

**NOMINATION OF DR. JEWEL H. BRONAUGH,
OF VIRGINIA, TO BE DEPUTY
SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY**

UNITED STATES SENATE

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C O N T E N T S

Thursday, April 22, 2021

	Page
HEARING:	
Nomination of Dr. Jewel H. Bronaugh, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Agriculture	1
STATEMENTS PRESENTED BY SENATORS	
Stabenow, Hon. Debbie, U.S. Senator from the State of Michigan	1
Boozman, Hon. John, U.S. Senator from the State of Arkansas	3
WITNESSES	
Warner, Hon. Mark R., U.S. Senator from the State of Virginia	5
Bronaugh, Jewel H., Med, Edd, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Agriculture	6
APPENDIX	
PREPARED STATEMENTS:	
Bronaugh, Jewel H.	34
DOCUMENT(S) SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:	
Stabenow, Hon. Debbie:	
Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association, letter of support	38
Food and Farming Organizations, letter of support	39
Bronaugh, Jewel H.:	
Committee questionnaire, Office of Government Ethics Executive Branch Personnel Public Financial Disclosure Report and 5-day letter filed by Dr. Jewel H. Bronaugh	41
QUESTION AND ANSWER:	
Bronaugh, Jewel H.:	
Written response to questions from Hon. Debbie Stabenow	84
Written response to questions from Hon. John Boozman	90
Written response to questions from Hon. Patrick Leahy	100
Written response to questions from Hon. Amy Klobuchar	101
Written response to questions from Hon. Richard Durbin	102
Written response to questions from Hon. Ben Ray Luján	108
Written response to questions from Hon. John Hoeven	109
Written response to questions from Hon. Roger Marshall, M.D.	110
Written response to questions from Hon. John Boozman	113

**NOMINATION OF DR. JEWEL H. BRONAUGH,
OF VIRGINIA, TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY
OF AGRICULTURE**

THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 2021

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., via Webex and in room 301, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Debbie Stabenow, Chairwoman of the Committee, presiding.

Present or submitting a statement: Senators Stabenow, Brown, Bennet, Gillibrand, Luján, Warnock, Boozman, Hoeven, Ernst, Hyde-Smith, Marshall, Tuberville, Grassley, Thune, Fischer, and Braun.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DEBBIE STABENOW, U.S. SENATOR
FROM THE STATE OF MICHIGAN, CHAIRWOMAN, U.S. COM-
MITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY**

Chairwoman STABENOW. I call this hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry to order. I thank colleagues for your patience as several of us were trying to be two places at once. I am looking forward to “Beam Me Up, Scotty” so we can do this without running between office buildings. Thanks very much.

Everyone on this Committee knows the breadth of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and how it affects every American, whether they are a farmer or a rancher, facing—

Senator WARNER. Could I get some ice water, or ice with my favorite bottle?

Chairwoman STABENOW. I think someone is tuning in here on us. It sounds like Senator Warner, but we will welcome him to the Committee.

Senator WARNER. Are you ready for me, Madam Chair, or later?

Chairwoman STABENOW. Oh, I am sorry. It is Senator Warner. I will be ready for you in a few moments.

Senator WARNER. Yes, ma’am.

Chairwoman STABENOW. I am sorry.

Senator WARNER. Yes, ma’am.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Just in a few moments. Thank you. Thank you. Senator Warner will be introducing our nominee.

Everyone on the Committee knows the breadth, as I said, of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and how affects every American, whether it is a farmer, a rancher facing severe drought, a family

struggling to make ends meet, or a small town looking to provide high-speed internet to its residents.

I am pleased that today we are here to consider a nominee for a position that covers the scope of these issues, and more, at the USDA. Dr. Jewel Bronaugh, welcome and congratulations on your nomination to serve as Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. You have a very impressive and wide-ranging agricultural background. You have worked on some of our most important issues to American farmers, families, and rural communities.

As Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, you led one of the most diverse agricultural States in the country—slightly behind Michigan—growing everything from apples to peanuts to turkeys. You also have a track record as a strong leader in helping Virginia farmers, families, and rural communities weather the pandemic.

You are also no stranger to USDA. For two years, you were the Virginia State Executive Director for the USDA Farm Service Agency, overseeing Virginia's local Farm Service Agency offices, which, as we know, serve on the front lines helping our farmers and ranchers.

You know first-hand the important role USDA plays in helping farmers and ranchers tap into resources that will help them grow and sustain their farms. Whether it is a dairy farmer signing up for the Dairy Margin Coverage Program, a soybean producer applying for ARC, or a beginning farmer learning how to start their operation, you have valuable experience working directly with farmers on the ground.

You also know how conservation can help farmers be productive and profitable, while also protecting land and water and addressing the climate crisis. I trust that you will bring that perspective your role.

You also have extensive experience in agricultural research, which is fundamental to the success of American agriculture. As Dean of the College of Agriculture at Virginia State University, you oversaw important research and innovation that helps our farmers grow the food that feeds the world.

When we met last week, you and I also discussed how we can support all corners of American agriculture, big and small, urban and rural. We need to make sure there is opportunity for all farmers, no matter what you grow or how you grow it.

Dr. Bronaugh has the support of a wide range of organizations representing food and farming, including the American Farm Bureau Federation, National Farmers Union, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, United Fresh Produce Association, National Milk Producers Federation, and a variety of State and local groups, including several from my home State of Michigan. I ask that such letters be included in the record. Without objection, so ordered.

[The letters can be found on pages 38–40 in the appendix.]

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you again for being here. I look forward to hearing more about your plans and your vision today. I now recognize our Ranking Member, Senator Boozman, and then I will recognize Senator Warner for the formal introduction.

**STATEMENT OF HON. SENATOR JOHN BOOZMAN, U.S.
SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS**

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you, Madam Chair. We are very pleased to welcome Dr. Jewel Bronaugh to the Committee this morning as we consider her nomination to be Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. Secretary Vilsack was confirmed a few weeks ago, and we appreciate his eagerness to get a full team in place so the Department can continue to work on behalf of the Nation's farmers, ranchers, and other rural stakeholders. I look forward to hearing from Secretary Vilsack in the next few days on the status of the work he has been doing since getting reacquainted with his old job.

The Deputy Secretary of Agriculture is the second highest-ranking official at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. More importantly, she becomes the Acting Secretary if the Secretary is unable to perform the duties of the office. The position coordinates day-to-day operations within the Department and efforts across agencies. The Deputy Secretary is tasked with implementing the departmental mission. The Deputy Secretary receives input from outside the agency and stays up to date on issues and trends in the agriculture arena.

Dr. Bronaugh certainly has shown she has the experience to handle these significant responsibilities at the Department. Throughout Dr. Bronaugh's career, she has shown to be a true leader in agriculture by serving her country and the State of Virginia in government and educational roles. Her experience includes her service as the Virginia State Executive Director for the USDA Farm Service Agency, where she was appointed by Governor Terry McAuliffe and the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack in July 2015.

In her role with FSA, she provided oversight for critical production, stabilization, price support, compliance, farm loan conservation, environmental and emergency assistance programs in Virginia. She was responsible for the supervision of 41 field offices and the State FSA office, comprising 186 employees. Dr. Bronaugh was the first African American female in the Nation to serve in this capacity, and she is the first woman of color to be nominated for the USDA Deputy Secretary.

She has championed causes in her career such as developing and delivering programs addressing issues of bullying among youth while she was Associate Administrator of Cooperative Extension and a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, and in the spring of 2019, she launched the Farmer Stress Task Force, organized in partnership with agriculture and health-related agencies and organizations to raise awareness and coordinate resources to address farmer stress and mental health challenges in Virginia.

She has won praise and support from many in the agriculture community, including the American Farm Bureau, the National Farmers Union, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, National Cotton Council, North American Meat Institute, USA Rice, and I am sure many others.

As everyone knows in this room, agriculture is more prone to regional concerns as opposed to partisan battles. I am pleased to see that in Dr. Bronaugh's current job she serves as the Treasurer of

the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture, part of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, which displays her appreciation and understanding of Southern agriculture.

As I have stated before, I am a strong believer that past performance is indicative of future performance, so I believe Dr. Bronaugh is bound for success at the Department. If confirmed, I am confident that Dr. Bronaugh and her staff will continue working in a bipartisan fashion with Congress on behalf of our farmers, ranchers, and those the Department serves.

USDA and Congress have a very special relationship, one that is traditionally very collegial and informative. I hope that that relationship will grow stronger in the coming days and months under the guidance of Dr. Bronaugh, and that she will endeavor to work with Congress in a transparent, bipartisan manner as we all serve the agriculture constituency.

Despite seeing light at the end of the tunnel, there are many challenges to getting rural America back to a full recovery, and open, transparent lines of communication between USDA and Congress are an important part of doing the work to reach that goal. I continue to monitor the status of COVID relief, as I know the Chairwoman is also, and it is imperative that the CFAP assistance gets to those most in need. I was troubled when the Biden administration announced a 60-day review of some of this assistance while advocating for an additional \$1.9 trillion, then passing it on a partisan basis without the benefit of input from all in Congress.

However, I am pleased to see that some relief has begun to flow to those who are in need. Accordingly, I encourage you, Dr. Bronaugh, to work to deliver assistance as expeditiously as possible to those who continue to struggle with this pandemic.

I also remain concerned about a number of issues in ag today, including how the administration works with our producers on issues involving the environment and climate. In recent years, production agriculture has taken many strides to be more efficient and environmentally friendly. We need USDA and other Federal agencies to acknowledge that work and see agriculture as part of the solution, not part of the problem.

It is important that USDA and this Committee keep farmers and producers at the forefront of any discussion on climate change. Heavy-handed, one-size-fits-all regulations simply do not work. Climate policy that is advanced by this administration or by others in Congress must be addressed in a bipartisan fashion with a focus to truly benefit all farmers across the country, without mandating specific farming practices. Responding to the demands for immediate, urgent legislative action on issues that affect our farmers, ranchers, and producers is important, and it is our job.

As Congress considers additional climate policies, I urge my colleagues that we should address such legislation in a diligent, collaborative, and bipartisan manner, because while bipartisan consensus takes time, it yields greater buy-in, and hopefully better results.

Dr. Bronaugh, I look forward to hearing from you today and working with you, if confirmed, and I now yield back to our Chairwoman.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much, Senator Boozman, and I would now yield to my good friend and colleague from Virginia, Senator Warner.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. MARK R. WARNER, A U.S. SENATOR
FROM THE STATE OF VIRGINIA**

Senator WARNER. Well, good morning, everyone, and thank you, Madam Chair Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman and distinguished members of the Committee. It is obviously my distinct pleasure and honor to introduce formally a fellow Virginian, an outstanding public servant, to serve as President Biden's Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Dr. Jewel Bronaugh.

Since both Senator Stabenow and Senator Boozman went through a number of the parts of your background I will only hit them briefly. Dr. Bronaugh, I do not think we ought to bring up the fact that the Chairwoman just said that Michigan was much better than Virginia on a series of agricultural things. Until we get through the Committee we shouldn't correct her of that impression.

Chairwoman STABENOW. That is true, Senator Warner. I simply said we had more diversity of crops, but you are absolutely right.

Senator WARNER. Well, Madam Chair, you know, Dr. Bronaugh and I would never, never try to contest that, at least until she is confirmed.

[Laughter.]

Senator WARNER. It has already been mentioned, and again I will just try to hit this very quickly, because I really do appreciate both you and the Senator from Arkansas. You know a lot about the nominee's background. She served as the 16th Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. She has held that position since 2018. She was the first African American woman. Senator Boozman brought out the fact that during COVID she had a very interesting, I think, program called the Farmer Stress Task Force, to recognize the challenges that farmers had to endure through the COVID challenge, and that, again, I think, shows her creativity and her willingness to lean in.

As has been mentioned already, she understands very well the mission at USDA. As Commissioner of VDACS she established the Virginia Food Access Investment Grant Program that looked at this problem of food deserts, again something I know the Chairwoman has shown great leadership on, and I think you will find in Dr. Bronaugh somebody who can also bring creativity to that position.

You both mentioned, as well, that she served as Dean at the College of Agriculture at a great university in Virginia, Virginia State University in Petersburg, again, recognizing some of the issues around food deserts and food insecurity. She has obviously worked in some of these previous roles with Secretary Vilsack. In 2015, she was nominated by then Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe and Secretary Vilsack as Virginia State Executive Director of USDA Farm Service Agency, again familiar with the very strong Federal agricultural programs that I know she will help oversee.

This is really a very, very talented public servant. Both you and the Ranking Member I think have expressed that. I think the other members of the Committee, as they get a chance to know Dr.

Bronaugh, will realize both her heart for public service, her willingness to be committed, willingness to shake things up and try new things as well.

I recommend her 100 percent, without reservation, and would appreciate the Committee's prompt review of her qualifications. With that, Madam Chair, I will yield back and, again, Dr. Bronaugh, once we get you confirmed we can have the debate about diversity of farm products between Michigan and Virginia. That will be saved for another time.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you, Senator Warner, and you should quit while you are ahead.

Senator WARNER. I know. Don't worry. I am smart enough to yield back my 55 seconds, so thank you so much.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Well, thank you very, very much for that high praise for our nominee.

Now, Dr. Bronaugh, I have two questions for you to address. I realize we are doing this remotely, but I would ask that you raise your right hand. I see our nominee. Good morning.

Ms. BRONAUGH. Good morning.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Please raise your right hand. Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to provide is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Ms. BRONAUGH. I do.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you. Second, do you agree that, if confirmed, you will appear before any duly constituted Committee of Congress if asked to appear?

Ms. BRONAUGH. I will.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much. Dr. Bronaugh, welcome again. I look forward to learning more about your vision and priorities for the Department of Agriculture, and, of course, your testimony will be made a part of the record in its entirety. You may proceed as you desire.

**STATEMENT OF JEWEL H. BRONAUGH, M.Ed, Ed.D., OF
VIRGINIA, TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE**

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you. I appreciate being here today. Thank you, Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman, and members of this Committee. I also thank Secretary Vilsack for all of his support, and many thanks to Senator Warner for joining today for the warm introduction.

First and foremost, thank you for this opportunity. I am here today with the loving support of my husband, Cleavon, who happens to be a retired U.S. Army veteran, our beautiful children, my parents—two teachers who raised me to become an educator—and so many role models, including Virginia State Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring, and the farmers, ranchers, and landowners I work for each day.

Happy Earth Day to everybody, as we recognize 51 years of effort to protect our environment and restore our earth, and we are wearing the color green today to reflect today and what it means.

I am honored to have been nominated by President Biden to serve as the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture at USDA. I know that, if confirmed, I will be the first black woman and woman of color to serve as Deputy Secretary. As such, I fully understand the

historic nature of this confirmation, along with the responsibilities of my service in this role. I will join thousands of dedicated civil servants at USDA who work in every State and 100 countries around the world. I know from experience how their work touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. I value their work and I identify with their selfless commitment.

My parents taught me humility and they encouraged me to treat others with dignity. I went into education because of my parents, but I focused on agriculture because I wanted to inspire young people to build better communities through food and nutrition. I am also very proud of my career in Cooperative Extension, where I was first inspired by young people in 4-H, getting to know the families and communities across Virginia who produced our food, feed, fiber, and fuel. This led to the honor of serving as Dean of the College of Agriculture at Virginia State University, where many of my students were first-generation college students from rural communities. I am very proud of those men and women who have become outstanding leaders in their fields.

In 2015, Secretary Vilsack appointed me to serve as State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency, where I led the implementation of farm bill programs and I personally visited each of the 41 field offices within my first year of service to learn more about how FSA programs affected farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners.

Soon thereafter, I received the appointment as the 16th Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. I was proud to work with other State Commissioners, Directors and Secretaries to prioritize PPE for farmers and farm workers, advocate for State and Federal resources to support dairy farmers and poultry producers, expand opportunities for small and midsized farmers and ranchers to obtain infrastructure and processing capabilities, and develop strategies to meet environmental and water quality goals for the Chesapeake Bay.

Throughout all these experiences and opportunities, it has been personal interactions with farmers, ranchers, and land owners that I have found deeply rewarding. I have learned of their struggles. I have been in their homes and listened to aging mothers express the fear of losing the family farm because the children wanted to pursue careers outside of farming. I spent time with black farmers so inundated with stress resulting from years of farm debt that they gave up hope. I have spoken with Hispanic workers who, while working someone else's land, fully realized their dream of owning their own farm. I personally experienced the tears of multigenerational dairy farmers given no other choice but to sell their dairy herd and the farm that had been in the family for four generations.

What I took away from each experience is the importance not only of listening, but hearing what people are saying beneath the emotion.

What motivates me and inspires me is that with all the challenges our farmers and ranchers and landowners face today, I have never met one who is not eternally optimistic. Throughout the pandemic I spoke with one agricultural producer after another who somehow found ways to realign their operation to meet the de-

mands of an altered food supply chain. They only required help to provide a voice to assist them in obtaining resources that they needed for financial survival. If America's farmers and ranchers can find a way to stay positive and committed to their work, then I am obligated to use my voice, and, if confirmed, to do what I can to provide help and assistance in building our rural economy back stronger.

Each time I speak with Secretary Vilsack, we discuss equity. I share the Secretary's commitment to take bold action, to work with this Committee to address discrimination in all its forms across USDA. In 1862, Abraham Lincoln established USDA. In 1864, he called it "The People's Department." I believe it should be just that: the department for all people.

I am here today to commit that, if confirmed, I will be a champion for all farmers, producers, families, and rural communities who rely on USDA. I will remain committed to helping lead a Department that serves all Americans equally. I am grateful for your time and I welcome any questions you may have, and thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Bronaugh can be found on page 34 in the appendix.]

