirmed, I will advance the idea that fixing our deferred maintenance issues is considered in our infrastructure planning.

If confirmed as Secretary will you work to include funding within the 2018 Farm Bill to address this national issue? Yes, supporting agricultural research and our Land Grant Universities will be a priority for funding within the 2018 Farm Bill.

37. Specialty crop producing states share many challenges. During a recent conversation with Senator Hirono, she mentioned Hawaii's agriculture is unique and different from agriculture on the mainland. Among their highest value crops are coffee, macadamia nuts, papayas, and floriculture. As Hawaiian farmers strive for sustainability, they have been very fortunate to have had USDA's support in the past.

If confirmed as Secretary, will you build upon USDA's strong partnership with communities and agricultural stakeholders in Hawaii in addressing their unique challenges and opportunities? Yes.

38. Also during my conversations with Senator Hirono, she mentioned that, like New York, Hawaii's agricultural producers and land managers combat invasive species on a continual basis. Whether it is the Macadamia Felted Coccid threatening macadamia trees, the Coffee Berry Borer threatening coffee beans, or the Rapid Ohia Death threatening the native Ohia trees, the threat is constant. USDA provides funding for scientists at the Daniel K. Inouye U.S. Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center (PBARC) to conduct critical, cutting-edge research to further the understanding of these invasive species and develop methods to mitigate their impacts. These techniques and solutions not only benefit Hawaii but may benefit farmers in my home state of New York, or be disseminated across the country and around the world.

If confirmed as secretary, will you support the invasive species research at PBARC that is critical to assisting our land managers and agricultural producers? Yes.

As responsibilities for invasive species detection and response cross various agencies' jurisdictions, will you encourage USDA's partnerships with other agencies, such as those afforded by the National Invasive Species Council, in addressing invasive species threats? Yes.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue

to be Secretary of Agriculture

March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator Bennet (D-CO)

1. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) supports important forest conservation programs, which are under the jurisdiction of the USDA and Forest Service. This includes sportsmen's access and trail protection programs, and matching grants to states for the conservation of working forests through the Forest Legacy Program. In Colorado, the Forest Legacy Program has contributed \$14 million to protect over 15,000 acres; and Colorado's National Forests have received over \$70 million from LWCF for public lands conservation projects at the Arapaho, Roosevelt, Uncompahgre, and White River national forests. If confirmed, will you ensure that the Administration requests full funding for LWCF in their future budget requests? Will you commit to work with this Committee to advocate for a robust share of LWCF funding for the Forest Service in the appropriations process? As I discussed in my confirmation hearing, I believe that the mission of the Forest Service is critical, but have not been fully briefed on the Service's budget and operations. If I am confirmed, I will work with Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate funding for Forest Service programs including LWCF activities.

2. The protection and management of our National Forests is critical for Colorado communities. Over 80 percent of Coloradans participate in trail-related activities on a regular basis and 9 in 10 participate in outdoor recreation annually. Outdoor recreation – like hunting, fishing, skiing and hiking - adds \$19.9 billion to Colorado's GDP, supports 313,000 jobs and contributes \$4.9 billion in tax revenues. In Colorado, these Forests are a part of our basic infrastructure. Ski areas and outfitters depend on them, and residents use them every day. That's why so many Coloradans have concerns about selling these lands off to private interests. Will you commit to keeping Forest Service land in public hands, and oppose the sale or transfer of public lands? Although I generally believe that federal lands are a public trust and resource, I have not been briefed on any potential land transfers to state or private interests. If I am confirmed, I will work closely with the Administration and Congress to ensure that the Forest Service has appropriate resources to manage and care for the lands that we hold for the American people.

3. In Colorado, the USDA plays an important role to administer programs that help farmers and ranchers improve soil health, save water, and provide wildlife habitat. Two of our water districts employ the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program ("CREP") to reduce groundwater withdrawals and three new Regional Conservation Partnership Program ("RCPP") projects were funded this year. I also continue to hear from farmers who want to enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program ("CRP"), but are unable to because of the 24 million cap on acreage from the 2014 Farm Bill. If confirmed, will you work against conservation program cuts in your annual budget submission to Congress? I have not been fully briefed on the CRP budget. If I am confirmed, I will work closely with Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate funding for the Program.