Chairwoman STABENOW. Well, thank you so much, Dr. Bronaugh. Thank you so much for those comments, and we will now begin a round of five-minute questions from each member. As I begin, on a personal level I just wanted to say I was so pleased that I saw you were involved in 4-H. I spent my life growing up in 4-H, and I think it is such a wonderful leadership tool for young people, and I appreciate the fact that you understand that, so that was great to see.

Dr. Bronaugh, your current position as Commissioner of Agriculture of Virginia, and your previous service leading the USDA's Farm Service Agency in the State has given you tremendous insight, as you talked about, into the needs of farmers and ranchers, and I think this experience will serve you well if you are confirmed as Deputy Secretary.

As you know, American agriculture is incredibly diverse. Could you talk more about the lessons you have learned about how USDA can reach all farmers, big and small, conventional and organic, regardless of who they are and what they grow?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Yes. Thank you, Senator Stabenow, and I first want to start by saying I am excited to see this Committee pass the Growing Climate Solutions Act with such bipartisan leadership. I look forward to engaging with you, Senator Braun, Senator Boozman, and other members of the Committee to ensure that we have a timely and important effort to impact climate change.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you.

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you for your question. When I think about all that USDA does, you know, we have programs for all of the major priorities that we face in this country today. I think about the major priorities of the pandemic and addressing issues around health, climate change, racial equity, and building our rural economy back stronger, and USDA certainly has programs that affect all of those major priorities and can be used to address those priorities.

Senator Stabenow, you asked about my background and my experience in how we can utilize USDA programs, and I can go back to my first experiences in research and Extension where it was critical that we relied on science-based information and funding through NIFA, through ERS and ARS.

You mentioned 4-H and youth development. Youth development in the 4-H organization is one of the strongest in the world because it relies on research-based information and the focus on youth development as a body of knowledge, a science for really working to improve our young people and their leadership. Of course, the technical assistance aspect of programs that USDA provides has been critically important.

At Virginia State University, an 1890 land grant institution, we utilize many resources from USDA to address small and mid-sized and minority farmers, things that they needed—cold storage infrastructure, micro loans, grant opportunities like the Specialty Crop Block Grant, and the 2501 Program that we have relied on significantly. We also utilized resources in nutrition, in terms of trying to expand greater usage of SNAP and WIC. Then, of course, how we can access small-scale infrastructure through farm storage facility loans and others.

At FSA, I understood the critical safety net that USDA provided, the need for a strong crop insurance program, directing guaranteed loans, disaster assistance. Very important. Then I learned about the connections in the local office, where you had co-located NRCS programs that focused on conservation the ability to work in that local office through those important partnerships and those conservation efforts.

At the Virginia Department of Agriculture, USDA impacts us, and we work with them in many ways—in international trade, food safety, for example, food distribution, animal and plant health, and, of course, broadband expansion.

It does not matter the size or the type of operation that you are. There is a program at USDA that can work to address our most critical needs that we face in agriculture today.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Great. Well, thank you very much. Just in closing my comments, one other question. You mentioned high-speed internet access, and when we look at our small towns and rural communities, we have a host of challenges. Certainly COVID showed us how the lack of high-speed internet access is so critical in so many areas. Aging infrastructure, you know, maintaining families, sustainable jobs, what more can USDA do to address these issues and create economic opportunities in rural America?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Well, we have a great opportunity, Senator Stabenow. You know, in thinking about opportunity for things like clean energy jobs in rural America, there is a great opportunity in terms of supporting renewable fuels, bio-based, product development, for example. Opportunities to manage our forests and grasslands, and you mentioned our broadband infrastructure. There are great opportunities through utilizing USDA programs such as ReConnect, in reaching that last mile of broadband infrastructure. That helps with telehealth, with small businesses development, distance learning.

Also, helping to renew the electrical grid in our rural communities is very important, and, of course, USDA has many opportunities around that. Improving housing, restoring our schools, being able to help with hospitals who can provide vaccinations, and then safe drinking water is so important to our Tribal communities and our rural communities.

We have a lot of opportunity through rural development programs to make an impact to address climate, to address infrastructure, and other important resources for our rural communities. If I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I look forward to working with all aspects of USDA to continue to strengthen our rural communities and make them as strong as they can be.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you so much. I am going to turn now to Senator BOOZMAN.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you, Madam Chair, and again, we appreciate, Dr. Bronaugh, your willingness to serve. My girls also were very active in 4-H. I have three daughters and they were all State record-book winners, and it was a tremendous benefit, not only to them but to our entire family. We appreciate your advocacy there and your hard work.

Also, I was with Wes Ward, our State Ag Secretary, last weekend, and he said to be sure and get on the stick and do all I could to help you get confirmed. He is one of your major cheerleaders. It is nice to hear from people that actually know you well and appreciate the service that you have done.

Let me ask you about a couple of things that I think are important that I want to put in your mind. Section 1005 of the American Rescue Plan included “such sums as necessary” for the cost of loan modifications and payments to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers who had outstanding Farm Service Agency farm loan debt as of January 1, 2021.

One of the problems that has occurred is that we have heard from a number of ag lenders that partner with USDA to make Farm Service Agency guaranteed farm loans to socially disadvantaged farmers who could be negatively impacted by the program if USDA is not careful. These are lenders that, again, are so helpful to these individuals.

If USDA is not careful in how it administers this—Section 1005 provides for the cost of USDA’s lost future interest on FSA direct loans—it would be both unfair and unfortunate if USDA failed to provide the same relief to FSA’s private sector lending partners. Also, not only would it be unfair, but I think we have the potential of some of those lenders leaving the market and making it more difficult for individuals to get loans.

I would ask you to commit to providing the same relief to FSA’s guaranteed farm lenders and, at the very least, make this a priority to find out how we can, again, treat everybody in a fair manner.

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator Boozman, and I appreciated conversations that I had with you recently, understanding that agriculture is 25 percent of the economy in your State. Please tell Wes Ward that I said hello. It was good chatting with you.

Senator Boozman, you talk about a critical issue in terms of farm loans, direct and guaranteed loans, and you also talk about those

loans being available to all farmers. I think as we work through some of the challenges, working with our socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, it will be important to ensure that we have those resources in the direct and guaranteed loan program. If I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I will work with USDA to ensure that through FSA we have the loans full and available to all of our Nation's farmers and ranchers.

Senator BOOZMAN. Thank you very much. Dr. Bronaugh, in order to ensure legal compliance with FOIA, the Federal Records Act, other Federal laws, best practices, and to be as transparent as possible, will you commit to ensuring that those employed at USDA, whether they are political appointees or those that serve in the career service, use official government email accounts, not personal email, when discussing or working on USDA-related business? Will you further commit to keeping Congress informed of USDA's compliance with such laws and principles?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Yes. Senator Boozman, if confirmed, I will make sure that all USDA employees comply with all rules and expectations of the Federal Government. We always want to make sure that we are doing business in the most appropriate way.

Senator BOOZMAN. Also regarding that, if confirmed, will you commit, without reservation, to notify Congress in advance of any public announcement of any major changes regarding policy decisions, programmatic or otherwise, whether made by you or the Department during your tenure? Further, if confirmed, will you commit to ensuring the Department provides timely responses to stakeholders seeking assistance or information on programs and practices impacting the agriculture community?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Boozman, yes. If confirmed, I will commit to timely responses to our important stakeholders, as well as to consistent and open communication with Members of Congress.

Senator BOOZMAN. Good. Also, very importantly, letting Congress know, letting the Committee know, in advance, with programmatic changes. Those things certainly are expected and very, very helpful. With that I yield back.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much, Senator Boozman. I believe we have Senator Gillibrand is next.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Thank you, Dr. Bronaugh, for being here today, and congratulations on your historic nomination.

First I would like to talk about dairy. In the 2018 Farm Bill, there was language that changed the price calculation for Class I milk. This change was implemented in 2019, and what it did was change the pricing calculation for Class I milk, which previously was calculated to use the "higher of Class III or Class IV price, plus applicable Class I differential, to an averaging method of those two classes plus \$0.74." This current Class I milk pricing cannot be changed until May 2021, after which it can be modified, either through legislation or an amendment to the Federal Milk Marketing Orders.

I have heard from our dairy farmers across New York and the country who have stated this change has caused dairy farmers collectively to suffer a net loss of hundreds of millions of dollars during the almost two years this rule has been in place. Now that we

are almost at the full two-year mark for this rule to be changed, USDA has an opportunity to resolve this issue by giving farmers a chance to revert back to the old method of calculating Class I milk by basing it off of the higher of Class III or Class IV price. This one change would put money back in dairy farmers' pockets immediately.

Do you think this is a change we should make?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Gillibrand, it is great to meet you. Dairy is the third-largest commodity in the commonwealth of Virginia, and I do understand the importance of ensuring that they get stabilized prices for their milk, and we need to support the dairy industry.

If confirmed, in terms of the milk pricing rule, I look to learn more about the process, and, if confirmed, I will followup with your office for further discussion to see what the USDA can do in order to move forward with the milk pricing rule.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. I think it is really important that you listen to farmers on this issue. Not all the organizations that purport to speak for them actually do. I would be grateful if you could commit to holding Federal Milk Marketing Order hearings and give a chance for amendments to be offered.

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Gillibrand, I understand the importance of that farmer engagement. It is very important. If confirmed, we will be sure to engage in conversations with important dairy stakeholders and others prior to making decisions.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay. Earlier this week, the USDA announced that they were extending free school meals for all students through 2021–2022 school year by continuing the existing waivers that had been granted due to the pandemic. This is welcome news and gives both schools and parents peace of mind that children will have free school meals for at least one more year.

However, we do need to go further and make universal free school meals a reality even when a pandemic is not present. Dr. Bronaugh, can you speak to what the impact of universal school meals has had on children's health, nutrition, and education during this pandemic, and will you be a supporter within USDA of a universal school meals program, even after the pandemic is over?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Gillibrand, you spoke about the importance of the school waivers, which I think provide an opportunity for food during the pandemic, and nutritious food that we can provide in a safe and healthy way. It provides flexibilities for our schools to be able to try to meet those needs.

In terms of universal free meals, that is something that I think would be incredibly important to, one, look at research and data, but to rely on conversations with Congress in order to determine how to best move forward. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with your office and other members of this Committee to determine how we can continue to offer school meals and other nutritional support and flexibilities to our school system to do so.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. The economic viability of more than 1,300 organic farms in New York depends on making sure that all organic operations operate under the same rules and that all certifiers are interpreting the standards consistently. There are several long-overdue rulemakings that are critical to the organic

farm sector, including organic livestock and poultry practices, the Strengthening Organic Enforcement Rule.

Today, I want to ask you about one specific rulemaking that is long overdue, which is the Origin of Livestock regulation, which would close loopholes in the organic standards related to transitioning of conventional dairy cows into organic dairy operations. Those operations that used the loophole to continuously transition conventional animals into organic production are gaining an economic advantage over the other organic dairy farms that are meeting the standard.

Will you commit to instructing the National Organic Program to finalize an enforcement rule on Origin of Livestock as quickly as possible so that New York organic dairy operations are not so economically disadvantaged?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Gillibrand, I understand the importance of the Origin of Livestock rule. If confirmed, I will work with USDA to become fully informed on how we will need to move forward with this rule, and as such, after guidance we will work with your office and any other members of this Committee ensuring that we move forward in the appropriate way.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Ms. Bronaugh. I appreciate your testimony, and congratulations.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much. Now Senator Ernst.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you as well, Dr. Bronaugh. It is wonderful to have you in front of the Committee today, and I am very excited about the extensive experience that you are bringing into this position.

I do appreciate your dedication to improving farmer mental health, and that is an area that I have focused on here in the U.S. Senate and worked with Senator Tammy Baldwin. We really appreciate the Farmer Stress and Mental Health Task Force in Virginia. I think that is a wonderful step forward to ensuring the mental health of our farmers and ranchers. Thank you very much for that.

Now one concern that I do have is the use of Executive orders by the Biden administration to address climate change and to institute policy. I am certain that everyone in this room really does care about our environment, and, in fact, I would argue that our farmers are our Nation's first conservationists. I say that all the time.

That being said, we have seen countless proposals from the 30x30 land rule to transitioning the Federal fleet to electric vehicles, and just last week we saw USTR announce the need to fight climate change with trade policies.

Clean water, soil, and air are a top priority for our farmers, but what I worry is that the Biden administration's singular focus on climate policy could actually create an environment where our farmers and producers are not seen as part of the solution but instead they are being targeted as the problem. The path forward really does have to be a bipartisan one.

Will you commit to advocating for our farmers, our producers, and rural communities as the administration continues to roll out their executive edicts on climate?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you very much, Senator Ernst, and there has been a lot of discussion around climate change. As you mentioned, it is a bipartisan effort to move forward. As such, it will be critical that we keep our farmers first, in any discussions and decisions that are made in terms of climate change, that anything that we do regarding decisions around climate change are voluntary and incentive based.

If I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I will ensure that we keep our farmers, ranchers, and landowners first in discussions and plans to address climate change and additional efforts in this regard.

Senator ERNST. Thank you very much. Many of those issues, and as I just stated, of course working with USTR and some of the announcements there, what I would like to know from you, of course, is how you would work with other agencies like the USTR, the EPA, a number of those agencies that have shared Federal jurisdictions, to defend our farmers and producers with the issues that are very important to them? How will you work with those other Federal agencies?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator Ernst, for that question. You know, it is important that we always work with Federal agencies—I call them our sister agencies—to inform them about how the decisions that they make affect our clientele. Things that are related to agriculture, forestry, are things that I believe our Nation's farmers and ranchers and landowners would expect USDA to make critical decisions about.

If I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I will commit to working with Secretary Vilsack to ensure that we stay in contact with those agencies, we talk about the impacts of their decisions on our clientele, and ensure that we fight for our agricultural producers and their rights and needs going forward.

Senator ERNST. Thank you. I really do appreciate that. I think it is important, because decisions made in those other Federal agencies obviously impact our farmers and ranchers which heavily. Congratulations on your nomination, and I appreciate your testimony today. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much. Senator Ernst, as you were speaking I was thinking that that is why I am so glad we passed the Growing Climate Solutions Act as a voluntary program through the USDA. Very important. Thank you for your questions.

I am not sure if we have Senator Warnock with us. If he is, he would be next up.

[No response.]

Chairwoman STABENOW. If not, we will go to Senator Hyde-Smith.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to be here today. As a former Commissioner of Agriculture, I know that we did not serve together, but I sure hear good things about you. In our visit before, as I told you, I am very proud of you today.

One of the things that I am working on in Mississippi right now is very important to me. We have had some great discussions al-

ready in this hearing about dairy, that is very important, and climate change. One of the specific things that I am working on, that I am going to take this opportunity to discuss with you now, and present a question on, is Section 8631 of the 2018 Farm Bill which authorized a transfer of 150 acres on the Homochitto National Forest from the U.S. Forest Service to the Scenic Rivers Development Alliance, a regional organization dedicated to rural economic development and outdoor recreation, in southwest Mississippi.

The provision in the farm bill authorizing this transfer would specifically support much-needed rural economic development in southwest Mississippi. There is a lot going on in that area regarding agriculture, but this is rural economic development that we are focusing on right now.

The Forest Service has worked with the Scenic Rivers and the transfer is nearly complete. We are working on a date now for the announcement. The development plan for the land includes a lodge-style hotel, conference center, and many other amenities that will attract visitors to this remote region and pretty part of our State. I am confident it will bring tremendous economic benefits to this large rural area. It is currently an underserved area, very underserved.

An updated master plan for the Homochitto National Forest would complement Scenic Rivers' development plan in a very significant way. This is something that we really need from the Forest Service.

If confirmed, with a confidence the transfer will be finalized in the coming weeks, will you help ensure the U.S. Forest Service continues working closely with the Scenic Rivers Development Alliance to ensure maximum benefits from this exciting rural economic development project? We are very excited about this project because there has not been anything in southwest Mississippi in a very long time. This is a great opportunity.

I am just asking you, if you are confirmed, would you continue to work and make sure that this comes to fruition, to the best of your ability?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Hyde-Smith, it is great to see you. I have my genuine Mississippi logo binder right here with me, and it is great to talk about all of the great economic development work around agriculture that is done in the State of Mississippi. If confirmed, I will confer with the Forest Service to ensure that they are able to work closely with the Scenic Rivers project and to identify any other challenges and issues, and I am happy to followup with your office as a followup in this regard.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you so very much, because that is important. I really look forward to working with you. I think we are going to see some very good things.

My second question. In June 2020, the U.S. International Trade Commission announced an initiation of a countervailing duty investigation on phosphate fertilizer imports from Morocco. I raised this issue during Secretary Vilsack's confirmation hearing. The imposed tariffs are currently under appeal. Since the initiation of this case, the uncertainty of available fertilizer supplies has driven costs up significantly, at a time when commodity prices are just beginning to rebound.

Now is not the time to increase costs to farmers by as much as 25 to 30 percent. We are hearing a lot from our farmers, as you can imagine, on this cost increase.

If confirmed, will you ensure that USDA remains engaged with the Department of Commerce to be a voice for American agriculture producers as this process continues?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Hyde-Smith, if I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Vilsack and the International Trade Commission to ensure that we are in a competitive position to have a solid and affordable supply of phosphate fertilizer, and to also utilize USDA programs to continue to educate our Nation's producers around the efficient and effective use of fertilizer so as not to lead to overfertilization.

Senator HYDE-SMITH. Thank you very much for that response. We are going to get you another genuine Mississippi notebook to make sure that that does not wear out, and if it does, you are going to have one to replace it. I so appreciate everything you have done for agriculture, and I think you are an outstanding nominee and look forward to supporting that.

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much. We will now, I believe Senator Brown is with us, so we will turn to Senator Brown, and then as we are monitoring who is available and who is here in the room at the moment, it would be Senator Brown and then Senator Tuberville, who is here in person, and then Senator Warnock would be the next three, as the situation is currently in front of us.

Senator Brown.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I see on the screen my friend, Senator Warnock, who is also coming back to the Banking and Housing Committee. In his first year in the Senate he has seen the complexities of even schedule, so thank you, Senator Stabenow, for that.

Dr. Bronaugh, congratulations on your nomination. I was pleased to learn, when we spoke a few weeks ago—I very much enjoyed our telephone conversation—that you spent a few years living in Toledo and teaching at Bowling Green State University, one of our great State universities in my State. I would be more than happy, after you are confirmed, and I plan to support you and I am very confident you will be confirmed, to welcome you back to northwest Ohio, perhaps, this time to talk about soil health in the Western Lake Erie Basin and algae blooms, and the challenges for the shallowest of the Great Lakes, the shallowest 30 or 40 feet in the Western Basin.

As I may have told you, my favorite Lake Erie trivia is that Lake Erie, of all the Great Lakes' water, Lake Erie is two percent of the water but has 50 percent of the fish of all the Great Lakes, and that is why it is so, so important that lake be clean.

You had first-hand experience as an Extension agent, and we talked. Do Extension agents have the tools they need to stay relevant to farmers in rural communities? If the answer is not quite a resounding yes, how do we improve this service to help communities and American agriculture tackle 21st century problems?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator Brown, and it is great to talk to you about my time at Bowling Green State University. I appreciate the education and some of the reminders about the great town of Bowling Green and that university.

I come from a background of cooperative extension, which has, I think, some of the most powerful networks of really providing research-based information to make important change. There is that outreach that extends to most counties all across the Nation, and it is a powerful network. I think there is power in the partnership with the land grant institutions, in order to be able to provide the latest in research-based information, science-based information that translates into effective agricultural practices.

In Virginia, we are concerned about financial resources to support our Extension agents, to make sure that they receive the professional development that they need, because they are still valued. I think we have great opportunities to really further engage them, and as you said, some of the new concerns that we have as our world continues to change and our emphasis refocus in all areas.

If confirmed, I very much look forward to working with our resources—NIFA, ARS, ERS, and others—to fully engage our Extension professionals in fully ensuring that they can meet the challenges that face us all today.

Senator BROWN. Thank you. Talk, if you would, as your experience as Commissioner of Agriculture, describe your work on rural mental health and the best practices to strengthen these programs. Ohio has been terribly afflicted with mental health issues coming out of opioid addiction, coming out of this COVID, coming out of isolation in rural areas, coming out of rural poverty, all of that that I know you saw especially in southwest Virginia when you were the State Commissioner of Agriculture. Talk about what we do with rural mental health.

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Brown, I appreciate the opportunity to respond, and I will say from a personal standpoint it really started with my engagement with dairy farmers, who, when you think about the role that a dairy farmer has in milking 365 days a year, twice a day, sometimes more, no breaks, conversations with dairy farmers personally really informed me of some of the challenges. We saw many challenges.

I also remember the president of our Virginia Farm Bureau, who is a very successful farmer by all standards, very successful person, and he personally talked about sending his son to Virginia Tech with the plans to take over the family farm, and he said, “I don’t know if there will be a family farm for him to take over.” He said, “I am stressed out about it, and I wanted to make sure I talked with someone.” He looked me in the eye, and he said, “I need you to do something about it.” I took that very seriously as I embarked on various conversations.

We did form a Farmer Stress Task Force, and, one, we wanted to raise the level of awareness of farmer stress; two, we wanted to identify resources that farmers could access if they needed help, because we all know our farmers and ranchers are very proud individuals, who will work through any circumstances, and as I said in my opening remarks, stay eternally optimistic.

We are doing that in addition to training Extension agents on how to identify when a farmer or landowner was stressed and needed assistance, and also working on helping farmers and ranchers with working on their finances and being able to determine how they can really make decisions about what they are going to do to continue to operate or even to opt out, are some of the strategies that we have utilized in Virginia, and other States have done so as well.

If I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I would look forward to moving forward with how to continue to address that.

Senator BROWN. Thank you. You have my enthusiastic support. I would only add—I know my time has expired, Chair Stabenow—that I grew up milking. I hear those stories that you share. Even though this was 40 years ago, I hear those stories. I grew up working, milking Holsteins and Guernseys, mostly Guernseys in those days, which shows how old I am. I certainly heard those stories of how do we hand this farm over to the next generation and the mental health issues that swirl around it.

Thank you very much. Thanks, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much. Senator Tuberville.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Doctor, for that comment on mental health. Our farmers have really struggled over the last year with this pandemic. Sometimes they are forgotten in those critical areas. I really enjoyed your visit last week.

Dr. Bronaugh, Alabama's farmers and rural communities consistently work directly with the Department of Agriculture. It is a vital Federal department that citizens in Alabama must have a working relationship with and open line of dialog.

From the fields of our commodity producers to the school cafeterias and all the rural development needs, including broadband deployment, your job with USDA is across a vast area of policy, but it also includes direct access to citizens across the country.

Diversified family farms crisscross all over my home State of Alabama and we must ensure they continue for decades to come. Most of these small businesses have been in the family for generations and we cannot allow any government policies to drive them out of business. Farmers already have it tough competing against Mother Nature and the world market prices.

Although you do not have a lot of background in production agriculture, how will you implement policy and develop strategies that keep our rural communities and family farms thriving for the future?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator. That is a great question, and I think one of the greatest challenges that we face in our family farms is how do we find adequate markets for products? I think that is always that question, of how do we identify those markets. It will certainly be important to look at all of our options, including how we can more fully engage in products internationally, in international exports, how we can be competitive, either in new market opportunities or more competitive in our current trade agreements.

I think we also want to look at how we can consider opportunities in local and regional markets. I think they provide great oppor-

tunities that will help continue to provide economic opportunities for our farmers and ranchers, and even more today, the ability to address important climate change goals and conservation practices. Those provide considerable market benefits for all of our products, for them to be able to engage in renewable energy, bio-based markets, ecosystems markets. There are significant opportunities around our conservation and climate change goals that I think can further support our farmers and ranchers, all of our farmers and ranchers.

If I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I will work with USDA programs, and Secretary Vilsack, to ensure that we can engage our farmers and ranchers in as many market opportunities as possible, and to utilize our programs and resources to support our farmers.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. You know, given your backgrounds serving as a State Director with the Farm Service Agency, Alabama has suffered in the past with unstaffed and deficient offices and county offices around the State. In your testimony, you talked about the hands-on approach with visiting county offices and State directors. I hope your experience in seeing these offices and their needs can assist you as you will now have nationwide exposure to FSA offices.

How will you maintain FSA offices, and specifically, will you commit to using all hiring authorities to keep Alabama FSA offices fully staffed and trained, because we have terrible storms, and have had terrible storms, and we need to be fully staffed.

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator, for that question, and I recognize again the reason that I visited those offices, because I wanted to learn about how the staff and the work in those offices impacts the clientele that they serve. Certainly our staff in FSA offices need to be recognized for the hard work and dedication that they have provided, even during the pandemic, in providing critical services to our farmers and ranchers. They are in a very important place.

I understand the staffing needs, and if I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I look forward to learning more, as I do not have specific details about current staffing levels. I did remember Secretary Vilsack, in a recent hearing, talking about flexibilities and allowing staff options to telework or work face-to-face in the office. We will think about creative opportunities to try to address those staffing needs, while we continue to work to keep the current workers in the office safe. I look forward to, if confirmed, fully looking at the staffing needs in the FSA office.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Doctor. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much. Next we have Senator Luján, and then next it will be Senator Marshall.

Senator LUJÁN. Thank you so much, Madam Chair Stabenow. It is an honor to be with you again today, and thank you for this important hearing, and the markup today, as well, and successful support from all of our colleagues. I also want to recognize Ranking Member Boozman for holding this hearing today as well. The importance of having the full slate of leadership positions confirmed at USDA is essential to addressing the pressing issues facing the diverse populations that rely on USDA service.

I am eager to work with the Chairwoman on getting those key positions confirmed. I look forward to working with Secretary Vilsack and his team to increase opportunities for value-added agriculture, acknowledge traditional land and food use and USDA programs, address past discriminatory practices and expand outreach to those impacted communities.

I would also be remiss if I did not just recognize the work that Secretary Vilsack and his team did to already help some farmers that were discriminated against under the previous administration, and to be able to make them whole. I just want to express my gratitude to the Secretary for that.

Now historically underserved farmer outreach, Dr. Bronaugh, is something very important to me. Now you have a very impressive resume. What strikes me the most about your background is the breadth of your experience. Importantly, you have held positions at the Federal, State, and university level. Farmers and ranchers in New Mexico have been impacted by these past negative practices at the USDA, and I am grateful that this Committee and Congress have identified these shortcomings as a top priority to be addressed by this administration, and as I opened, have already been recognized and corrective action has been taken by Secretary Vilsack and his team.

In addition to the diverse population of farmers and ranchers in my State, we also produce a diverse set of products, such as the world-famous and best-in-the-world green chile. You can find it on everything that we serve and everywhere that it goes, and to my colleagues up in Colorado, you can be grateful for that chile seed being produced in New Mexico, as well, for those chile products that they benefit from. Whether you are having green chile or you are having Chimayo red, pecans, dairy, cheese, chances are if you are eating pizza in the western part of America you are getting mozzarella from New Mexico.

We also pride ourselves on our historic land use and our access, traditionally Hispanic communities, programs for Native American farmers and producers. As we develop farm assistance programs, we must recognize the unique needs of farmers across the Nation, and make sure the USDA's policymaking reflects the diversity of our Nation's farming communities.

Will you work with me to address USDA's past discriminatory practices and history of ineffective outreach to historically underserved populations?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Luján, it is a pleasure to see you today, and I have had the opportunity—you have a great Ag Commissioner in New Mexico, and I had an opportunity to visit, and the green chiles were a little hot for me but it was very good to have that opportunity.

You know, you bring up a very important point about socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and farmers of color. I think the Biden administration has been clear about making racial equity a priority. Secretary Vilsack, as you stated, has been also fully committed as we recognize that we have been impacted by the cumulative effects of years of not addressing policies and regulations and guidelines that have impacted our farmers of color who bring a great amount of value to agricultural production.

We have been fortunate, with recent funding through the American Rescue Plan, to have resources to address the needs of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. If I have the opportunity to be confirmed I look forward in engaging with the USDA to expand the work that we are currently doing to ensure that we remove barriers, provide technical assistance and outreach to engage all of our farmers and ranchers of color.

Senator LUJÁN. Dr. Bronaugh, how do you plan on bringing a fresh approach to how USDA conducts outreach to these populations?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator Luján. One of the things that you mentioned is my varied background, and one of the things that I was able to learn on the ground, especially working with Extension and doing work at the university was, you know, the type of outreach. We have many opportunities to engage people in socially disadvantaged communities' trust. I have been able to work with community-based organizations and faith-based organizations, working with Tribal leaders and others in order to ensure that critical resources get to those communities to further engage them.

If I am confirmed, I look forward to engaging with all of our stakeholders to determine how we can get information out effectively, it reaches the audiences we need to serve, that they understand how to use the resources and tools at USDA and can be fully engaged in our programs.

Senator LUJÁN. Thank you. Madam Chair Stabenow, I do have a few other questions. I will submit them into the record so we can just get a response there.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Absolutely.

Senator LUJÁN. I definitely want to thank Dr. Bronaugh for being here today, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you so much.

Senator Marshall.

Senator MARSHALL. Thank you, Madam Chair, and I just wanted to start by saying thank you and congratulations on getting the Growing Climate Solutions Act of 2021 out of Committee, Ranking Member Boozman, Senator Braun as well. We probably will not make the news tonight, but this may be the most significant legislation that comes out of this body this year. This is an example of how it is supposed to work up here. I appreciate you letting a freshman Senator from Kansas having some input on the bill, and truly believe that we can take two plus two, using your ideas, our ideas, and make eight out of it. Congratulations, and really, thank you from all the ag producers in the State of Kansas for letting us give input on that bill.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you so much for your support and input.

Senator MARSHALL. You are welcome. I will turn now, of course, to Dr. Bronaugh. It is great to meet you virtually. I want to talk about biofuels for just a second. Farmers and ranchers are the original conservationists. Nobody is more motivated to leave our environment cleaner, healthier, safer, for our children, for our grandchildren than farmers and ranchers. I think biofuels can have a great impact on that and for this entire world.

I am convinced that the carbon footprint of a renewable diesel or biodiesel-driven cars, tractors have a lower carbon output from start to finish. When you look through the whole cycle of making everything that goes in that car or truck, to the tailpipe emission, to the final disposal of that, that they will have a lower carbon footprint than electric cars. I am just curious about your thoughts on biofuels.

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Marshall, it is great to see you and chat with you about all the creative work you all are doing in the State of Kansas. You know, we think about, you mentioned the Growing Climate Solutions Act and all of our work that we will do to address climate change, and, you know, we will be challenged to use many tools in our tool belt for doing so. The use of biofuels, ethanol, and bioenergy have a critical role to play in helping to reduce carbon emissions and helping to address critical climate change goals.

I think it will be very important to educate people on the environmental benefits of biofuels and bioenergy, to expand uses for bioenergy—you know, there are opportunities with uses in sustainable jet fuel, in the fleet of vehicles at USDA and our sister agencies—and really promote renewable fuels production and infrastructure development so we can expand the use of biofuels, and more people can purchase biofuel. That we can also think about how we can utilize bioenergy production and renewable fuels to create clean energy job throughout rural America.

If I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I will join Secretary Vilsack and members of the industry, corn industry and others, in fully supporting the use of biofuels and bioenergy to reach important climate change goals.

Senator MARSHALL. Thank you for that answer, and we do appreciate your support.

I want to talk just for a second about NIFA and ERS, that those offices were moved to the greater Kansas City metro area. Gosh, it feels like two years ago that I was there welcoming them. The whole concept is, No. 1, it would save American taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars by having that office located in Kansas City as opposed to expensive real estate in Washington, DC.—the cost of living is a little bit less there—but more importantly, putting those offices closer to the people who use those services.

We just want to know your commitment to keep those offices there in Kansas City and see this mission through. It was given years of study and it was felt like that was the best solution. We are proud to have them there. We are very proud that they are in triangle of agriculture, education, excellence. All my hats off to the Virginia schools, but we are very proud of the opportunities there in Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, just to say a few States right there.

How would you feel about supporting keeping those offices there?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator Marshall, for that question. You know, I have read about the move of NIFA and ERS. Certainly Kansas is a great State. I do understand, from reading an Office of Personnel Management survey, that the change did affect staffing challenges. I have not discussed any details about how USDA will move forward with regards to a Kansas City location or other

locations. You know, I am sure that Secretary Vilsack is aware of how we will move forward, and, if confirmed, I look forward to engaging with the Secretary regarding any other decisions around NIFA and ERS.

Senator MARSHALL. Thank you so much, and I yield back.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much, Senator. Senator Warnock is next, and then Senator Grassley.

Senator WARNOCK. Thank you so much, Madam Chair, and Dr. Bronaugh, congratulations on your historic nomination to be Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Your resume speaks for itself, Commissioner of Ag for the State of Virginia, State Director of the Farm Service Agency, Dean at Virginia State. You are more than qualified, and you are indeed the right pick for the job.

I also appreciate the time that we had the other day, discussing some of my priorities ahead of today's hearing. As you know, I am very pleased to have my Emergency Relief for Farmers of Color Act included in the American Rescue Plan, signed into law by President Biden. This targeted relief, including debt relief on outstanding USDA loans, and \$1 billion in investment will help farmers of color recover from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, while also beginning the long process of addressing years—decades, really—of systemic racial discrimination against farmers of color at the hands of their own U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Dr. Bronaugh, if confirmed, you and your office will play a critical role in implementing these provisions for farmers of color. Do I have your commitment to work with me and others on the implementation of these provisions?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Warnock, great to see you, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you earlier this week. You know, I talked about the commitment of addressing racial equity. We have lost 90 percent of black farmers over the years, and that is a critical loss. Secretary Vilsack has spoken publicly that he looks forward to me working with him to help address this issue. We have been fortunate to receive funding from the American Rescue Plan, as you noted, to be able to support our farmers and ranchers of color.

We are also fortunate that we will have funds to establish an equity commission, which I imagine I will be engaged with, and a racial justice and equity working group, who is already identifying gaps and barriers to programs. I would imagine I will be closely involved with that. If I have the opportunity to be confirmed, will work with members of this Committee and other important stakeholders in ways that I will be closely engaged in moving forward to address this important issue.

Senator WARNOCK. Well, I am grateful to know that you will ensure that the voices of farmers of color are heard at the highest levels of our U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is something I have also discussed with Secretary Vilsack, and he is very much aware of my concerns there, and again, decades of discrimination and deep disappointment, which has led to deep distrust, and understandably so from farmers of color. All of this, of course, exacerbated by the pandemic.

As we look ahead, Georgia farmers are seeking guidance from the USDA on the implementation of these provisions. They need guidance on how debt relief will be administered, and a better understanding of just how they can provide input in regard to the \$1 billion in investments aimed at supporting farmers of color.

A concern that I keep hearing from farmers of color who are, again, encouraged by the legislation but, honestly, they said, “Senator, we are worried, and we are concerned that we are going to get disappointed again.” They are frustrated, in the meantime, that their loan payments have not been paused by the USDA as it stands up these programs. They have concerns about engaging with their local Farm Service Agency.

Dr. Bronaugh, if confirmed, what is your plan for ensuring that these concerns are being heard and addressed as the USDA works behind the scenes to stand up these programs?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Warnock, you bring up some very valid points, and, you know, we talked about this in our phone call, and we have a lot of opportunities. I think what is very important is as we have—and I acknowledge the distrust that you stated, because it is important to not talk the talk but to walk the walk. We have received funding, again, from the American Rescue Plan.