4. Last year, Congress passed the bipartisan National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act, which I authored along with Senator Enzi from Wyoming. The bill gives the Forest Service new authorities and tools to increase volunteer capacity and take other actions to rehabilitate the world-class trail system that stretches across our national forests. The Forest Service is beginning to implement this law - which will help improve trails and increase outdoor access. If confirmed, how will you make this new law a priority so that our trail users – from horseback riders, to snowmobilers, to wilderness enthusiasts – can start seeing the benefits? I have not been fully briefed on the National Forest System Trails Stewardship Act, but agree strongly with the concept of working with volunteers and rehabilitation of our trail system. If I am confirmed, I will make sure that this program is a priority.
5. There are some innovative public-private partnerships that could be expanded to address wildfire mitigation needs, and set the next generation of our wildland firefighting workforce on career pathways. The Forest Service currently partners with organizations – like Southwest Conservation Corps in Colorado – to operate Veterans Fire Corps. These programs provide veterans the opportunity to continue working in a team environment while learning hard skills on wildfire mitigation and firefighting, like chainsaw certifications. Partnerships like this could be expanded through additional support and direction from the Forest Service. Will you work to expand partnerships, like the Veterans Fire Corps, to address wildfire mitigation and wildland firefighting needs? Yes.
6. The USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) administers federal broadband funding programs, including grants and loans for rural deployment. Broadband investment is a top priority for Colorado communities that are frustrated with existing providers that offer slow, expensive coverage or none at all. Our office is working on a proposal to streamline federal loan and grant programs that support public and private investment in broadband infrastructure. These reforms would focus on hard-to-reach rural areas that currently lack fixed broadband connectivity. If confirmed, will you take steps to reform RUS's broadband programs to make them more efficient and useful for rural communities? As I stated in my confirmation hearing, I believe that broadband access is absolutely essential to rural communities. If I am confirmed, I look forward to working the USDA staff, Congress, states and the private sector to develop innovative approaches to close the digital divide and ensure that rural communities are on a level playing field when it comes to broadband access.
7. To farmers and ranchers in Colorado, taking steps to adapt to changing conditions is part of the business. Due to climate change, Colorado will experience changes in the timing of snowmelt, lower streamflow, shifting growing seasons, and an increase in the frequency and severity of heat waves and wildfires. There are also opportunities to sequester carbon and mitigate climate change through the conservation and management of grasslands, forests, and working agricultural land. The USDA has started to equip producers, growers, and ranchers with information to make risk-based decisions and tools to adapt to climate change and extreme weather through their regional climate hubs, like the Northern Plains Hub headquartered at Colorado State University. If confirmed, will the USDA continue to implement, and dedicate adequate resources to, programs to adapt to and mitigate climate change, including the USDA Climate Hubs and the ClimateSmart Agriculture and Forestry Initiative? I believe we have to

take a consistent, common sense approach to adapting to a changing climate and focus on strategies that make financial and environmental sense. If confirmed as the Secretary of Agriculture, I commit to helping farmers, landowners and foresters adapt to what the data is showing us about changes to weather patterns and temperature across the country.

8. USDA grant programs through the NRCS, provide hundreds of millions of dollars around the country to improve water management. The Bureau of Reclamation, through its WaterSMART water efficiency grant program, provides around \$30M annually for water conservation projects proposed by its beneficiaries and other water suppliers. In June, USDA and Bureau of Reclamation agreed to coordinate these programs for on and off farm funding to maximize the benefits of both programs specifically in the Colorado River Basin. What steps will you take to ensure this cooperation continues between Bureau of Reclamation and USDA in the Colorado River Basin? Although I have not been briefed on the specifics of the WaterSMART grant program, I strongly believe that coordination between USDA and other federal and state agencies is critical to maximizing the impacts that these grants can have. If I am confirmed, I will work to ensure that this coordination continues.
9. I continue to hear from producers across Colorado about how difficult the farm economy is right now. With many producers still reeling from years of drought, they are now having difficulties obtaining operating loans due to low commodity prices and decreased revenue. When farmers are having trouble that can spell trouble for the rest of the economy. If confirmed, what specific steps do you plan to take to address the financial difficulties that farmers are facing in Colorado and across the country? The FSA Farm Loan Programs are a critical tool in USDA's efforts to promote development of the rural economy. If I am confirmed, I will work with FSA's staff, Congress and the Administration to ensure that we have appropriate funding for FSA programs.
10. On top of the already difficult economic conditions in farm country, Colorado producers continue to lack the stable, qualified workforce needed to thrive, grow, and compete. Not addressing this issue means peaches left in the tree and onions spoiling in the ground. We addressed farm labor four years ago in the Senate through comprehensive immigration reform—which both growers and workers supported—but the House never took it up. If confirmed, how will you use your platform as USDA Secretary to advocate for immigration reform on behalf of our farmers and ranchers? What near-term steps do you plan to take so that producers have the workforce they need to stay in business? Would you support changes to the H-2A visa program? If I am confirmed, I will be a strong voice within the Cabinet for ensuring that our immigration policies allow for the development of a legal and reliable workforce for American farms. I understand that this is one of the most important issues facing the farming community and will work with Congress and the Administration to develop and implement policies that will allow farms to meet their workforce needs legally.
11. When the president talks about improving trade, one area he doesn't always mention is agriculture. Reaching new markets (e.g., Cuba, Japan, etc.) and maintaining current markets (e.g., Canada and Mexico) will be important to the continued success of agriculture in Colorado and across the country. Colorado exports more than 80% of the wheat grown in the state, and last year we exported more than \$486 million of beef, pork and lamb to Canada and Mexico.

What are your plans for soliciting recommendations from producers as the administration rolls forward with its agenda? As I mentioned during my confirmation hearing, ensuring that American farmers have access to international markets is a critical part of the Secretary of Agriculture's portfolio. If I am confirmed, I will be a champion for market access within the cabinet and will work closely with producers to ensure that their voice is heard as we develop and implement our Administration's trade policies.

12. As you know from your experience in Georgia in 2007, drought can have devastating consequences on farmers and producers. The Obama Administration took the threat of drought very seriously, establishing through executive order a National Drought Resilience Partnership (NDRP), led by USDA, to coordinate federal, state, and local response to drought and build long-term drought resilience. This program has increased resiliency and improved water conservation efforts in the Colorado River Basin. Will you maintain support for the NDRP, including appointing senior staff to lead the effort and dedicating adequate resources to ensure its success? Yes.
13. The Secure Rural Schools (SRS) program provides resources for schools and road projects in rural communities. SRS payments have provided revenues to counties that contain national forests. SRS authorization is expired and without reauthorization, the existing payments are not sufficient to support these rural counties and their school districts. If confirmed, will you include SRS reauthorization in your annual budget request to Congress? Will you commit to working with Congress to ensure SRS is funded and reauthorized as soon as possible? Although I have not been briefed on the budget and operations of the Secure Rural Schools program, I support funding for rural schools and road projects. The Forest Service has an opportunity to be a better neighbor in the community in which it operates and productive forest management allows for new revenues to support such infrastructure needs. If confirmed, I will work with the Administration and Congress on this matter.
14. In 2014, we convened a group of Colorado fire and forestry experts to find ways that the federal government can support fire protection and forest health in Colorado. This group of stakeholders released a Colorado-written report titled "Innovations in Forestry and Fire Mitigation" to provide consensus ideas and recommendations for collaborative forest health and fire protection efforts. Will your team review this report – and then follow up with us on steps to implement possible solutions? Certainly, I agree that the Forest Service should work to maintain healthy forests.
15. The President's so-called "skinny" budget would hurt rural communities in Colorado that rely on the Rural Utility Service programs. For example, the budget eliminated the USDA's Rural Water and Wastewater loan and grant program that has funded 42 projects in Colorado serving 34,800 rural residents over the past eight years. Last year, 80% of the projects funded by these programs in Colorado served communities of less than 1000 residents. Will you ensure that USDA Rural Utilities Services are adequately funded and oppose elimination of programs that service our rural communities? If I am confirmed, I will work with the Administration and Congress to ensure appropriate funding for the Rural Utilities Service programs.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
 To consider the nomination of George "Sonny" Perdue
 to be Secretary of Agriculture
 March 23, 2017
 Questions for the Record

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT)

Dairy and Access to Farm Labor

1. As we discussed at the hearing do you commit to utilizing every authority available to you as Secretary and to the Department to support our nation's struggling dairy farmers and shore up a strong safety net for them? Yes.
2. If confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture, how will you direct the USDA to help Vermont dairy farmers, Georgia produce growers, and others in the agriculture sector with their critical farm workforce that is now being disrupted as a result of President Trump's executive order calling for them to be detained and deported? If I am confirmed, I will be a strong voice within the Cabinet for ensuring that our immigration policies allow for the development of a legal and reliable workforce for American farms. I understand that this is one of the most important issues facing the farming community and will work with Congress and the Administration to develop and implement policies that will allow farms to meet their workforce needs legally.
3. If confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture how will you direct the USDA to assist producers, such as the Trump winery, facing lengthier delays for H-2A visa approvals for critical seasonal workers, and potentially millions of dollars in lost crops that could result from the President's proposed 21% cut in funding for the U.S. Department of Labor? As I mentioned in my confirmation hearing, I will work closely with President Trump, the Administration and Congress to ensure that the USDA has appropriate funding to carry out its important missions.

Rural Development

4. The Administration has expressed its interest in creating an infrastructure package to give a boost to the United States economy. What are your ideas about the role that USDA should play in such an effort? Do you view investments in broadband, water and wastewater systems as infrastructure spending? I believe that USDA and the Secretary of Agriculture should play a significant role in the development and implementation of an infrastructure package and that investments in broadband, water and wastewater systems should be included in such a package. If I am confirmed, I will work with the President and the Administration to push for these priorities.
5. In the area of broadband, the needs of rural communities are clearly distinct from those of urban ones. In 2015 the FCC determined that more than half of rural areas lack access to its broadband benchmark speeds of 25 mbps. How should rural communities utilize broadband to best advance their economies and what investments and incentives are needed to help these efforts? What innovative approaches can communities take that the federal government can

support to close this digital divide? As I stated in my confirmation hearing, I believe that broadband access is absolutely essential to rural communities. If I am confirmed, I look forward to working the USDA staff, Congress, states and the private sector to develop and innovative approaches to close the digital divide and ensure that rural communities are on a level playing field when it comes to broadband access.

6. Over the last four years Georgia dramatically increased its utilization of USDA's Water and Wastewater programs. My state too has put these funds to good use to build more systems and relieve the tax burden of local property owners. In my view this program is complementary to the EPA's State Clean Water and Drinking Water Revolving Loan Funds, rather duplicative. Could you explain your views on this program, how it assisted communities in Georgia and whether you believe it to be duplicative of other federal programs? I have not been fully briefed on the USDA Water and Wastewater programs. If I am confirmed, I will work with Congress, the states, EPA and local communities to ensure appropriate funding for water and wastewater infrastructure investment.
7. The 521 Rental Assistance Program is a critical component of the Department of Agriculture, as it provides an additional subsidy for tenants in Section 515 or 514/516 financed rental housing with incomes too low to otherwise pay the subsidized rent. Last year, this program helped nearly 300,000 low-income families nationwide in achieving safe, affordable housing in our most rural communities. The cost of the Section 521 Rental Assistance program is growing every year, as the number of program participants expands to serve more low-income families. I applaud the USDA's priority to increase funding for this program. however, I am concerned about how we keep costs manageable as more households participate in the program.