There is something that I learned from my work in Extension. There is something called outputs and there is something called impact. I think, going forward, as we work through ensuring that these resources are made available, we have the output. We have gotten the resources. I think it is going to be important for us to establish a way to measure, to gather the right data to ensure that we are making impact. Because the outputs are good, but if we are not making the impact, then we are not reaching the goal.

Being able to ensure that we gather the right data, that we follow up with accountability measures, and we are able to translate that and see the translation into impacts for farmers of color will be critically important. If I have the opportunity to be confirmed as Deputy Secretary, I imagine that I will be closely engaged in my role with ensuring that we follow those accountability measures and make that impact.

Senator WARNOCK. Thank you so much, Dr. Bronaugh. Again, congratulations on your nomination. I look forward to supporting your confirmation on the floor, and also having you and Secretary Vilsack come to Georgia to meet with farmers of color. Again, thanks.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much, Senator. Now Senator Grassley.

Senator GRASSLEY. Congratulations, Dr. Bronaugh. My first question was going to be what Senator Tuberville said to you about the FSA offices, so I do not have to ask that. I know that you have been in charge of those offices on a very direct basis, so I know you know their importance.

I am going to start with interest to read about your work in launching the Farmer Stress Task Force to raise awareness and to coordinate resources to address farmer stress and mental health issues. Over the recent years, we have seen too high of a suicide rate among farmers. Senator Tester and I introduced a bipartisan bill to raise the awareness about mental health among farmers.

The Seeding Rural Resilience Act was passed by Congress, signed into law last year. The bill will improve mental health care for farming families by implementing suicide prevention training programs at USDA, and I would see the FSA offices as being very prime in that effort.

What parts of your Farmer Stress Task Force have worked well in the State of Virginia and could be implemented at the Federal level?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator Grassley. It is very nice to meet you, and I appreciate you giving me an opportunity to talk a little bit more about the Farmer Stress efforts. I would say, from my experience, being able to educate and empower more people to identify stress issues and mental health issues amongst our farmers and ranchers—and I would dare say it is not just our farmers and ranchers, it is also the family members and folks who are closest to these family members—who need help.

As we have been able to move forward, we have utilized Extension, but I think we also have a great opportunity to educate our CEDs and county offices to be able to identify stress, because farmers will open up to people whom they trust, and if they can trust people to be there and to provide guidance and to identify when there is an issue, we have the greatest opportunity to address the issue.

As I think about how we will move forward, being able to utilize people who work in local offices, whether it is NRCS, Rural Development, or other offices, to be able to identify key issues is going to be powerful in helping us to address the issues. Also, I think States have greatly benefited from the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network funding. As I have stated at VDACS, that was going to be something that having that resource at the State level would be incredibly important in conducting training and more outreach.

If confirmed, I look forward to the efforts that we can take at USDA to address this critical issue.

Senator GRASSLEY. There is an Executive order that President Biden signed on January 29th that proposes a conservator retire 30 percent of the agricultural land by 2030. I suppose it is not fair for me to ask whether you support that Executive order, because you did not have anything to do with it. Widespread retiring of one-third of the farmland is going to affect how we are going to feed nine billion people midterm of this century. How do you think that kind of removal of farmland from production would impact agriculture, besides the fact that it is going to make it more difficult to feed nine billion people?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator Grassley. You talk about the importance of working to feed nine billion people by 2050. I also understand that this, 30x30, is a priority of this administration, so we are going to have to work together to determine how, one, we can get farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners engaged in regenerative agriculture—many have been for quite a long time.

It is important that I highlight that it is not just going to be land that is in conservation but our working lands that are going to be very critical. Our farmers, ranchers, and landowners have a long history of stewardship, and the utilization of working land, vol-

untary, incentive-based, that we can collect locally with conservation efforts will be critical in moving forward. We will continue to determine how we can utilize working lands as an integral part of addressing 30x30 goals, the challenges.

If confirmed, I look forward to working with members of this Committee, also with our farmers and ranchers, important stakeholders and organizations to determine how we can reach this goal and utilize our current effort in working lands in doing so.

Senator GRASSLEY. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much, Senator Grassley. Now we have Senator Hoeven. I think he is with us remotely.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Dr. Bronaugh, great to see you again. Thanks so much for visiting with me the other day. I really appreciate it and spending so much time talking about important ag issues. Again, very much appreciated.

One of the things I emphasized to you is we worked hard to get the Quality Loss Adjustment program, QLA program, and the WIC+. I think WIC+ may be something we are going to have to continue. I am already hearing from some farmers in that regard.

My first question is, will you work with us to make sure that we get the WIC+, and particularly the QLA, out the door as soon as we can, in line with the program parameters that we put into legislation?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Hoeven, it is great to see you, and I am very relieved that the fact that I went to James Madison University is not a reason that you do not plan to confirm me—

[Laughter.]

Senator HOEVEN. We have a great rivalry there, between NDSU and James Madison. That is going to be fun.

Ms. BRONAUGH. We hopefully can talk about that going forward. You mentioned the WIC+ and QLA. I always, you know, think of disaster assistance programs, it is not if the next disaster will happen, it is when the next disaster will happen. If I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the status of these important programs, and, as such, I am happy to followup with your office in determining the most appropriate way to move forward. I know they are very important programs. I seek to learn a little bit more. Certainly I want to support any efforts for addressing disaster assistance that we have available.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you. That is an absolute priority, and I have worked a lot with our Ranking Member as well as the Chairwoman on those programs, so I appreciate that.

Also, I know a program that is going to be very important to the Chair is the carbon capture program, and, of course, there is legislation that she has led on that. I am certainly willing to work on it, as I have told her and I told you. Can you assure me that we are going to make sure that whatever we do in regard to the carbon capture programs that they are farmer friendly?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Hoeven, you bring up a very important point. For those of us who have committed years of work in agriculture, we understand the importance of any new efforts, especially one around the notion of a carbon bank, carbon capture efforts, that they absolutely be voluntary and incentive-based, and provide market opportunities for our farmers and ranchers.

In effort to move forward it is going to be very important that we engage, actively engage, our agricultural producers in how we move forward in the most effective way, that brings benefit to them, that utilizes the practices that they have been doing for years, and that we really move forward with a common-sense approach to addressing climate change. Also an effort that we have around job creation, in terms of agriculture conservation and other important businesses.

If confirmed, I look forward to fully engaging our farmers, ranchers, and landowners in any efforts to address climate change and to establish a carbon bank.

Senator HOEVEN. Will you commit to ensure that the CCC funding, Commodity Credit Corp, continues to go for the priorities in the farm bill, as it always has?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Hoeven, I clearly understand that the purpose of the CCC is to support important farm bill programs, and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Vilsack to learn more about the use of the CCC.

Senator HOEVEN. We need to get you to North Dakota, and you need to see what we are doing at Grand Farm. I know you know a little bit about it, because we talked about it. Also we worked to put in place the RISE program and fund it. We put money in it the last two cycles, and we will do it again through ag appropriations. Will you come out and see it, and will you help make sure that we enable them to access the RISE program to continue to do amazing things in precision ag?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Yes, I appreciate the opportunity, Senator Hoeven, to visit Grand Farm and all the work that you are doing in innovation and the use of precision agriculture, which is very important, and, if confirmed, I look forward to visiting, to learn more about that important work and opportunities to support the work that is being done out there.

Senator HOEVEN. Well, that is good because we are also then going to give you a tour of NDSU, and I don't know if you should wear your James Madison jacket or not. I will leave that entirely up to you.

I do have some other questions for the record, Madam Chair, which I will submit, regarding livestock. We are a cow-calf State, livestock ranching, extremely important to us. The sugar program, in the Red River Valley in the north, that is a \$3 billion industry. Then crop insurance is our No. 1 risk management tool. We feel that it has to be strongly supported.

I will add a few more questions for the record, but being respectful of my time here I will wrap. Just, again, thank you, Dr. Bronaugh. I really appreciate our opportunities to visit and the way that you have approached these important issues.

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator Hoeven, and I would not wear my purple and gold when I come to North Dakota.

Senator HOEVEN. Fantastic. Thank you.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Well, thank you, Senator Hoeven, and you mentioned a number of things, issues that you and I both care deeply about. I just want to say, you have never invited me to North Dakota to get a tour, so I am a little hurt right now. Maybe I can tag along.

Senator HOEVEN. Madam Chair, you are invited any time. You know that. We would love to have you out there.

Chairwoman STABENOW. All right.

Senator HOEVEN. Thank you.

Chairwoman STABENOW. I will take you up on it.

Now, Senator Braun.

Senator BRAUN. Thank you, Madam Chair. Dr. Bronaugh, good to talk to you here today. I am lucky that I still, each week, go back to my farm in Indiana. I am a tree farmer, and to the extent I can still be involved in the row crop side of agriculture, that I have been a part of for over 30 years, it is kind of my therapy for this new job.

I have got a question. I have heard concern, especially since we just got the Growing Climate Solutions Act out of Committee, which, of course, aligns farmers, both tree and ag, with these private voluntary markets. Some of the reservations that we had to work through, at least on my side of the aisle, to get to this point, would have been addressing the conversation around the Commodity Credit Corporation being involved in a carbon bank.

Things can evolve in a direction on any issue with time, but I think here we have just gotten to a place where, if that did occur—and I would love to hear your opinion and what you might advise to President Biden—I think it would set us back significantly.

I think to get bipartisanship out of the gate on this serious issue, the more we can do it through technology, innovation, and through the private sector, especially maybe in light of the financial condition of the Federal Government currently, I would like to hear your comments on that, please.

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator Braun. Great question. Of course, we have an opportunity to work very closely with private industry in regard to how we move forward.

In regard to the use of the CCC, again, I understand that its critical role is to support our farm bill programs, and again, you know, I am not yet at USDA, but if I have the opportunity to be confirmed, will assure that speak with Secretary Vilsack on how we will move forward with the use of the CCC.

Senator BRAUN. I do hope that you will, because I think that in the year and a half that I have been on our Senate Climate Caucus, we have made so much headway getting it to be a bipartisan discussion. I think there are certain things that would undermine that if it is not given careful consideration.

One other question. What is your view on the Phase 1 agreement between U.S. and China? Do you believe that President Biden, should you get the post, are you going to advise him to enforce the deal? In my conversation with Hoosier farmers, I constantly hear that they think that that was a part of getting through a tough period with a tough counterpart and negotiator, on the part of the Chinese. What is your recommendation there in terms of, did you like it, and would you advise to continue it?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Braun, great question. Certainly China is a huge market for United States agricultural products. Secretary Vilsack has been clear about working to engage in many of our export opportunities. I think there is a need to understand the market of China and ways that we can engage with China. We have

seen benefits in their purchases of corn, wheat, sorghum, cotton, and other proteins.

If I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Vilsack, with the White House, the State Department, and the U.S. Trade Representative's Office to determine how we can move forward with China as a very big export market.

Senator BRAUN. I think my advice, from being so deeply involved in agriculture, is that it was kind of working, and do not be beguiled by the Chinese. I think the one thing we have learned across any conversation with them is what they do now may not represent what their true motives, or what they might do down the road. I think they do respect when you take a stance with them, that make sure that we are thinking long term. They certainly do.

Thank you for your time.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much, Senator Braun. I believe that Senator Thune is with us, remotely, I believe.

Senator THUNE. Madam Chair, let me start by, Dr. Bronaugh, congratulations on your nomination. There is obviously a lot of talk today about climate, given the President's ongoing climate summit. During the first week in office, January 27th, the President issued a climate change executive order, which included the directive for USDA and other departments to come up with recommendation to conserve at least 30 percent of our land and waters by 2030, commonly referred to as 30x30.

While the details on this directive have not been released yet, I have already heard from ranchers and landowners in South Dakota who are concerned about potential measures this administration may pursue to meet 30x30, including Federal land acquisitions and burdensome regulations on private landowners. Those are concerns that I share. The Federal Government, in my view, should not be acquiring more land when it is often not able to properly manage the Federal lands it already possesses.

My question is, what are your views on the 30x30 directive, and, if confirmed, what efforts would you take to ensure this directive does not ultimately result in efforts to acquire more Federal land and to impose onerous regulations on private landowners?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Thune, great to see you. You mentioned this is an administrative goal, and one thing I want to highlight again is the fact that we will have to consider different lands, and working lands will be critically important and being at the center of this issue. We need to keep working lands working.

We have an opportunity to partner with our farmers, forest landowners and others in a way to do that, and recognizing the history of stewardship, to honor property rights and to assure that we have voluntary, incentive-based opportunities for our farmers and our forest landowners to participate. If confirmed, I will ensure that we continue to work in local efforts, in a collaborative way, to ensure that we keep our working lands working and help meet important climate change goals.

Senator THUNE. Okay. I agree with you 100 percent on that. I think the question is, should our landowners out there be worried about the Federal Government acquiring more land?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Thune, I think that there will be a lot more opportunities to make decisions about how we move forward

in engaging with that, and, if confirmed, I look forward to hearing more and learning more regarding how we need to move forward.

Senator THUNE. You will be hearing a lot from us, at least from the people I represent, when it comes to land acquisition. I just think that that is an issue that really should not be a part of this conversation, given the vast amount of Federal land that the Federal Government already owns and operates and manages, and many of the issues we have associated with those.

Which brings me to my second point, and that is I just want to raise the issue of the forest. We just had a big timber plant close in South Dakota, in a community where those jobs are pretty much the entire community, and families are affected by that.

I have long advocated, I think as you know because I mentioned this to you on our phone call, for a robust timber sale program in order to mitigate the risk of wildfires and to support the local economy.

Could you tell me what your views are on proactive management of our forests, and, if confirmed, will you commit to working with me and stakeholders on a path forward for the timber sale program that appropriately balances the health of the forest and the health of the regional economy?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Thank you, Senator Thune. I appreciate our conversation about the Black Hills timber sawmill and the impact that it had on job loss in your State. I think it is critically important that as we move forward we think about and focus on ensuring that we increase the scale and pace of forest management. I know there are opportunities to support wood products, sustainable bioenergy. If I have the opportunity to be confirmed, I will work with the Forest Service, work with members of this Committee to determine how we can fully protect and manage our forests, but also fully benefit from wood products and sustainable bioenergy and biobased materials.

Senator THUNE. My last question has to do with the issue of Country of Origin labeling. I have sent a letter to USDA requesting the Department address a loophole that has allowed beef from cattle that were not born, raised, and harvested in the United States to be labeled as Product of the USA. USDA initiated the rule-making process, but a rule has not been finalized.

If confirmed, how would you approach closing this loophole and ensuring accurate labeling of meat products?

Ms. BRONAUGH. Senator Thune, that is a great question. Country of Origin labeling is something that I am familiar, in understanding that there have been some challenges with world trade organizations' determination, and I seek to learn more about that issue. I look forward to getting briefed, once confirmed, about Country of Origin labeling and the most appropriate way to move forward, and will be happy to followup with your office and other members of this Committee in talking about the best way to move forward with that issue.

Senator THUNE. Thank you.

Chairwoman STABENOW. Thank you very much, Senator Thune. We have now reached the end of our confirmation hearing, and I want to thank you again, Dr. Bronaugh, for being here. It is clear to me you have very strong experience as an advocate for farmers

and ranchers, and your work on the ground with our producers will really be invaluable as the Department works to improve service to every part of agriculture.

I strongly support your nomination and look forward to moving it forward as quickly as possible.

That concludes today's hearing. The record will remain open until tomorrow at 5 p.m. for members to submit additional questions and statements. Thank you again to our Ranking Member. Thank you for your partnership. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:56 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

APRIL 22, 2021

**Opening Statement of Dr. Jewel H. Bronaugh Before the Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
April 22, 2021**

Thank you, Chairwoman Stabenow, Ranking Member Boozman and members of this Committee. I thank Secretary Vilsack for all of his support, and thank you Senator Warner for your warm introduction. First and foremost, thank you for this opportunity. I am here today with the support of my loving husband, Cleavon, a retired U.S. Army veteran, our beautiful children, my parents—two teachers who raised me to become an educator—and so many role models, including Virginia State Secretary for Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring, and the farmers, ranchers, and landowners I work for each day.

Happy Earth Day, as we recognize 51 years of effort to protect our environment and restore our earth. I am honored to have been nominated by President Biden to serve as the Deputy Secretary of Agriculture at USDA. I know that, if confirmed, I will be the first Black woman and woman of color to serve as Deputy Secretary. As such, I fully understand the historic nature of this confirmation, along with the responsibilities of my service in this role. I will join thousands of dedicated civil servants at USDA who work in every state and 100 countries around the world. I know from experience how their work touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. I value their work and identify with their selfless commitment.

My parents taught me humility and they encouraged me to treat others with dignity. I went into education because of my parents, but I focused on agriculture because I wanted to inspire young people to build better communities through food and nutrition. I am proud of my career in Cooperative Extension where I was first inspired by young people in 4-H, getting to know the families and communities across Virginia who produced our food, feed, fiber, and fuel. This led to the honor of serving as dean of the College of Agriculture at Virginia State University, where many of my students were first generation college students from rural communities. I am very proud of those men and women who have become outstanding leaders in their fields.

In 2015, Secretary Vilsack appointed me to serve as State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency, where I led the implementation of Farm Bill programs and personally visited the 41 field offices within my first year of service to learn more about how programs affected farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners. Soon thereafter, I received the appointment as the 16th Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. I was proud to work with other state Commissioners, Directors and Secretaries to prioritize PPE for farmers and farm workers, advocate for federal and state resources to support dairy farmers and poultry producers, expand opportunities for small and midsized farmers and ranchers to obtain infrastructure and processing capabilities, and develop strategies to meet environmental and water quality goals for the Chesapeake Bay.

Throughout all these opportunities, it has been personal interactions with farmers, ranchers, and forestland owners that I have found deeply rewarding. I have learned their struggles. I have been in their homes and listened to aging mothers express fear of losing the family farm because the children wanted to pursue careers outside of farming. I spent time with black farmers so inundated with stress resulting from years of farm debt that they gave up hope. I have spoken

with Hispanic workers who, while working someone else's land, fully realized their dream of owning their own farm. And I personally experienced the tears of multi-generational dairy farmers given no other choice but to sell their dairy herd and the farm that had been in the family for 4 generations. What I took away from each experience is the importance not only of listening—but hearing what people are saying beneath the emotion.