In recent years, recommendations have been made to the USDA to improve energy efficiency, eliminate duplicative administrative requirements, and refinance USDA mortgages at lower interest rates to achieve greater program affordability. I encourage the USDA to pursue these ideas as a way to lower program costs, without negatively impacting vulnerable tenants.

As Secretary, will you commit to submitting a plan to the Senate Agriculture Committee within the first 6 months of your tenure for how the USDA plans to reduce these costs, meanwhile ensuring protections for the most at-risk families who receive rental subsidies from the 521 Rental Assistance Program? If confirmed, I commit to review the 521 Program, and assess available opportunities to deliver benefits to at-risk families in a cost-efficient manner.

8. While dramatic improvements have been made in rural housing quality in recent decades, deferred maintenance plagues much of the USDA-financed rental properties throughout the United States. The 2015 Comprehensive Property Assessment of the USDA Rural Development Multi-Family Housing Portfolio made recommendations about how to preserve this critical housing stock. The report found that over the next 20 years, the Rural Housing Service' multifamily portfolio will have an estimated combined need for additional funding, over the current funding levels, of \$5.6 billion to cover basic capital improvements, such as roofs, insulation, accessibility improvements, plumbing, and electrical and structural repairs to USDA-financed rental properties. In 2004, this number was \$2.6 billion.

The Section 515 Multifamily is an excellent tool in addressing this need, as it provides necessary grants and loans to these rural properties, ensuring safe, affordable, accessible housing for the low and very-lowest income families. This program has been reduced by more than 50% in the last decade, meanwhile the House of Representatives has voted to entirely eliminate the Section 515 program.

You have shared that you believe the Department of Agriculture should strengthen its rural development programs. Do you believe that eliminating the 515 program is a step in the right direction? Furthermore, if confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture how will you ensure the safety, and quality of affordable rural housing that these families deserve? I have not been fully briefed on the Section 515 program budget or the long-term projections for the funding needs for the multifamily portfolio. If I am confirmed, I look forward to reviewing this program and will work with USDA staff, Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate funding for these programs.

9. Today, Vermont and much of rural America is facing an ongoing opioid crisis that continues to take lives at an alarming rate. More than 200,000 Americans struggle with substance abuse addition to opioids and Vermont continues to see extended waiting lists of individuals seeking treatment. According to a 2015 study in the American Journal of Public Health, 47 other states in the United States have opioid dependence rates that exceed medication-assisted treatment availability. Under the last Administration, the USDA committed up to \$50 million in Community Facilities funds for these types of facilities by the end of 2016, in addition to supplemental funding through to the end of the Federal Fiscal Year 2016. To end this national epidemic, we must continue to increase these investments to ensure all addicts, and all communities have access to the treatment that they deserve.

What do you believe the role of the Department of Agriculture is in helping to combat this national opioid epidemic, and furthermore, how will you utilize and prioritize funding in USDA programs, such as the Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program, to treat the ongoing epidemic that is plaguing rural America? What will be your commitment to addressing this challenge and do you have thoughts on new approaches? I feel strongly that we have an obligation to help combat the national opioid epidemic. If I am confirmed, I will work with Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate funding for USDA programs which can play a role in a coordinated federal response to this critical problem.

Nutrition

10. Included in the Healthy and Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010 was mandatory funding to USDA to support the Farm to School grant program, which offers funding to schools and nonprofits to create school-based programs that help children of all income levels have access to nutrition education and farm-fresh food in their cafeterias. The program also benefits farmers and producers while supporting rural economies. Vermont has been a leader in farm to school programs recently reporting that 83 percent of school districts participate in the program. Your home state of Georgia has also been involved in farm to school programs with a goal that 20 percent of all required school menu items be Georgia grown products by the year 2020. The

last administration made great strides in its efforts to bolster farm to school activities including local procurement, school gardens, and food and agriculture education.

How will you work to support Farm to School programs to ensure farmers can continue to benefit economically from these programs and that children can continue to learn about the benefits of local, fresh food? Although I am a huge supporter of the Farm to School program, I have not yet been fully briefed on the program budget. If I am confirmed, I will work with Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate funding for this important program.

11. The school meal program has been critical in ensuring all children have access to meals throughout the school day. We all know that a hungry child cannot learn. Proper nutrition is vital to the health and well-being of children, particularly in their earliest years. The Healthy and Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 set meal standards to be sure that meals children are getting throughout the school day are balanced and nutritious. What role do you see health and nutrition playing in the Administration's efforts to improve education, job readiness, and the workforce? How will you work to ensure the meal standards put forward in the 2010 child nutrition bill can be met by schools? The health and nutrition programs administered by USDA play a tremendous role in the Administration's efforts to improve education and job readiness. I strongly believe that local school systems and state governments are critical partners in developing and implementing these essential programs. If I am confirmed, I will work with USDA staff, Congress and both state and local governments to ensure that schools are able to the meal standards and provide the most assistance to their students possible.
12. Due to the Community Eligibility Provision for school meals, a growing number of high poverty schools can serve free breakfast and lunch to low-income students, while minimizing the burdensome paperwork of the free and reduced application process. Many schools in Vermont are electing this option and in Georgia, well over a quarter million children benefit from community eligibility. What steps would you take to protect and expand this successful provision? If I am confirmed, I will work with Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate funding for the health and nutrition programs administered by USDA.
13. Summer meals allow a continuous service of nutritious meals to children throughout the year. According to USDA data, summer meals only reach 17 percent of the children who receive free or reduced meals. Great strides have been underway to expand and support this program to ensure our nation's children have continued access to proper nutrition, but there is more work to be done. What ideas do you have to bolster access to summer meals? I understand the Ag Committee has ideas to share on this topic and I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that during the summer children have access to nutritious meals.
14. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) helps nearly 8 million women, infants, and children up to age 5 have access to healthy foods, breastfeeding support, nutrition and education and healthcare referrals. The program has proven results in improving health outcomes for women and children and pregnant women who participate in WIC give birth to healthier babies. WIC has enjoyed bipartisan support to ensure the program has adequate funding to meet the demand. Will you work with Congress to ensure WIC continues to receive full funding without budget cuts? If I am confirmed, I will

work with Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate funding for the WIC program.

Conservation

15. As was discussed during your confirmation hearing, surface water runoff from farms is among the most significant causes of water pollution in many parts of the United States and Vermont is not spared. Our treasured Lake Champlain is impaired by nutrients and some studies show that 40% of the problem can be traced to cropland and pastures. We are making great progress and are working together to address the problem. One of our most important tools is USDA financial assistance to farmers through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Secretary Vilsack visited Vermont at my invitation in 2014 and, on the shores of Lake Champlain, he committed that at least \$45 million in EQIP funds would be available in Vermont's Lake Champlain Basin through the 5 year life of the 2014 Farm Bill. Thus far that commitment is being fulfilled and our excellent USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service team in Vermont has done great work delivering their programs. While this is a water quality success story that the USDA should be very proud of, the job is far from done.

If confirmed, will you visit Vermont with me to see first-hand the excellent work that the USDA is doing to deliver conservation programs and help farmers protect water quality? And can you assure me that under your guidance the USDA will continue to fulfill the balance of its commitment to make available at least \$45 million in base EQIP funding for Lake Champlain efforts for the life of the 2014 Farm Bill? If I am confirmed, I will work with Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate EQIP funding for the Lake Champlain basin. I also look forward to visiting Vermont with you.

16. Upon further study of your financial disclosure documents I learned that one of your businesses, the Soque River Conservation LLC, was involved in working with North Georgia Turf on a wetland mitigation bank, selling wetlands credits. Can you tell me more about that project and did it utilize any federal, state, or local programs or expertise? Do you have any thoughts on how we can incentivize the permanent protection of more wetlands and support the restoration of wetlands? Thank you for your question. The North Georgia Turf had been leasing the land where the mitigation bank is located to grow sod for many years. Obviously, many years before that, prior to our involvement, the land had been cleared for agriculture production. The land was bordered on one side by a nationally recognized trout stream, the Soque River. The owner was considering dividing up the land for small river lot development, based on the popularity of the trout stream. Aaron McWhorter, owner of NGTurf, and I decided that a protected conservation wetland easement would be the only way to compete with the development potential of the property. So, we bought the land at development prices, and began the process to develop the mitigation bank. Federal and state agencies were only involved as regulatory overseers. We were responsible for hiring environmental consultants to develop a plan which would restore wetlands on the hydrologic soils which had been covered up, as well as hiring contractors to implement the plan.

All the plans and construction had to be approved by the US Army Corp of Engineers, in conjunction with US Fish and Wildlife, as well as the Georgia Environmental Protection

Division. I must attest to the fact that the significant bureaucratic hurdles and changing of the rules, with each change of personnel, has made this effort extremely difficult and not as altruistically rewarding as it could have been. I think more people would participate in the restoration of wetlands, if there were clear and consistent rules and policies to be followed, which were not open to differing interpretations, depending on who was in charge. Also, as you imagine, receiving approval from several federal agencies, along with state agencies, delays the projects by a multiple factor. I would suggest that if we want to attract more investment in the protection of wetlands we will need to drastically streamline the regulatory process from where it stands today.

17. Do you accept the scientific consensus that the climate is changing because of human-made greenhouse gas pollution, predominantly the burning of fossil fuels? And if so, do you feel you will be in a position to help mitigate this threat, should you be confirmed in order to help address the threats to the productivity and stability of America's farms, ranches, forests, and in turn our national security? Although it is clear that the climate has been changing, and that changes in the climate will likely have impacts on the Chesapeake Bay, the extent that human activities play a role in those changes is still the subject of significant debate within the scientific community. That being said, I do believe that it is vital for the farming community to reduce its impacts on the environment and, if I am confirmed, will work with USDA programs, the Administration, Congress, the States and the farming community to address these impacts in a thoughtful and coordinated way.

Forestry

18. Last year Georgia was honored with the top ranked Forest Legacy project in the country. This is a program that I helped to create as part of the 1990 Farm Bill to conserve working forestlands across the country. Georgia's Altamaha River-Savanna Conservation Project is a great example of the work that Forest Legacy can do if it receives sufficient funding. Georgia is requesting \$5,000,000 in federal funds to permanently protect 19,500 acres of well stocked longleaf and loblolly pine working forests to buffer to the U.S. Marine Corps Townsend Bombing Range and protect gopher tortoise habitat, a candidate species which, if listed, could stifle the regions forest economy. If federal funding is cut off for this program and for other Forest Service and Interior Department acquisitions, we will miss out on important conservation projects like this. If the administration's budget advances as originally proposed, viable and important projects like this would not receive much needed funding. If confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture, how would you ensure that the Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service continue to work to permanently protect our threatened, important, and strategic working private forestlands? If I am confirmed, I will work with the Administration and Congress to ensure appropriate funding for these important Forest Service programs.
19. How do you feel about federal land acquisitions for the Forest Service using the Land and Water Conservation Fund?