What motivates and inspires me is that with all the challenges our farmers and ranchers face today, I have never met one who is not eternally optimistic. Throughout the pandemic I spoke with one agricultural producer after another who somehow found ways to realign their operation to meet the demands of an altered food supply chain. They only required help to provide a voice and assist them in obtaining resources that they needed for financial survival. If America's farmers and ranchers can find a way to stay positive and committed to their work, then I am obligated to use my voice to act—and if confirmed do what I can to provide help and assistance to build our economy back stronger.

Each time I speak with Secretary Vilsack, we discuss equity. I share the Secretary's commitment to take bold action and work with this Committee to address discrimination in all its forms across USDA. In 1862, Abraham Lincoln established USDA. In 1864, he called USDA "The People's Department." I believe it should be just that: the Department for *all* people.

I am here before you today to commit that, if confirmed, I will be a champion for all farmers, producers, families, and rural communities who rely on USDA. I will remain committed to helping lead a Department that serves all Americans equally. I am grateful for your time and welcome any questions you may have. Thank you.

**DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE
RECORD**

APRIL 22, 2021



February 26, 2021

The Reverend Raphael G. Warnock
United States Senate
B40D Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: The nomination of Dr. Jewel Bronaugh for USDA Deputy Secretary

Dear Senator Warnock:

I write today to ask for your support for the nomination of Dr. Jewel Bronaugh for Deputy Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Dr. Bronaugh has been an effective advocate for both farmers and consumers throughout her career both in academia and in local and state government. It is a pleasure to urge her swift confirmation to serve in this new role at a federal agency.

Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers counts over 900 dairy farmers in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast among our farmer owners. Our cooperative has served the nation's capital and the mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. for more than a century. A positive working relationship with dedicated government officials like Dr. Bronaugh has been a major contributor to the long-time success of our cooperative. We look forward to continuing that record of success working with Dr. Bronaugh and the other members of the incoming leadership team at the USDA.

Given the economic interruptions brought on by the national effort to control the spread of the coronavirus, it is especially critical that key appointees be in place at the USDA soon to keep making nutrition assistance available to those struggling with food insecurity. Equally imperative is that the USDA have the leadership team in place to continuously evaluate the farm safety net in order to provide timely economic assistance to farmers who have seen their markets drastically altered, and in some cases eliminated, by the effort to protect the public health during the pandemic.

Thank you for considering this request of support for Dr. Jewel Bronaugh for USDA Deputy Secretary. Please let me know if additional information about this request or our cooperative would be helpful as you consider this nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Bryant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

1985 Isaac Newton Square West
Reston, Virginia 20190-5094
703-742-6800 / FAX 757-952-2370

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February 11, 2021

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

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

Dear Senators Stabenow and Boozman:

We write to you in strong support of President Biden’s nomination of Jewel Bronaugh, PhD to serve as Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and ask that you quickly approve her nomination. As leaders of the nation’s food and agricultural organizations, we work closely with the senior leadership of the U.S. Department of Agriculture in support of efficient and effective administration of food and agricultural programs and have consistently advocated for the appointment of highly qualified candidates to serve in these critical positions.

Dr. Bronaugh has spent her entire career in agriculture. In Dr. Bronaugh’s service as a Cooperative Extension Specialist, university dean, USDA-FSA State Executive Director, and most recently as the 16th Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, she has committed herself to fair and equitable administration of the laws and policies within her areas of responsibility. Noting Dr. Bronaugh’s exceptional passion and perspective, we are confident that she will provide outstanding leadership in service to our nation as USDA’s Deputy Secretary.

Our nation is facing considerable challenges with regard to pandemic response, failing infrastructure, climate, diversity and inclusion, trade, immigration, and many others. The USDA needs knowledgeable and experienced leaders at the helm to navigate through these challenges and to implement bipartisan solutions.

We are grateful that President Biden has moved quickly to fill these senior positions with people of Dr. Bronaugh’s caliber and ask that the Senate do likewise.

Sincerely,

- | | |
|---|--|
| Almond Alliance of California | American Soybean Association |
| American Farm Bureau Federation | Animal Health Institute |
| American Feed Industry Association | Association of Virginia Potato and Vegetable Growers, Inc. |
| American Fruit and Vegetable Processors and Growers Coalition | Biotechnology Innovation Organization |
| American Seed Trade Association | California Farm Bureau Federation |
| American Sesame Growers Association | California Grain and Feed Association |

CoBank
Consumer Brands Association
Corn Refiners Association
CropLife America
Dairy Business Association
FMI Food Industry Association
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas
Global Cold Chain Alliance
Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils
Leather and Hide Council of America
Meat Import Council of America
Michigan Agri-Business Association
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Fisheries Institute
National Grain and Feed Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Sorghum Producers
National Turkey Federation
Nebraska Grain and Feed Association
North American Meat Institute
North American Millers' Association
North American Renderers Association
North Carolina Potato Association
Ohio AgriBusiness Association
Organic Trade Association
Potato Growers of Michigan, Inc.
Produce Marketing Association
Sweetener Users Association
The Hardwood Federation
U.S. Apple Association
U.S. Dairy Export Council
U.S. Grains Council
United Fresh Produce Association
USA Rice
Vote Hemp
Washington State Potato Commission
WineAmerica
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association

U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION & FORESTRY
 Questions for Executive Nominees
 117th 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>
Deputy Secretary of Agriculture	<u>2/22/2021</u>

<i>Current Legal Name</i>			
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>
Jewel	Hairston	Bronaugh	

<i>Addresses</i>					
<u>Residential Address</u> (do not include street address)			<u>Office Address</u> (include street address)		
			Street: 102 Governor Street		
City: Midlothian	State: VA	Zip: 23114	City: Richmond	State: VA	Zip: 23219

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

Jewel	Lynn	Evans		x	1967	11/1997
Jewel	Evans	Hairston			11/1997	Est X 12/2015

<i>Birth Year and Place</i>	
Year of Birth (Do not include month and day.)	Place of Birth
1967	Richmond, VA MCV Medical Hospital

<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>
Cleavon	Domancz	Bronaugh	

<i>Spouse's Other Names Used (current spouse only)</i>						
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>	<u>Check if Maiden</u>	<u>Name Used From</u> (Year) (Check box if estimate)	<u>Name Used To</u> (Month/Year) (Check box if estimate)
None					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>

					Est <input type="checkbox"/>	Est <input type="checkbox"/>
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<i>Children's Names (if over 18)</i>			
<u>First Name</u>	<u>Middle Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Suffix</u>
Elon	Clarke	Hairston	
Treavon	Domancz	Bronaugh	

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>
James Madison University	University	12/1985	Est X 05/1989	B. S.	08/1989
Virginia Tech	University	Est X 01/1993	Est X 12/1994	M.S.	12/1994
Virginia Tech	University	Est X 01/1995	Est X 12/1997	Ph.D.	12/1997

3. **Employment**

(A) In reverse chronological order, 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.

Type of Employment (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	Name of Your Employer/Assigned Duty Station	Most Recent Position Title/Rank	Location (City and State only)	Date Employment Began (month/year) (check box if estimate)	Date Employment Ended (month/year) (check box if estimate) (check "present" box if still employed)
State Government	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	Commissioner	Richmond, VA	05/2018	Present <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
State Government	Virginia State University	Executive Director, Center for Agricultural Research, Engagement & Outreach	Petersburg, VA	Est <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 04/2017	Est <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 04/2018
Unemployment	N/A	N/A		01/2017	Est <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 03/2017
Federal Government	USDA Farm Service Agency	Virginia State Executive Director	Richmond, VA	Est <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 05/2015	Est <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 01/2017

State Government	Virginia State University	Dean, College of Agriculture	Petersburg, VA	Est X 03/2012	Est X 04/2015
State Government	Virginia State University	Interim Dean, College of Agriculture	Petersburg, VA	Est X 04/2011	Est X 02/2012
State Government	Virginia State University	Associate Administrator, Virginia Cooperative Extension	Petersburg, VA	Est X 05/2008	Est X 3/2011
State Government	Virginia Tech	Southeast District Program Leader, Virginia Cooperative Extension	Blacksburg, VA	Est X 03/2005	Est X 04/2008
State Government	Virginia State University	4-H Youth Development Specialist, Virginia Cooperative Extension	Petersburg, VA	Est X 11/2001	Est X 02/2005
Unemployed	N/A	N/A		09/2001	10/2001
State Government	Cave Spring High School	Marketing Teacher Coordinator	Roanoke, VA	Est X 08/2000	Est X 09/2001
Unemployed	N/A	N/A		06/2000	07/2000
State Government	Bowling Green State University	Assistant Professor, Business Education	Bowling Green, OH	Est X 08/1998	Est X 05/2000
Unemployed	N/A	N/A		07/1998	07/1998
State Government	Cave Spring High School	Marketing Teacher Coordinator		Est X 07/1997	Est X 07/1998

Unemployed	N/A	N/A		07/1997	07/1997
State Government	Virginia Tech	Graduate Teaching Assistant	Blacksburg, VA	Est X 08/1995	Est X 06/1997
State Government	Cave Spring High School	Marketing Teacher Coordinator	Roanoke, VA	09/1989	Est X 08/1995

(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)
Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Administrative Council	Administrative Council Member	Est X 10/2020	Present
Virginia Economic Crisis Taskforce	Member	Est X 03/2020	Present
COVID-19 Enforcement Steering Committee	Member	Est X 03/2020	Present
Virginia Agricultural Leaders Obtaining Results (VALOR)	Member	Est X 12/2018	Present
Virginia State University Strategic Planning Taskforce	Member	Est X 10/2017	04/2018
Virginia State University Provost's Advisory Council	Member	2017	2018
Virginia State University President's Cabinet	Member	07/2017	04/2018

USDA Farm Service Agency - New SED Onboarding Taskforce	Member	01/2016	01/2017
USDA Farm Service Agency State Committee	Secretary	05/2015	01/2017
Commonwealth Council on Bridging the Nutritional Divide	Member	Est X 12/2014	05/2015
Excellence in Extension Implementation National Team	Member	Est X 2014	2014
Southern Region Program Leadership Network	Member	Est X 2014	2014
Virginia Food Desert Taskforce	Chair	Est X 02/2013	01/2014
Virginia State University Research Foundation Board of Directors	Member	Est X 2013	2014
Virginia Tech Department of Agricultural and Extension Education Advisory Council	Member	Est X 2012	Est X 2015
Virginia State University Department of Agriculture Advisory Council	Council Member	Est X 2012	Est X 2012
Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dean's Council	Member	Est X 2012	Est X 2015
Virginia State University Department of Hospitality Management Advisory Council	Council Member	Est X 2012	Est X 2015

VSU Cares Dental Clinic Planning Committee	Member	Est X 2012	Est X 2014
Virginia State University College of Agriculture Advisory Council (CAAC)	Council Member	Est X 2010	Est X 2015

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.

Bronaugh, J. E. (2020). Special Recognition of an Individual Award, Virginia Agribusiness Council

Bronaugh, J. E. (2018). Recognition for Outstanding Contributions to Virginia State University and Chesterfield County, Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors Resolution.

Bronaugh, J. E. (2015). Educational Administrator of the Year. Association of Educational Office Professionals.

Bronaugh, J. E. (2014). Sustainable Table Award, Virginia Food System Council.

Bronaugh, J. E. (2013). Cover of the 7th Anniversary Issue of Minority Landowner Magazine for leading university efforts to work with small farmers in Virginia.

Bronaugh, J. E. (2012). Land Grant University Award, Virginia Agribusiness Council.

Bronaugh, J. E. (2012). 4-H All Star Recognition, Virginia 4-H.

Bronaugh, J. E. (2012). Contributions to Education Award, Alpha Phi Alpha, Nu Omicron Lambda Chapter.

Bronaugh, J. E. (2009). Mary Nell Greenwood Extension Evaluation Award. American Evaluation Association.

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>
The NASDA Foundation	10/2020 – current	Member, Board of Directors
Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture	06/2020 - current	Treasurer
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA)	05/2018 - current	Chair, Rural Development and Financial Security Committee
Virginia Winery Distribution Company	05/2018 - current	Member, Board of Directors
State Fair Youth Development Board	01/2017 – 12/2018	Member, Board of Directors
Virginia Agribusiness Council	01/2012 – 01/2016	Member
Virginia 4-H Foundation	2013-2015	Advisory Committee, Member
2013 AHS/CARET Southern Region Conference	2012-2013	Host
State Fair of Virginia	01/2012 – current	Board Member
Chesterfield County Farm Bureau	01/2012 – 12/2013	None
1890 Association of Extension Administrators	7/2008 – 5/2015	Advisory Committee, Member

6. Political Activity

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

Yes No (If yes, please complete the chart below)

<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>

(B) List any offices held in or services rendered, including volunteer services, to a political party or election committee during the last 10 years that you have not listed elsewhere.

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

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

<u>Name of Recipient</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Year of Contribution</u>
Hillary Clinton campaign	\$600	2016
Virginia Senator Rosalyn Dance	\$250	2015

7. Publications and Speeches

(A) List the titles, publishers and dates of books, articles, reports or other published materials that you have written, including articles published on the Internet. Please provide the Committee with all listed publications via email or other digital format and list all required publications even if no copy of the publication is available to provide.

Title	Publisher	Date(s) of Publication
Vaughan, J., Owens, C., (Producers), Hairston, J. E. (Co-Producer). <i>Living in A Food Desert Documentary.</i>	Retrieved from https://youtu.be/jicYbi-8ZNU .	2015
Hairston, J. E., Grant, A. <i>Food Deserts in Virginia.</i> A formal study conducted by the Food Desert Task Force.	Virginia State University. Retrieved from VCE-294.pdf (vt.edu)	2014
Faison, K., Conway, A., Hairston, J. E., Thornton, G. and Faison, O. M., Sr. <i>Addressing Health Disparities through Community Partnerships.</i> Association of Black Nursing Faculty, Inc. (ABNF). Vol. 6, No. 1 - Spring/Summer 2013.	Association of Black Nursing Faculty, Inc. (ABNF). Vol. 6, No. 1 - Spring/Summer 2013.	2013
Garst, B., Hairston, J. E. <i>Developing 4-H volunteers: A Guide for Leadership.</i>	<i>American Camping Association.</i> Contributor to book published.	2010
Hairston, J. E. & Jamison, K. <i>Conducting 4-H Community Service Learning Projects.</i>	Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication #384-160 http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/384/384-160/384-160_pdf.pdf	2009
Hairston, J.E., Gehrt, K. <i>Common Ground: Why Should University Faculty Partner with Virginia Cooperative Extension.</i>	Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication #VT/0513/VCE-163	2008

Garst B., Hunnings, J., Jamison, K., Hairston, J., & Meadows, R. <i>Development of a Comprehensive New 4-H Extension Agents Training Program using a Multi-module Approach and the 4-H Professional Research, Knowledge, and Competencies (4HPRKC) Taxonomy.</i>	Journal of Extension, 45(1), Article Number 1FEA3. "Development of a Comprehensive New 4-H Extension Agents Training Progr" by Barry A. Garst, Joseph R. Hunnings et al. (clmson.edu)	2007
Garst, B, Meadows, B, Hairston, J. E., Hunnings, J, & Jamison, K. <i>Exploring the Adolescent Life Skill Outcomes of State 4-H Congress Participation and the Different Outcomes of Gender and Race Groups.</i>	Journal of Extension, 44(6), Article Number 6RIB2. "Exploring the Adolescent Life Skill Outcomes of State 4-H Congress Par" by Barry A. Garst, Joseph R. Hunnings et al. (clmson.edu)	2006
Hairston, J. E. & Garst, B. <i>Camp: A Perfect Place to Address Bullying.</i>	American Camping Magazine, 77(8), 48-51. "Camp: A Perfect Place to Address Bullying" by Jewel Hairston and Barry A. Garst (clmson.edu)	2004
Hairston, J. E. <i>Identifying What 4-H'ers Learn from Community Service Learning Projects.</i>	Journal of Extension, 41(1), 1-11.	2004
Hairston, J. E. <i>Perceived Knowledge Level, Utilization, and Implementation of School-to-Work by Preservice Teacher Educators in Ohio.</i>	Journal of Vocational Education Research. Volume 27, Number 2. JVER v27n2 - Perceived Knowledge Level, Utilization, and Implementation of School-to-Work by Preservice Teacher Educators in Ohio Virginia Tech Scholarly Communication University Libraries (vt.edu)	2002

Bonner, Fred A., Hairston, J. E. <i>Teaching the Multicultural Learner: A Musical Theory Approach to Pedagogical Practices.</i>	The Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Volume 2, Number 1. Teaching the Multicultural Learner: A Musical Theory Approach to Pedagogical Practices - ProQuest	2002
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(B) List any formal speeches you have delivered during the last 10 years relevant to the position to which you have been nominated, and all speeches you have delivered related to any topic for the last five years. Include any testimony to Congress or any other legislative or administrative body. Please provide the Committee with copies of all listed speeches via email or other digital format and list all known required speeches even if no copy is available to provide.