Although I am aware that the Forest Service does acquire land using the Land and Water Conservation Fund and believe that forest land is an appropriate use of LWCF funding, I have

not been fully briefed on this issue. If I am confirmed, I will undertake a review of the Service's use of LCFS.

20. Invasive species are a significant threat in the east, some experts view them as our "wildfire" threat. Ranging from emerald ash borer that has ravaged Michigan to the Asian long-horned beetle that I fear is at Vermont's doorstep, to countless other dangerous hitchhikers arriving on wood pallets, in shipments of produce, and nursery stock. The ecological and economic destruction caused by these pests is growing rapidly, just as budgets for research and action on the ground by the Forest Service and Animal Health Inspection Service have been falling. If confirmed as Secretary, how will you work to provide solutions to this mounting problem and prevent new waves of invasions? If I am confirmed, I will work with the experts at the Forest Service to determine whether any changes are needed to the Forest Service's National Framework for Invasive Species Management. I will also work with Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate program funding to address invasive species.

International Development and Trade

21. We have seen time and time again that when parents have hope for a better future for their children, they turn away from extremists. When children have the chance to go to school and stay in school, and when hunger no longer impedes their ability to learn, then they can be on the path that leads to greater economic opportunity. The USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service's work is an important part of achieving many of our foreign policy goals and communicates our country's compassion to those around the world. Together with our State Department programs, USDA is playing an important role for the United States to triumph over poverty and terror. Do you agree that reducing hunger and improving literacy and primary education, especially for girls by providing school meals, teacher training and related support, can boost school enrollment, academic performance, and lead to hope and economic opportunities that are among our most powerful weapons in the fight against terrorism? As I mentioned during my confirmation hearing, I agree that foreign aid – including the important work by the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service – is a critical tool in the United States' foreign policy.
22. The President has described NAFTA as "the worst trade deal maybe ever signed anywhere" and threaten unilateral across the board taxes on imported goods from Mexico. However, for our nation's dairy farmers, Mexico is our largest dairy export market. Last year alone dairy exports to Mexico totaled \$1.2 billion, a figure that has been rising steadily over the last decade. Can you assure me that you understand the importance of this trading relationship to our nation's hardworking dairy farmers? And are you committed to protecting this important export market for our farmers? Can you assure me that as the administration looks to "modernize" NAFTA that you will ensure that those discussions do not disrupt our vital agricultural trade with Mexico? Yes. As I stated during my confirmation hearing, international trade is absolutely critical for our rural economy and I will be an aggressive champion for market access within the Administration if I am confirmed.

Miscellaneous

23. Our farmers deserve a fair shake and the chance to make a decent living. Our farmers and ranchers should be able to have fair contracts and protection from deceptive and unfair practices by large-scale corporate packers and processors. Far too often we hear stories about how our farmers are facing David vs. Goliath situations. These range from dairy farmers fighting processors conspiring to drive down milk prices or stifling competition, to poultry processors who appear to be trying to avoid paying individual poultry contract growers what they are due all in the name of a "tournament system" where the company always seems to win. While you were Governor, what steps did you take to ensure fairness in the market place for your Georgia poultry farmers, many of which are contract growers? And do you believe that the federal government has a role to play in protecting farmers from retaliation, and ensuring that farmers can understand and discuss their contracts, which should be fair and transparent? Following the 2004 Session of the Georgia General Assembly, I signed into law several protections for contract poultry farmers. The statute may be found in Section 22-1 through 4 of Title 2, Official Code of Georgia Annotated. In short, the law provides the following protections for contract poultry farmers:

- Growers may void a production contract if the contract cannot be reviewed outside the business premise of the poultry company by independent counsel with a three day review period.
- Growers may request and poultry companies must provide any statistical data used to determine compensation paid to such grower with exception to trade secret information.
- Any contract grower has the right to be present at the weighing of poultry produced by such grower or producer, be present at the weighing of feed delivered by the integrator or processor, and observe the weights and measures used to determine compensation due such grower or producer under a production contract.
- Growers may seek civil remedy for any violation of this law under Georgia "Fair Business Practices Act."

I believe this was balanced legislation and shows my commitment to these issues.

24. As I mentioned at the hearing, I wrote the first Organic Farm Bill when I was Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee in 1990. At the time I was hearing from Vermont farmers who were desperate for a level playing field and national standards. Thanks to decades of hard work, today organic agriculture is an industry with strong and consistent growth, having reached \$43.3 billion in sales in 2015. If confirmed as Secretary, how would you support the viability and continued growth in this sector, which has increasing consumer demand and the need for strong standards to maintain the credibility of the USDA organic seal, particularly as we face reports of fraudulent organic imports? As I mentioned during my confirmation hearing, the American people have indicated through their purchasing habits a strong interest in organic products. If I am confirmed, I will work with the farming community and Congress to ensure continued growth in the sector.