<u>Title/Topic</u>	<u>Place/Audience</u>	<u>Date(s) of Speech</u>
Panelist. Participated in the Virginia Food Access Investment Fund Webinar #5.	Virginia Community Capital, virtual conference, https://youtu.be/AP6YGNjKpOg	01/27/2021
Opening Remarks.	2021 Virginia Farmers Market Conference, virtual presentation	01/07/2021
Moderator. Moderated a virtual discussion titled "Let's Break It Down: Marijuana-related Legislation and Reports from the 2020 VA General Assembly."	Tom Tom Foundation, https://youtu.be/XCvB-krcuA8	12/09/2020
Participated in a podcast to discuss the Virginia Food Access Investment Program and Fund.	Episode 101 of podcast "Virginia Takes an Equity Approach To Community Development Through Food" produced by the World Food Policy Center at Duke University, https://wfpc.sanford.duke.edu/podcasts/e101-virginia-takes-equity-approach-community-development-through-food	12/08/2020
Moderator. Moderated public meetings of the Equitable Food Oriented Development Stakeholder Work Group.	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Agriculture & Forestry Development, virtual meetings, https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/marketing	11/19/2020 09/10/2020 08/27/2020 08/12/2020 07/30/2020

	-agriculture-and-forestry-development.shtml	
Panelist. Served as panelist on General Session III.	Veteran Farmers Conference: Boots to Roots, virtual meeting	11/12/2020
Gave remarks on Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services programs.	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission's meeting on food processing, virtual meeting	11/05/2020
Recorded Remarks: <i>Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Jewel Bronaugh remarks on China Tobacco International.</i>	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28o1DH1_tkY	11/04/2020
Meeting Moderator and Participant. Moderated and participated in the Virginia Marijuana Legalization Work Group Meetings in development of the <i>Report to the Virginia General Assembly and Governor of Virginia: Impact on the Commonwealth of Legalizing the Sale and Personal Use of Marijuana.</i>	Virginia Marijuana Legalization Work Group Meetings	10/28/2020 10/26/2020 10/21/2020 10/20/2020 10/15/2020 10/14/2020 09/16/2020 09/14/2020 09/11/2020 08/19/2020 08/17/2020 07/31/2020
Gave remarks on Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services programs.	Virginia Agribusiness Council Annual Meeting, virtual meeting	10/28/2020
Speaker. Gave presentation titled "Reaching Underserved and Nontraditional Audiences with RREA Extension Programs."	Renewable Resources Extension Act (REEA) Conference Series Team, virtual meeting, Reaching Underserved and Nontraditional Audiences with RREA Programs (panopto.com)	10/22/2020
Moderator. Moderated a discussion with Beth Ford, CEO, Land O'Lakes.	The Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity, the Virginia Rural Center, virtual presentation	10/21/2020
Recorded remarks on the food supply chain.	Global Agriculture Productivity (GAP) Report: Agricultural Productivity in a Time of Pandemics Stories from the FrontLines, Video Report, https://youtu.be/LF96Jyncpd8	10/12/2020

Gave remarks on the importance of women in agriculture.	Cultural Diversity Day 2020: Empowering Women in Agriculture, Virginia Natural Resources Conservation Service, virtual meeting	10/07/2020
Speaker. Gave remarks on Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services programs for the Healthy Food Access Roadmap Webinar.	Virginia Federation of Food Banks, virtual meeting	10/2020
Speaker. Gave presentation titled "Mental Health Innovations in Ag Communities Farm Health and Safety Webinar about VDACS Farmer Stress and Mental Health".	Perdue University Extension National Farm Safety & Health Week Webinar Series.	09/22/2020
Interviewed by RFDTV about National Association of State Departments of Agriculture	Episode 174 of the <i>Rural Evening News</i> produced by RFDTV, https://www.watchrfdtv.com/details/6186704007001	09/01/2020
Gave remarks on Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services programs.	Virginia Farm Bureau Board Meeting, virtual meeting	08/26/2020
Recorded Remarks: <i>Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Jewel Bronaugh Visits Shore Breeze Farm and Talks about the AFD Fund.</i>	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, https://youtu.be/MQLmCi7K0bc	08/11/2020
Gave remarks on Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services programs.	Virginia Community Prosperity Summit: Building Community Resilience, Southern Rural Development Center, virtual event, https://youtu.be/AVeaPSzblU	08/07/2020
Recorded Remarks: <i>Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Visits Pacific Tomato Growers on Virginia's Eastern Shore.</i>	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, https://youtu.be/TDWoWnTqFTs	07/29/2020
Recorded Remarks: <i>Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Jewel Bronaugh Visits Cub Run Dairy .</i>	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, https://youtu.be/FEzR5IFaTgE	06/23/2020
Recorded Remarks: <i>Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Jewel Bronaugh –Support Virginia's Seafood Industry.</i>	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, https://youtu.be/GIpezgXcX0	05/23/2020

Recorded Remarks: <i>Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner and Wegmeyer Farm Encourage You to Buy Local.</i>	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, https://youtu.be/h01wsoJWjbs	05/22/2020
Recorded Remarks: <i>Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Jewel Bronaugh celebrates Virginia Farmers' Market Week.</i>	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, https://youtu.be/rT17SR_zMiw	04/29/2020
Panelist. Participated in a panel titled "Black, Green, Traumatized."	Black Church Food Security Network, virtual event, https://youtu.be/sRnp9MVDmKw	04/22/2020
Recorded Remarks: <i>Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Jewel Bronaugh visits Williamsburg Farmers Market.</i>	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, https://youtu.be/jxXhZBceuFA	04/21/2020
Recorded Remarks: <i>A Message to Virginia Agriculture and Forestry.</i>	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, https://youtu.be/	03/28/2020
Televised remarks on COVID-19 response from Commissioner Jewel Bronaugh.	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	03/28/2020
Featured in the <i>Farmer Stress Documentary Coming Soon.</i>	Virginia State University, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMzM7RnenEI&t=2s	02/13/2020
Gave remarks on Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services programs.	2020 Eastern Shore Agricultural Conference & Trade Show, Melfa, VA	02/05/2020
Gave remarks on the Farmer Stress Taskforce.	Annual Virginia Farm Bureau State Conference, Norfolk, VA	01/04/2020
Gave remarks on the Farmer Stress TaskForce.	Meeting with staff at the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Henrico, VA	12/12/2019
Opening remarks.	2019 Virginia Farm-to-Table Conference, Blue Ridge Community College, Weyers Cave, VA	12/05/2019
Gave remarks on the Farmer Stress Taskforce.	Virginia Cooperative Extension Fall District Meetings: - Southeast District Meeting, Smithfield, VA - Central District Meeting, Danville, VA	11/01/2019 10/30/2019

Gave remarks on the Agricultural Leadership & Community Transformation program.	Launch event with students and faculty for the Agricultural Leadership & Community Transformation, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA	10/03/2019
Panelist. Participated in the State Commissioners of Agriculture Keynote Panel.	Women in Agribusiness Summit, Minneapolis, MN	09/25/2019
Moderator. Moderated public meeting on production standards for industrial hemp derived oil.	Public Meeting on the Report by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Forestry and Health and Human Resources on production standards for industrial hemp derived oils, Richmond, VA	09/13/2019
Panelist. Participated in Plenary Session 3: "Moving Virginia Forward – Policy and Programs."	2019 Resilient Virginia Conference, Darden School of Business, Charlottesville, VA	07/18/2019
Welcoming Remarks.	Virginia State University Small Farm Field Day at the George Washington Carver Agricultural Center, Rapidan, VA	06/12/2019
Keynote Speaker.	Jr. MANRRS Leadership Institute State Conference, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA	05/03/2019
Keynote Speaker.	"Celebrating 40 Years at the Arlington Farmers Market", Arlington, VA	04/27/2019
Keynote Speaker.	4th Virginia Urban Agriculture Summit, Virginia Beach, VA	04/23/2019
Keynote Speaker.	Madison County FSA Women in Agriculture Workshop, Orange, VA	04/08/2019
Keynote Speaker.	Virginia Farm Bureau Women's Spring Conference 2019, Bristol, VA	03/29/2019
Panelist. Spoke on the role of Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in the Phase III Watershed Improvement Plan Panel	Environment Virginia Conference, Virginia Military Institute, Lexington, VA	03/27/2019
Participated in a roundtable hosted by Senator Warner to discuss his legislation, the Healthy Food Access for All Americans Act.	Feeding America Southwest Virginia, Salem, VA	02/20/2019
Gave remarks on Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services programs.	2019 Virginia Agriculture Development Officers Conference, Richmond, VA	02/2019

Speaker.	73rd Annual Convention Virginia State Feed Association, Roanoke, VA	02/13/2019
Keynote Speaker.	Young Farmers of Virginia Convention, Williamsburg, VA	02/01/2019
Opening Speaker for The Real Dirt on Dirt: A Workshop on Soil Health.	2018 Virginia Farm to Table Conference. Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA	12/07/2018
Interviewed about Virginia wine and grape production.	Season 14 Episode 43 of television show <i>Virginia Farming</i> titled "Virginia Farming: Dirt to Fine Wine" produced by the Virginia Farm Bureau https://www.pbs.org/video/virginia-farming-dirt-to-fine-wine-ezmyyq/	12/05/2018
Keynote Speaker.	2018 Annual Meeting of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Roanoke, VA	12/03/2018
Speaker at the Women in the Environment (WINE) Breakfast.	Virginia Coastal Policy Center, 6 th Annual Conference: Building a Resilient Virginia, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA	11/02/2018
Panelist. Served on the Influential Leaders Panel.	2018 Virginia Farmers Market Association Conference, Virginia Farm Bureau, Richmond, VA	11/02/2018
Keynote Speaker. Gave a speech titled "The Climate of Agriculture" on the 2018 Farm Bill and other issues, including: declining agriculture industries, Chesapeake Bay health, industrial hemp, labor shortages, land use taxation, growth of solar farms, equine welfare, and mental health of farmers.	Real Local RVA October Meeting, Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA	10/21/2018
Panelist. Participated in a panel titled "Community-Based Solutions for Making a Difference."	University of Virginia Bicentennial Symposium: Our Evolving Food System: From Slavery to Sovereignty at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA	10/18/2018
Keynote Speaker. Provided remarks on "Urban Agriculture and Community Based Food System Development in Virginia."	2018 Arlington/Alexandria Urban Agriculture Symposium, Arlington, VA	10/05/2018

Gave remarks recognizing Eden Community Garden and their efforts in conservation and water quality, and recently launched urban agriculture certificates from Virginia State University and Tricycle Gardens.	Press conference at Eden Community Garden. Richmond, VA	09/25/2018
Keynote Speaker. Gave presentation on urban agriculture.	Virginia Farm Bureau Board Meeting, Richmond, VA	08/29/2018
Gave remarks on recent legislative issues pertinent to industrial hemp.	2018 Industrial Hemp Field Day, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA	08/28/2018
Provided remarks on Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services programs.	Model Farm Field Day - National Black Grains Council, Spring Grove, VA	08/17/2018
Keynote Speaker. Gave presentation titled, "Hey Ladies...What's Next for us?"	Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Training, Virginia Farm Bureau State Office, Richmond, VA.	08/2018
Opening Remarks. Provided an update on the Center for Agriculture, Research, Engagement and Outreach (CAREO) at Virginia State University.	Virginia Cooperative Extension Winter Conference: When Research and Extension Work, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA	02/2018
Interviewed for and featured in <i>Urban Farmer Curtis Moody Gives Back Agriculture Program</i> .	https://youtu.be/UJpfd1IMBbM	2017
Presenter. Gave presentation about the Center for Agriculture, Research, Engagement and Outreach (CAREO) at Virginia State University.	Presentation at Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA. Excerpts of presentation: https://youtu.be/J2K0_gtn5UY	05/16/2017
Interviewed for blog post as part of a series highlighting #WomenInAg.	USDA Office of Communications: https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2015/03/26/conversation-womeninag-dr-jewel-hairston	02/21/2017
Panelist. Participated in panel on documentary <i>Living in a Food Desert</i> .	Documentary viewing and panel discussion at the Student Leadership & Involvement Center of Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA	02/2016
Gave remarks on USDA Farm Service Agency programs.	Virginia Farm Bureau State Meeting, Richmond, VA	12/2016

Panel moderator. Moderated discussion titled "Questions and Answers with Future Agriculture Leaders."	Agriculture Diversity Roundtable and Inclusion Roundtable, Washington, D.C.	04/2016
Featured guest. Interviewed about food deserts in Virginia and the documentary <i>Living in a Food Desert</i> .	Episode #185 (March B) of television show <i>Real Virginia</i> produced by the Virginia Farm Bureau, https://youtu.be/Nv3JdtawRZY	02/15/2015
Keynote Presenter. Gave presentation titled "Why Can't We All Just Get Along?"	2020 Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Meeting, Richmond, VA	05/2015
Panelist. Participated in a viewing and discussion of the documentary <i>Living in a Food Desert</i> .	Richmond International Film Festival, Richmond, VA	2015
Panelist. Spoke on resources available through the USDA Farm Service Agency.	Urban Agriculture Symposium 31 st Street Baptist Church, Richmond, VA	09/23/2015
Speaker. Provided remarks on women in agriculture.	Farm Bureau Federation Women's Conference, Roanoke, VA	03/22/2015
Spoke about the findings and recommendations from the Food Desert Study Report.	Meeting of the Virginia General Assembly's Rural Caucus and the Virginia General Assembly's Legislative Black Caucus, Virginia General Assembly Building, Richmond, VA	02/2014
Keynote Speaker.	Virginia Food System Council State Conference, Lynchburg, VA	2014
Conference Speaker. Presented on "Food Deserts & Food Access, Turning Challenges into Opportunities."	2014 Virginia Urban Agriculture Summit, Lynchburg, VA	04/24/2014
Hosted workshop titled "Interdisciplinary Programs to Serve Limited-Resource Farmers."	59 th Annual North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Conference. Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA	06/28/13
Presented on Virginia State University and resources available through the College of Agriculture.	2013 Virginia Agribusiness Council Roundtables in the following locations:	08/21/2013
	- Northern Neck Regional Roundtable, Heathsville, VA - Southeast Regional Roundtable, Suffolk, VA	08/26/2013

Presented on Virginia State University and resources available through the College of Agriculture.	Prince George County Farm Bureau Meeting, Colonial Heights, VA	05/30/2013
Keynote Speaker. Gave remarks on small farming and persistence under pressure.	7 th Annual Minority Landowner Magazine Conference: Keeping Your Farm Productive, Profitable and Yours, Greensboro, NC	02/21/2013
Keynote Speaker.	2013 Local Foods Network Conference, Virginia Farm Bureau, Richmond, VA	02/26/2013
Panelist. Participated in a discussion about farm-to-table agriculture.	Virginia Women's Conference, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Richmond, VA	2013
Gave remarks on behalf of Virginia State University College of Agriculture.	Chesterfield County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, Chesterfield, VA	10/08/2012
Panelist. Participated in discussion on the role of agriculture, Cooperative Extension and faith-based community partnerships.	Agricultural Symposium: The Role of Agriculture and the Church in the Community and Economic Development in Rural America, Powhatan, VA	10/10/2012
Opening Remarks.	4 th Annual USDA Outreach Conference, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA	2012
Panelist. Participated in panel titled, "Closing the Gap: Fostering Collaborative Research Between 1862 and 1890 Land Grant Universities."	125 th Annual Meeting of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, Association of Public Land Grant Universities, Denver, CO	11/12/2012
Featured guest for the VSU Spotlight series. Provided televised remarks on the VSU College of Agriculture.	VSU Today TV https://vimeo.com/28645526	02/12/2012
Opening Remarks.	Virginia Master Gardener's State Conference, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA	02/26/2011
Panelist. Served on a panel about the contributions of land grant universities.	Virginia Extension Leadership Council State Conference, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA	10/20/2011
Keynote Speaker.	2010 Fall Conference – Virginia Association of Adult 4-H Volunteer Leaders, Williamsburg, VA	11/07/2010
Welcoming Remarks to open the 2010 Small Farm Family Conference themed "Profits through Value-Added Products."	2010 Small Farm Family Conference, Virginia Cooperative Extension Programs Williamsburg, VA	11/09/2010

Panelist. Participated in a panel titled, "Examining the Research - Advisory Leadership Councils."	Strengthening Extension Advisory Leaders(SEAL) Conference, Charlotte, NC	05/20/2009
Keynote Speaker.	53 rd Annual Rural Life Conference, Economic Challenges: Impact on the Health of Agriculture, Communities and Rural Families, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Pine Bluff, AR	2009
Opening remarks.	2 nd Annual Virginia Berry Production and Marketing Conference https://youtu.be/hbxdWu6kiuM	03/2009

8. Lobbying

In the past 10 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

April 21, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington DC 20150

The Honorable John Boozman
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington DC 20150


RE: Addendum to the Committee Questionnaire

Dear Senators Stabenow and Boozman:

I have identified a few additional speeches that I inadvertently left off the original Committee Questionnaire I submitted. Please find the information below about these events.

1. Title/Topic: Presenter on Virginia's Agriculture and Forestry Industries and Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Programs
Place/Audience: African American Advisory Board, Richmond, VA
Date: 2/20/2020
2. Title/Topic: Welcome remarks
Place/Audience: 2019 Industrial Hemp Field Day, Virginia State University, Petersburg, VA
Date: 07/25/2019
3. Title/Topic: Welcome Remarks
Place/Audience: 2019 State Farm Service Agency Conference, Blacksburg, VA
Date: 6/18/2019
4. Title/Topic: Welcome Remarks
Place/Audience: Virginia Small Grain Field Day
Date: 5/22/2019
5. Title/Topic: Keynote Speaker
Place/Audience: Louisa County Chamber Breakfast Meeting, Mineral, VA
Date: 3/30/2019
6. Title/Topic: Keynote Speaker
Place/Audience: Eastern Shore Agriculture Conference, Melfa, VA
Date: 1/23/2019

Thank you again for the opportunity to be considered by the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee and I am available to answer any further questions you have about my paperwork submissions.

Sincerely,
Jewel Bronaugh

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF
GOVERNMENT ETHICS



February 26, 2021

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

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

In accordance with the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, I enclose a copy of the financial disclosure report filed by Jewel Bronaugh, who has been nominated by President Biden for the position of Deputy 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,

David J. Apol
General Counsel

Enclosures



February 23, 2021

Mr. Stuart Bender
Designated Agency Ethics Official
U.S. Department of Agriculture
J.L. Whitten Building
Room 347-W
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
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 Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is my responsibility to understand and comply with commitments outlined in this agreement.