25. While you were Governor of Georgia, the King Nut national salmonella outbreak spurred Congress to enact the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), the most sweeping update of our food-safety system in 75 years. The FSMA regulations are now subjecting produce farmers

to first-time requirements. USDA administers training and technical assistance programs, such as the Food Safety Outreach Program, to help farmers comply. What do you see as USDA's role in supporting farmers as FSMA is implemented? Will this administration and the FY18 budget proposal recommend that this is another area for the private sector alone to take the lead? While I believe that there is a role for the federal government to play in working with farmers on training and technical assistance to comply with FSMA requirements, I have not been fully briefed on the Department's outreach programs. If I am confirmed, I will work with USDA staff and the Administration to ensure appropriate program funding to carry out the important education and outreach required by FSMA.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry

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March 23, 2017

Questions for the Record

Senator Chris Van Hollen

1. In the 2008 Farm Bill, Congress created the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative, which prioritized resources to effectively use tax dollars and deliver significant outcomes. In the 2014 Farm Bill, Congress folded that program into the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to scale up more voluntary conservation that curbs risks and builds resilience for stronger production. Do you believe USDA should take additional steps to build better partnerships that can deliver more large scale conservation in areas of national priority like the Chesapeake Bay Watershed? As I mentioned in my confirmation hearing, I believe the Chesapeake Bay is a national priority and it will be essential for USDA to work with state and local governments, as well as land owners to build working partnerships on conservation.
2. When RCPP was enacted, resources were spread across the country and investments in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed decreased significantly. Given the unique nature of the watershed, will you work to increase resources and prioritize their delivery to projects that will result in significant nutrient reduction and water quality improvement in line with the goals set by states and farmers? If I am confirmed, I will work with you and Congress, as well as the Administration and the States to dedicate appropriate resources to nutrient reduction and water quality improvements.
3. In the 2014 Farm Bill, we reduced mandatory funding levels for conservation programs to meet budget objectives. In addition to RCPP, Maryland relies on programs like the Environmental Quality Incentive Program and the Conservation Reserve Program to achieve conservation objectives. Do you support maintaining conservation program funding at the levels set in the last Farm Bill? Although I am familiar with these programs, I have not been fully briefed on the funding levels and specific objectives set forth under the 2014 Farm Bill. If I am confirmed, I will work closely with my staff at USDA, the Administration and Congress to support appropriate funding levels for conservation programs.
4. The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is a key Federal agency in delivering utility systems, including broadband services through its Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP), to rural communities. Since 2009, RUS has awarded \$6.7 billion for nearly 550 projects to improve telecommunications infrastructure in rural communities - including broadband delivery. This include "last-mile" projects which are providing households, businesses and other end users with broadband service. How will you address the ongoing need for broadband connectivity, including "last-mile" projects, in rural communities? As I mentioned during my confirmation hearing, I am a strong supporter of the Rural Utilities Service and its mission. If I am confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the specific activities of the service and

supporting its work to improve broadband and telecommunications infrastructure in rural communities.

5. Aquaculture and farmed shellfish is a growing industry on the East Coast. What can the USDA do to improve marketing opportunities for U.S. aquaculture products? Are there additional legislated authorities that are necessary for USDA assistance? Although I am aware that the USDA has several programs which focus on aquaculture, I have not been briefed on Agriculture Marketing Service activities for U.S. aquaculture products. If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and the Committee to determine what, if any, legislative authorities the Department may need to improve marketing opportunities for the industry.
6. How can the USDA assist to improve shellfish aquaculture science, particularly increasing resilience to climate change, ocean acidification, and harmful algal blooms? Although I am aware that the USDA has several programs which focus on aquaculture, I have not been briefed on the aquaculture research programs or aquaculture monitoring and surveillance program activities currently underway at the Department. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the experts at the Department to facilitate improvements in shellfish aquaculture science.
7. What steps can USDA take to improve water quality in coastal states to assist in shellfish breeding and production? As I mentioned in my confirmation hearing, I am committed to working with you and the Committee to working with state and local governments, as well as landowners to develop better partnerships and help facilitate improvements in watersheds such as the Chesapeake Bay, which, along with USDA's aquaculture research program, is essential to shellfish breeding and production.
8. Do you accept the science that human-caused climate change will have serious impacts on the Chesapeake Bay, including increased coastal flooding and erosion; increased saltwater in marshes and wetlands that could lead to loss of habitat; warmer water that threatens eelgrass and the fish, crabs, and waterfowl that depend on it; more extreme weather that would damage crops and increase flooding; and altered wildlife migration? Although it is clear that the climate has been changing, and that changes in the climate will likely have impacts on the Chesapeake Bay, the extent that human activities play a role in those changes is still the subject of significant debate within the scientific community. That being said, I do believe that the farming community has and can continue to reduce its impacts on the environment and, if I am confirmed, will work with USDA programs, the Administration, Congress, the States and the farming community to address these impacts in a thoughtful and coordinated way.
9. Do you accept the science of ocean acidification that has directly connected the increase in human-caused carbon dioxide emissions with decreases in ocean pH? Science has indicated that increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide have caused ocean acidification. As I have mentioned previously, I believe that the farming community has and can continue to reduce its impacts on the environment and, if I am confirmed, will work with USDA programs, the Administration, Congress, the States and the farming community to address these impacts in a thoughtful and coordinated way.