SECTION 1 – GENERAL COMMITMENTS

As required by the criminal conflicts of interest law at 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 particular 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 an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or employee; and
- Any person or organization with which I am negotiating or have an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

In the event that an actual or potential conflict of interest arises during my appointment, I will consult with an agency ethics official and take the measures necessary to resolve the conflict, such as recusal from the particular matter or divestiture of an asset.

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 regulatory exemption for diversified mutual funds and unit investment trusts at 5 C.F.R. § 2640.201(a), obligations of the United States, or municipal bonds.

I will receive a live ethics briefing from a member of the Office of Ethics after my confirmation but not later than 15 days after my appointment pursuant to the ethics program regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2638.305. Within 90 days of my confirmation, I will submit my Certification of Ethics Agreement Compliance which documents my compliance with this ethics agreement.

I understand that as an appointee I will be required to sign the Ethics Pledge (Exec. Order No. 13989) and that I will be bound by it. Among other obligations, I will be required to recuse from particular matters involving specific parties involving my former employer or former clients for a period of two years after I am appointed, with the exception of states and local governments.

I will not modify this ethics agreement without your approval and the approval of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics pursuant to the ethics agreement requirements contained in the financial disclosure regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2634.803(a)(4).

SECTION 2 – EMPLOYMENT RELATED INTERESTS

Upon confirmation, I will resign my position as Commissioner of the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. For a period of one year after my resignation, I will have a “covered relationship” under the impartiality regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502 with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d), the agency will grant me a written authorization to participate personally and substantially in particular matters involving specific parties in which I know the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is a party or represents a party. However, I understand that any authorization will not allow me to participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I previously participated as Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

SECTION 3 – OTHER RESIGNATIONS

Upon confirmation, I will also resign from the following positions:

- Treasurer of the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture;
- Board Member, State Fair of Virginia;
- Administrative Council Member, Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Administrative Council; and
- Board Member, National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Foundation.

Pursuant to the impartiality regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502, 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 at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d).

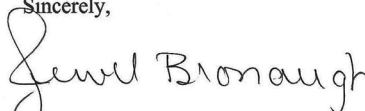
SECTION 4 – SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT

My spouse is employed by NVR/Ryan Homes, in a position for which he receives a fixed annual salary. Pursuant to the impartiality regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502, for as long as my spouse continues to work for NVR/Ryan Homes, I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter involving specific parties in which I know NVR/Ryan Homes is a party or represents a party, unless I am first authorized to participate, pursuant to 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(d).

SECTION 5 – PUBLIC POSTING

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jewel Bronaugh". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Jewel Bronaugh

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

Filer's Information

Bronaugh, Jewel

Deputy 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/ Bronaugh, Jewel [electronically signed on 01/22/2021 by Bronaugh, Jewel 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 02/24/2021 by Bender, Stuart in Integrity.gov]

Other review conducted by

U.S. Office of Government Ethics Certification

/s/ Apol, David, Certifying Official [electronically signed on 02/26/2021 by Apol, David in Integrity.gov]

1. Filer's Positions Held Outside United States Government

#	ORGANIZATION NAME	CITY, STATE	ORGANIZATION TYPE	POSITION HELD	FROM	TO
1	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	Richmond, Virginia	State Agency	Commissioner	5/2018	Present
2	Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture	Frankfort, Kentucky	Organization comprised of Commissioners and Secretaries of Agriculture of the Southern States	Treasurer	6/2020	Present
3	State Fair of Virginia	Richmond, Virginia	Non-Profit	Board Member	1/2012	Present
4	Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Administrative Council	Jeffersonville, Florida	Federal Agency Program under USDA/NIFA	Administrative Council Member	10/2020	Present
5	The NASDA Foundation	Arlington, Virginia	Non-Profit	Member of Board of Directors	10/2020	Present

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

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	N/A		Annual Salary	\$167,316
2	Virginia State University Cooperative Extension and Agricultural tax-deferred annuity plan (403(b) plan)	No			

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
2.1	CREF Money Market Account R2	Yes	\$15,001 - \$50,000		None (or less than \$201)
3	Virginia State University Cooperative Extension and Agricultural cash match plan (401(a) plan)	No			
3.1	CREF Money Market Account R2	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
4	Virginia Polytechnic Institute tax-deferred annuity plan (403(b) plan)	No			
4.1	TIAA Traditional	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
4.2	TIAA Real Estate	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
4.3	Cref Money Market	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
5	Virginia Polytechnic Institute cash match plan (401(a) plan)	No			
5.1	TIAA Traditional	N/A	None (or less than \$1,001)		None (or less than \$201)
5.2	TIAA Real Estate	Yes	None (or less than \$1,001)		None (or less than \$201)
5.3	Cref Money Market	Yes	None (or less than \$1,001)		None (or less than \$201)
6	Bowling Green State University alternative retirement plan (401(a) plan)	No			
6.1	TIAA Traditional	N/A	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
6.2	TIAA Real Estate	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
6.3	Cref Money Market	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
7	Virginia State University 403(b) Plan	No			
7.1	American Funds Growth Fund of America Class A (AGTHX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
7.2	Fidelity VIP Growth Fund	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)
8	Roanoke County Schools 403(b) plan	No			
8.1	Pioneer Core Equity Class A (PIOTX)	Yes	\$1,001 - \$15,000		None (or less than \$201)

3. Filer's Employment Agreements and Arrangements

#	EMPLOYER OR PARTY	CITY, STATE	STATUS AND TERMS	DATE
1	Bowling Green State University	Bowling Green, Ohio	I will continue to participate in this defined contribution plan, but the plan sponsor no longer makes contributions.	8/1998
2	Virginia State University Cooperative Extension and Agricultural - 401(a) Plan	Petersburg, Virginia	I will continue to participate in this defined contribution plan, but the plan sponsor no longer makes contributions.	7/2008
3	Virginia Polytechnic Institute - 401(a) Plan	Blacksburg, Virginia	I will continue to participate in this defined contribution plan, but the plan sponsor no longer makes contributions.	2/2005
4	Virginia State University	Petersburg, Virginia	I will continue to participate in this defined contribution plan, but the plan sponsor no longer makes contributions.	7/2001
5	Roanoke County Schools	Roanoke, Virginia	I will continue to participate in this defined contribution plan, but the plan sponsor no longer makes contributions.	7/1989

#	EMPLOYER OR PARTY	CITY, STATE	STATUS AND TERMS	DATE
6	Virginia State University Cooperative Extension and Agricultural - 403(b) Plan	Petersburg, Virginia	I will continue to participate in this defined contribution plan; but the plan sponsor no longer makes contributions.	7/2008
7	Virginia Polytechnic Institute - 403(b) Plan	Blacksburg, Virginia	I will continue to participate in this defined contribution plan; but the plan sponsor no longer makes contributions.	2/2005

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

#	SOURCE NAME	CITY, STATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES
1	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	Richmond, Virginia	Commissioner of the Agency

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

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	NVR/Ryan Homes	N/A		Salary	
2	IHG Hotels	N/A		Salary	

6. Other Assets and Income

#	DESCRIPTION	EIF	VALUE	INCOME TYPE	INCOME AMOUNT
1	U.S. bank #1 (cash account)	N/A	\$100,001 - \$250,000	Interest	\$1,001 - \$2,500
2	Virginia Prepaid 529 Plan	N/A	\$15,001 - \$50,000		None (or less than \$201)

7. Transactions

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

8. Liabilities

#	CREDITOR NAME	TYPE	AMOUNT	YEAR INCURRED	RATE	TERM
1	Quicken Loans	Mortgage on Personal Residence	\$250,001 - \$500,000	2020	2.7%	30 yr

9. Gifts and Travel Reimbursements

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

Endnotes

PART	#	ENDNOTE
1.	1	By virtue of my position as Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, I serve in an ex officio capacity on the following entities: The Board of Agriculture and Consumer Services; the Virginia Spirits Board; the Virginia Winery Distribution Company Board; the Virginia Specialty Food and Beverage Association; the COVID-19 Enforcement Steering Committee; the Virginia Economic Crisis Taskforce; and the Virginia Agricultural Council.
1.	2	State Departments of Agriculture in the southern region are members of SASDA. SASDA is a regional association serving under the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. Additionally, the Southern U.S. Trade Association (SUSTA) is a regional association serving under the auspices of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture.

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 (1) that ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) from which more than \$200 in income was received 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 earned 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 (1) that ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) from which more than \$200 in income was received 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, (1) that ended the reporting period with a value greater than \$1,000 or (2) from which more than \$200 in investment income was received 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 in income was received). Additional exceptions apply. Note: The type of income is not required if the amount of income is \$0 - \$200 or if the asset qualifies as an excepted investment fund (EIF).

7. Transactions

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

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

8. Liabilities

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

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

9. Gifts and Travel Reimbursements

This section discloses:

- Gifts totaling more than \$415 that the filer, the filer's spouse, and dependent children received from any one source during the reporting period.
- Travel reimbursements totaling more than \$415 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 \$166 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. Failure to provide the requested information may result in separation, disciplinary action, or civil action. 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 a source when necessary to obtain information relevant to a conflict of interest investigation or determination; (4) to the National Archives and Records Administration or the General Services Administration in records management inspections; (5) to the Office of Management and Budget during legislative coordination on private relief legislation; (6) when the disclosing agency determines that the records are arguably relevant to a proceeding before a court, grand jury, or administrative or adjudicative body, or in a proceeding before an administrative or adjudicative body when the adjudicator determines the records to be relevant to the proceeding; (7) to reviewing officials in a new office, department or agency when an employee transfers or is detailed from one covered position to another, a public financial disclosure report and any accompanying documents, including statements notifying an employee's supervising ethics office of the commencement of negotiations for future employment or compensation or of an agreement for future employment or compensation; (8) to a Member of Congress or a congressional office in response to an inquiry made on behalf of and at the request of an individual who is the subject of the record; (9) 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 this system of records; (10) on the OGE Website and to any person, department or agency, any written ethics agreement, including certifications of ethics agreement compliance, filed with OGE by an individual nominated by the President to a position requiring Senate confirmation; (11) on the OGE Website and to any person, department or agency, any certificate of divestiture issued by OGE; (12) on the OGE Website and to any person, department or agency, any waiver of the restrictions contained in Executive Order 13770 or any superseding executive order; (13) to appropriate agencies, entities and persons when there has been a suspected or confirmed breach of the system of records, the agency maintaining the records has determined that there is a risk of harm to individuals, the agency, the Federal Government, or national security, and the disclosure is reasonably necessary to assist in connection with the agency's efforts to respond to the suspected or confirmed breach or to prevent, minimize, or remedy such harm; and (14) to another Federal agency or Federal entity, when the agency maintaining the record determines that information from this system of records is reasonably necessary to assist the recipient agency or entity in responding to a suspected or confirmed breach or in preventing, minimizing, or remedying the risk of harm to individuals, the recipient agency or entity, the Federal Government, or national security. 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 ten 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, N.W., 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).

April 18, 2021

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

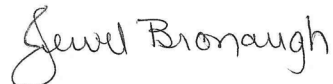
The Honorable John Boozman, Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman:

Please be advised that pursuant to section 101(b) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, as amended, I have informed the appropriate ethics officials that the information required by section 102(a)(1)(A) of the Act with respect to income and honoraria contained in OGE Form 278e (Executive Branch Public Financial Disclosure Report) executed by me on January 22, 2021 is correct.

This information is current as of Sunday, April 18, 2021. This date is five days prior to the date of the first hearing scheduled to consider my nomination.

Sincerely,


Jewel Bronaugh

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

APRIL 22, 2021

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Hearing to Consider the Nomination of Jewel H. Bronaugh, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of
Agriculture
Questions for the Record
April 22, 2021

Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow

- 1) Rates of food insecurity have risen throughout the pandemic. While food banks play a critical role in providing food to those in need, it is clear that charity alone cannot meet the need. Programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Child and Adult Care Program (CACFP), school meal programs and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) are all critical to feeding children and families before, during, and after school, and over the summer. Through flexibilities directed by Congress and implemented by USDA, participants have experienced increased flexibility to participate in programs and increased benefit levels. If confirmed, will you work with Congress to ensure that participants in these programs do not face a benefit cliff and that schools have support as they transition back to serving meals under the National School Lunch Program?

Response: The issue of rising hunger in my state of Virginia has remained top of mind for me during the ongoing pandemic. I agree, the stress of the growing need on our local food banks and pantries over the past year has shown us they cannot address food needs alone and that we must strengthen other existing food assistance programs to ensure people in need can put food on the table during tough economic times. Like so many others, vulnerable communities in my state of Virginia continue to benefit greatly from the food relief provided in the 2020 COVID-19 and stimulus packages and the American Rescue Plan. If confirmed to serve as Deputy Secretary, I look forward to working with Congress and Secretary Vilsack to explore the ways we can work together to avoid a benefit cliff and further support our nation's schools and school food service operators through the summer months, upcoming school year and beyond.

- 2) During the pandemic, USDA made great strides to expand the SNAP online program and COVID-19 waivers have demonstrated that technology can be useful and effective in serving program participants, for example through actions like remote certification in WIC. However, technology remains a barrier to improving participant experience, increasing access and retaining participants. If confirmed, will you to commit to investing in program modernization and technology improvements throughout nutrition programs and supporting states as they transition as well?

Response: Congress provided USDA with tremendous support for modernizing both online SNAP and the WIC program through passage of the American Rescue Plan. This is important work and if confirmed, I look forward to learning about USDA's plans for this funding and ensuring Congress is updated as to USDA moves forward on those plans.

- 3) As we confront the ongoing threats of climate change, USDA is uniquely positioned to deploy clean energy technology to rural communities and agricultural operations across the country. If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, how do you plan to use existing USDA programs to promote and deploy clean energy technology; and how will you ensure that these projects are deployed with local support and sufficient technical assistance to ensure their success?

Response: I understand the energy title of the Farm Bill provides USDA with tools that can play an important role in promoting clean energy technology in rural communities and agricultural operations. The Rural Energy for America Program, for example, provides assistance to farmers and rural small businesses for the deployment of a variety of clean energy and energy efficiency solutions. In addition to deployment of clean energy, energy efficiency and grid improvements are important strategies for addressing climate change. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about how USDA's Rural Utilities Service provides financing for energy efficiency improvements and smart grid initiatives that improve energy efficiency, grid reliability, and enhance grid security in rural areas.

- 4) The COVID-19 pandemic has placed significant strain on small business owners, particularly those in rural America. As we look toward rebuilding rural economies following the pandemic, how do you plan to leverage existing Rural Business-Cooperative Service programs, and what changes or improvements to these programs do you believe would better serve USDA's customers?

Response: Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have a real opportunity to reimagine how we serve people in rural America. I believe that we must focus on breaking down the barriers that may have prevented some businesses and organizations from participating in Rural Business-Cooperative programs in the past. Additionally, any changes and improvements need to be driven by experiences of our business owners and community leaders. Whether that's helping build capacity, creating more points of access for assistance, or expanding eligibility, I hope that Congress will work with the Department to deepen the impact of these programs.

- 5) Many sectors of the agriculture economy, such as specialty crops, local food, and organic producers, have not traditionally participated in USDA programs. These producers also often face unique challenges due to the complexity of their operations, differences in price and production practices and regional differences that make navigating and taking advantage of USDA programs challenging at times. If confirmed, will you commit to increasing USDA's outreach to specialty crops, local food, organic producers and socially disadvantaged farmers to communicate program opportunities, learn about challenges and build USDA's relationships with these groups?

Response: I understand the Administration has already taken actions to identify gaps in assistance provided under the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). USDA has re-opened CFAP2 sign-up and is seeking new partnerships under the Pandemic Assistance for Producers program due to concerns about insufficient outreach especially to these groups. If confirmed, I will seek more details on these efforts and explore ways to build on and strengthen these efforts and partnerships.

- 6) In the 2018 Farm Bill, I authored new provisions on urban agriculture including the development of a new advisory committee, grant programs, and established a new Office of Urban Agriculture. USDA has yet to fully implement these provisions of the Farm Bill. Will you commit to expediting the implementation process to ensure all aspects of urban agriculture from 2018 Farm Bill are implemented this year?

Response: Urban agriculture is an area that I am truly passionate about. During my time as Dean of the College of Agriculture at Virginia State University, I helped establish the "Summerseat Agricultural Project" by developing partnerships with Sabra Dipping Company and Chesterfield County to conduct urban agriculture research projects to address food deserts and human health concerns. Additionally, I assisted the Virginia State FSA office by identifying urban agriculture

producers to serve on the newly piloted FSA Urban-Suburban County Committee. I was pleased to see the creation of the Office of Urban Agriculture in the 2018 Farm Bill and if confirmed to serve as Deputy Secretary, I look forward to getting briefed on the status of USDA's efforts to fully implement the related provisions of the Farm Bill and will commit to ensuring Congress is updated on the Department's future plans in this area.

7) If you are confirmed, I look forward to working with you. If confirmed, do you agree, without reservation, to:

a. Promptly reply to any request for information from me or any duly constituted committee of the Congress and provide the requested information?

Response: If confirmed, I agree to respond to any requests from you or any duly constituted committee of Congress.

b. Respond to my requests for data and technical assistance in informing or drafting legislation or implementation of the law?

Response: Yes. If confirmed, I agree to respond to your request for data and technical assistance in informing or drafting legislation or implementation of law.

c. Notify me or my staff in advance of any public announcement of any major changes made by you or within the Department of Agriculture during your tenure?

Response: If confirmed, I agree to ensuring you or your staff is notified in advance of any public announcements of any major changes made within USDA during my tenure, as appropriate.

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?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to working with the Senate Appropriations Committee or the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee to improve the transparency of responses and the means by which other interested members of Congress can access the information.