10. Do you believe that climate change is connected to the increase in destructive wildfire seasons?
Science indicates that climate change may be a factor in forest fires, along with the presence of hazardous fuel and increased human activity in forests.
11. Would you support climate-smart agricultural policies and practices that conserve water and improve soil quality to make our food systems more resilient? Yes.
12. Do you believe that the U.S. Forest Service should work to maintain healthy forests to sequester carbon and offset greenhouse gas emissions? Certainly I agree that the Forest Service should work to maintain healthy forests.
13. The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) has a large footprint in MD. Maryland receives 12% of the ARS budget and has 12% of ARS employees. Beltsville hosts the single largest ARS facility in the country. According to a 2011 report entitled “The Economic Return to U.S. Public Agricultural Research”, for every dollar invested in agricultural research results in seventeen dollars’ worth of economic impact. Currently, ARS is suffering from over \$373 million in deferred maintenance throughout the agency. ARS plays a critical role in the search for solutions to or mitigations of a variety of diseases and invasive species that threaten U.S. agriculture including avian influenza, citrus greening, and wheat scab. As Agriculture Secretary, how will you address this high level of deferred maintenance which I believe is restricting the effectiveness and productiveness of ARS? If I am confirmed, I will work with you, Congress and the Administration to ensure appropriate funding for ARS.
14. Are you committed to maintaining the scientific independence of research throughout the USDA, including their ability to use the best-available science to assess climate impacts and protect pollinators? Yes.
15. Are there particular strategies that you would pursue to ensure that small- and medium-sized farms have access to the risk management tools and other USDA services that allow them to remain viable and secure? I have not been fully briefed on these programs, but am fully committed to ensuring that small and mid-sized farms have full access to all of the USDA programs in order to ensure that they remain viable and secure if I am confirmed.
16. The USDA is a participant in the National Science and Technology Council’s Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology. In 2016, the Subcommittee put forward several recommendations to address harmful algal blooms and hypoxia, including:
 - “Add to and improve scientific understanding of HABs and hypoxia, and their causes and effects, as well as improve testing and research methods”
 - “Strengthen and integrate new and existing monitoring programs”
 - “Improve predictive capabilities by developing and enhancing HAB and hypoxia modeling programs; improve disease surveillance for human and animal exposure, illnesses, and death”
 - “Improve stakeholder communications, including having more effective and readily-available public advisories, stronger connections with susceptible communities, and a

better understanding of the socioeconomic and health-related impacts of HABs and hypoxia”

- “Continue and expand collaborations in research, management, and policy-related arenas”

Do you agree with these recommendations? How do you believe USDA can use its expertise and resources to address harmful algal blooms? I have not been fully briefed on the National Science and Technology Council’s Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology or its 2016 recommendations. If I am confirmed, I will be work with USDA staff to determine an appropriate response to algal blooms.

17. Are you committed to strong nutrition standards for food in schools? Yes.

18. The Farm to School Grant Program provides an avenue for local farmers to provide fresh foods to schools. The program is currently funded at \$9.1 million – would you maintain that funding level? I have not been fully briefed on the budget for the Farm to School Grant Program but I support the program which has been successful in Georgia and other states. If I am confirmed, I will work with the Administration and Congress to ensure appropriate funding for the program.

19. As you know, the Horse Protection Act (HPA) prohibits sore horses from participating in shows, exhibitions, sales or auctions and prohibits the transportation of sore horses to or from any of these events. Before leaving office, the Obama Administration proposed an important rule to update HPA regulations to finally end horse soring. 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 – if confirmed, will you ensure that this HPA rule is promptly published? I have not been fully briefed on the proposal to update HPA regulations on horse soring. If I am confirmed, I will work with USDA staff and Congress to evaluate the proposed regulations and make a determination regarding the publication of final regulations in a timely manner.

20. Earlier this year, USDA’s Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), abruptly removed from its website thousands of pages of searchable inspection reports, annual reports, and other documents regarding enforcement of the Animal Welfare Act and Horse Protection Act citing privacy and other laws. Removal of these documents have left the Humane Society and other animal welfare advocates with the FOIA process, a costly and time consuming procedure where responses can sometimes take months or years to obtain information, as their primary access to this information. Public access to this animal care data helps guide consumer decision-making and plays an important role in deterring regulated entities from violating the law. As Secretary of Agriculture, will you promote transparency by restoring these records and resuming posting this important information on a searchable database? As I mentioned during my confirmation hearing, I believe strongly in the importance of data and science in policy making. If I am confirmed, I will work every day to ensure that the Department conducts all of its activities in a transparent manner.

21. Are you committed to continuing the implementation of the Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative between the Farm Service Agency, the Risk Management Agency, and Approved Insurance Providers to better share information and eliminate duplicative reporting requirements? As I mentioned during my confirmation hearing, I believe strongly in the importance of data and science in policy making. If I am confirmed, I will work every day to ensure that the Department conducts all of its activities in a transparent manner.
22. Will you take steps to implement the goals of the Pollinator Partnership Action Plan as recommended by the White House Pollinator Health Task Force? I have not been fully briefed on the Pollinator Partnership Action Plan. If I am confirmed, I will work with the USDA staff to review this plan and take appropriate actions to promote the health of bees and other pollinators.