8) I know you have a good working relationship with dairy farmers in Virginia. As you know, dairy is Michigan's top commodity, supporting 40,000 jobs and contributing over \$15 billion to the state's economy. As the Department looks to implement the recent COVID-19 assistance funding, I wanted to highlight one of the dairy provisions in particular. I secured \$400 million for a new Dairy Donation Program in the December COVID-19 assistance package, which was based on a pilot Milk Donation Program I authored in the 2018 Farm Bill. This important program will help dairy farmers partner with nonprofits at the local level to facilitate the donation of dairy products. It's a win-win for farmers and hungry families, and will help reduce food waste. Will you commit to prioritizing implementation of this program, as well as look for other ways to continue to support our dairy farmers?

Response: I understand that the Dairy Donation Program will require a rulemaking to implement the program but that USDA recently provided advance notice to the industry about the minimum requirements of the program and that reimbursement would be retroactive to at least cover donations in 2021. If confirmed, I will seek a briefing on the status of USDA's assistance for dairy farmers, including the rulemaking, and look for ways I can help expedite the implementation.

- 9) You know the importance of having fully staffed FSA county offices so that farmers and ranchers can actually access the tools we provide. We have seen declines in staffing levels at USDA in recent years. In particular, not having enough staff in local FSA and Natural Resource Conservation Service can create backlogs in accessing Farm Bill programs. It also places enormous stress on the county office employees who have had to implement many brand new programs on short notice in recent years – such as COVID-19 assistance. Will you commit to work on improving the service levels at local USDA offices and address ongoing staffing challenges?

Response: As a former State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Virginia, I made sure to visit every local county office because I know that our local staff is one of FSA's most important and valuable resources and was concerned by some of the previous Administration's early actions to freeze hiring and even propose cuts to field staff in their budget. If confirmed, I plan to seek more information on the status of county service center staffing and use my experience to look for ways to make sure resources are prioritized based on the needs of our customers and front-line employees.

- 10) Given the urgency of the climate crisis, it is imperative that we make as many tools available for farmers to participate in mitigation as possible. What are some existing USDA programs and tools that can be utilized to ensure speedy delivery of climate benefits? What do you think USDA's priorities should be to address the climate crisis? How will you coordinate such an effort?

Response: USDA's existing Farm Bill conservation programs provide significant opportunities to promote climate smart agriculture and forestry. For example, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program can dramatically increase adoption of cover crops, conservation tillage, nutrient management and other climate friendly conservation practices. In addition to widespread adoption of climate smart agriculture and forestry practices on working lands, USDA climate priorities should include (1) addressing catastrophic wildfire, (2) providing good information to producers and landowners regarding climate mitigation and resilience, and; (3) investing in agricultural research and development. If confirmed, I look forward to getting an update on USDA's climate work and ensuring coordination is happening across the Department.

- 11) Climate change touches each of our farmers across the U.S., and regional differences require a multifaceted approach to help producers build climate resilience into their systems. Cherry farmers in Michigan require different mitigation tools than ranchers in Texas or corn growers in Iowa. How do you plan to ensure that these regional variations in climate, cropping system, and farm size are addressed as the Agency develops and implements climate change mitigation plans?

Response: The goal of climate smart agriculture and forestry is to enable our farmers and ranchers to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change, regardless of where they are. Thus, this cannot be a one-size fits all strategy. Technical assistance, whether from NRCS agents or partners such as technical service providers, is an important part of the conservation planning process to identify the suite of tools that will work for a given producer. If confirmed, I plan to work closely

with Secretary Vilsack to develop innovative solutions in partnership with state and local governments, tribes, and nonprofits through programs such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). I believe these programs will play an increasingly important role in climate-smart agriculture and forestry. I also look forward to learning more about the role R&D and USDA's research agencies may play in identifying solutions to meet the unique challenges facing different regions and farm sizes, if confirmed.

- 12) Socially disadvantaged and historically underserved communities are disproportionately affected by climate change. Additionally, when Congress and the executive branch have discussed policies to address climate change in the past, stakeholders from these frontline communities have more often than not been left out of the discussion. How will you help ensure that these communities are active members in the dialogue around climate change at USDA? What are the specific measures you intend to take to ensure that these injustices are not perpetuated moving forward?

Response: Secretary Vilsack has made clear that identifying inequities in the way USDA delivers its programs, particularly programs impacting socially disadvantaged and historically underserved communities, is a top priority for USDA and the Biden Administration. This includes ensuring these communities have a seat at the table and an equity lens is consistently applied as the Department works to address climate change and rural and urban farm service issues. If confirmed, I plan to be fully engaged in this work and will work with Secretary Vilsack to ensure these issues remain front and center as part of the Department's ongoing work on racial and economic equity.

- 13) The 2018 farm bill made historic investments in conservation practices that improve water quality, such as cover crops and buffers. It also triples mandatory funding for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, which I created in the 2014 Farm Bill, and think is uniquely suited to helping us make demonstrable progress improving water quality in the western Lake Erie Basin, the Chesapeake Bay and all across the country. What are your views on the role USDA can play in dramatically increasing the adoption of water quality practices and fostering locally-led conservation partnerships?

Response: Coming from a state on the Chesapeake Bay, I have a strong appreciation for the importance of conservation to improve water quality and how partnerships are critical to successful efforts. Congress afforded USDA exciting opportunities through the 2018 Farm Bill to grow these partnerships through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and, if confirmed, I look forward to working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency to increase these partnership opportunities.

- 14) A key function of the Deputy Secretary role is to manage the budget across all programs and agencies at USDA and coordinating with OMB to release the President's budget. How will you collaborate with the Secretary, Under Secretaries, and Assistant Secretaries to prioritize funding in USDA's budget request?

Response: I understand the role of the Deputy Secretary is to manage the USDA budget and coordinate the development of USDA's priorities for inclusion in the President's annual budget proposal. If confirmed, I commit to working closely with Secretary Vilsack, the Office of Budget & Program Analysis, the Assistant Secretaries for Administration, Congressional Relations, and Civil Rights, the Chief Information Officer and Chief Financial Officer, and all mission area Under

Secretaries across the Department to prioritize USDA's budget request during the formulation of the annual budget request.

- 15) Small and beginning farmers often struggle to make it in agriculture. These challenges have been exacerbated by COVID. What more can USDA do to help small and beginning farmers to succeed?

Response: One of USDA's most important ways to support beginning farmers is through direct loans, but that also means being understanding and flexible when farmers face economic challenges such as those related to COVID. I was pleased to see one of the first steps taken by the new Administration was to suspend all adverse loan actions on direct farm loans and to urge guaranteed lenders to do the same, as USDA works to create a process for the debt relief provided in the American Rescue Plan. USDA's recent review of the COVID assistance for farmers also highlighted assistance for beginning farmers as one of the gaps in the previous rounds of pandemic assistance and a desire to make sure future rounds address this gap. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Vilsack to learn more about USDA's plans to support small and beginning farmers and to work with Congress to further support the Department's efforts.

- 16) The last few years have had an enormous toll on the morale at USDA and employee satisfaction as surveyed in the Best Places to Work Survey has dropped dramatically. What actions will you take to improve employee morale and strengthen USDA's workforce? What ideas do you have to improve diversity among USDA employees? How do you plan to work to engender confidence and buy in on the part of USDA employees in a way that helps to accomplish your goals as Deputy Secretary and the overall goals of the agency?

Response: I have always believed in treating those who work with me with the utmost dignity and respect. I understand the last few years have had a significant impact on staffing and employee morale across the Department. There is no doubt there is a great deal of work that needs to be done at USDA and across the federal government to rebuild trust, address staffing needs, ensure employees have what they need to do their work safely and efficiently during this pandemic, diversify the workforce, create a culture of true belonging where everyone feels included, and regain the buy-in of the broader workforce. The work is necessary to accomplish USDA's mission to provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues, based on public policy, the best available science, and effective management. I have full confidence that both Secretary Vilsack and I will do the necessary work in full partnership with the leadership across the Department, if confirmed. If confirmed to serve as Deputy Secretary, I look forward to working with Secretary Vilsack and the Assistant Secretary for Administration to listen to employees about what works and what hasn't, and to learn more about the status of efforts to improve employee morale and build a more diverse and inclusive workforce and culture.

- 17) USDA has long struggled to improve its information technology. Will you prioritize improving IT management and keep the Committee informed of the status of IT at USDA? Additionally, will you prioritize cybersecurity, especially given the Solarwinds cyberattack that has impacted the Department of Agriculture, as well as many other federal agencies and private sector entities?

Response: Yes, if confirmed to serve as Deputy Secretary, I plan to prioritize improving IT management at the Department and will keep the Committee informed of the status of IT at USDA, as appropriate and in accordance with any applicable laws or directives. Additionally, I plan to prioritize cybersecurity in accordance with the administration's broader efforts to identify

vulnerabilities in federal systems and prevent future cyber-attacks. It is my understanding the Administration will soon take actions aimed at improving federal cybersecurity, and that CISA has ordered all federal agencies to investigate and immediately patch their systems against both the Microsoft vulnerabilities and those used in the SolarWinds hack.

Ranking Member John Boozman

Management

- 1) Management challenges and numerous audits by USDA Office of the Inspector General and GAO have documented USDA's complicated history with proper oversight of programs, improving financial management and reducing "improper payments." In tightening budgetary times, every penny counts, but tracking errant payments down and eliminating the problem does not take place in a vacuum. There are "costs and benefits" which need to be balanced. How will your prior experience overseeing large operations inform your agenda? How do you envision handling the issue of firm oversight and slashing improper payments as you oversee management of programs that issue a considerable volume of payments?

Response: It is my understanding that in prior administrations the Deputy Secretary has taken a lead role in overseeing reports and high-level interactions between OIG and GAO. During my time as the Dean of College of Agriculture at Virginia State University, I oversaw the school's USDA/NIFA audit review, resulting in a \$583,000 savings for the university and funds returned to the College of Agriculture. I understand the importance of strong program oversight and ensuring good stewardship of taxpayer dollars. If confirmed, I plan to work with OIG and GAO to learn more about recent findings as it relates to program oversight and recommendations made to help guide USDA in tightening oversight.

- 2) I have heard concerns from farmers who have received stern "spot check" letters from USDA, demanding they turn over troves of documents to FSA within two weeks. While the letters are from the Farm Service Agency, local FSA offices are apparently telling these farmers that the inquiry is related to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigation. Alarming, when farmers have asked for assistance in discerning which documents to provide to FSA, they were greeted with only more confusion. FSA staff are either unwilling or unable to guide their customers for an audit that is not their own and for an agency that is not familiar with agriculture. I certainly am supportive of spot checks to ensure that programs are operating with a high level of integrity, but this seems to be something over and above a spot check and the FSA's internal integrity program. Furthermore, some of the farmers I've heard from are specialty crop producers who have never before interacted with FSA prior to the CFAP program. These first-time FSA customers deserve some help to walk them through the programs and needed documentation. Do you commit to remedying this situation so that these producers suffering from COVID losses can receive transparent, helpful customer assistance from FSA, USDA, and (if appropriate) GAO?

Response: If confirmed to serve as Deputy Secretary, I will certainly seek to discover the background for the spot checks and make sure producers are provided a resource to answer questions about what information to include. In the meantime, if you have not yet done so, I encourage you to share the details of the situation with USDA, so the Department can begin determining the full scope of this issue.

- 3) COVID has caused everyone to pivot and balance customer service against health and safety. At the beginning of March, the Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) mission area rescinded the previous COVID staffing guidance for service centers. It was replaced by a policy that mandated no more than 25% staffing in all service centers with no visitors permitted. This was done days before the signup deadline for the Quality Loss Adjustment (QLA) program and less than 2 weeks before the ARC/PLC signup deadline. This change took place unexpectedly. We understand that the QLA deadline was extended, and that as of March 22, service centers were given flexibility to have up to 50% staff. In this time of COVID, we need to keep the health and safety of people at the forefront as policies like these are crafted. There are mitigation measures that allow employees to be kept safe, while also providing good customer service. If confirmed, will you take into account local input and conditions as COVID workplace protocols continue to be developed?

Response: As a former State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) in Virginia, I made sure to visit every local county office because I know that our local staff is one of FSA's most important and valuable resources, and we need to ensure we are supporting them to continue to deliver the service expected by customers. Secretary Vilsack has publicly noted that USDA has a Work Safety Plan in place and that he was pleased to review data that shows the same level of service is happening at the county level as pre-pandemic. If confirmed, I look forward to getting briefed on the Work Safety Plan and to use my experience to look for ways to make sure resources are prioritized based on the needs of our customers and front-line employees.

- 4) How do you intend to align the current expanded telework policy with serving USDA customers who need in-person service?

Response: The COVID crisis has brought many challenges to our lives, including the need to adapt to working remotely. Secretary Vilsack has spoken publicly about the steadfast commitment and ability of USDA staff, particularly the Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff, to pivot over the last year and continue to deliver a level of service on pace with previous years in a virtual environment. As I mentioned during my confirmation hearing, during my time as Director of the Virginia Farm Service Agency, I made sure to personally visit all 41 FSA field offices in the state to better understand how staff work to stay connected to farmers and ranchers each and every day. That connection must remain strong, particularly during this and future public health emergencies. Additionally, as Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, I provided agency leadership and direction for 544 employees who offered both virtual and in-person services to farmers and ranchers during the pandemic. My understanding is that the Federal Government continues to operate in a maximum telework posture. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about USDA's efforts to keep staff safe, learn about their needs while continuing to deliver programming to millions of customers effectively.

- 5) USDA has a tremendous career staff and the Senior Executive Service, or SES, was created "to provide a core of seasoned leaders with broad and diverse leadership experience who can lead a variety of organizations." Too often, however, the SES are "program experts" serving in positions for decades when their function is to be leaders who can bring forward the vision and mission of the Department. With the Administration's goal of providing diverse and equitable leadership across all of USDA, SES rotations would provide critical career growth opportunities and improve collaboration and diversity across USDA. If confirmed, you will oversee the management of USDA's SES, as such how do you plan to implement SES rotations within USDA's many agencies?

Response: The Senior Executive Service (SES) is a critical part of the Federal Government's leadership and workforce. SES rotation can improve talent management, mission delivery, and collaboration. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Vilsack, the Assistant Secretary for Administration and the SES to understand their experiences and needs, including the needs for diversity and opportunities at USDA to benefit from their leadership, ideas, and talent. I will also work to ensure USDA follows existing laws, regulations, and the Office of Personnel Management guidance and best practices on SES talent management.

- 6) The Department plans to allow for greater remote work and full-time telework by employees. If that is the case, how will you determine the pay rate for employees taking advantage of this option? Will there be a focus on hiring staff from across the country to bring better equity and diversity? How do you think this management decision will affect customer service?

Response: Secretary Vilsack has spoken publicly about his commitment to ensure the safety of USDA employees. He has also shared the Administration's priority to ensuring equity in the workplace, from hiring diverse staff to providing the flexibilities and resources needed for employees to serve our customers effectively. If confirmed, I will work with USDA leadership as well as the Labor Unions to understand the needs of USDA employees, offer a variety of strategic workplace flexibilities to allow USDA to recruit and retain the best talent that reflects the diversity of our country, improve employee morale, and make USDA an employer of choice. In determining an employee's pay rate, I will ensure USDA follows existing laws, regulations, and Office of Personnel Management guidance on pay setting.

Farm Bill

- 7) As you know, current farm bill programs expire at the end of 2023, and, the agriculture committees and others in the industry will be gearing up for hearings and other efforts in preparation for writing the next farm bill. If confirmed, will you ensure the USDA will continue its history of providing Congress, and specifically this Committee, with timely technical assistance and information when requested?

Response: Yes, if confirmed, I will ensure USDA provides timely technical assistance and information when requested.

Information Technology

- 8) The data USDA manages, utilizes, and depends upon, grows and becomes more complex, causing many challenges. Safeguarding the data and IT Security are complex tasks requiring significant resources and continuous improvement. USDA was the first target of the SolarWinds hack a few months ago, which affected legions of business and federal agencies. Further, the Department has struggled in past years to upgrade and interface with rural communities to make programs work more efficiently. Will you commit to ensuring the safety and protection of data in the possession of USDA, and working to improve the soundness of USDA's data security practices and protocols? Will you also commit to keeping Congress informed of any breaches of security and changes to those practices and protocols?

Response: I agree USDA, along with other federal agencies, face a serious challenge in securing our IT systems and the critical data they contain from threats of all kinds. This is a never-ending effort. It

is my understanding that the Administration will soon take actions aimed at improving federal cybersecurity, and that CISA has ordered all federal agencies to investigate and immediately patch their systems against both the Microsoft vulnerabilities and those used in the SolarWinds hack. Should I have the honor of being confirmed, I will work with USDA's IT and cybersecurity teams to improve the practices and protocols in conjunction with government-wide directives. These efforts are essential to securing USDA's IT systems that enable us to serve the American people. I commit to keep the Committee informed of our progress, if confirmed to serve as Deputy Secretary.

- 9) Due to past decisions regarding systems platforms and overpromising and under delivering, specifically, MIDAS (SAP), and cost overruns, can you commit to being transparent and communicative with the Committee regarding IT strategic planning and direction?

Response: Yes, if confirmed, I will commit that USDA will be transparent and communicative with the Committee on IT strategic planning and direction.

CCC

- 10) The Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) has been talked about more openly in the past months, than it possibly has in its entirety, since inception. The Trump Administration used CCC authority to provide Market Facilitation Payments to farmers, and there has been more than mere speculation that the Biden Administration will explore using the CCC to address climate change. As the debate continues and options are explored as to how the CCC can be used to advance the administration's climate agenda, do you commit to ensuring USDA follows published legal opinions relating to its purported authority with using CCC for climate related purposes?

Response: Climate change is a top priority of the Administration and a top challenge facing the world. American farmers and ranchers have always been at the forefront of conservation and will play an important role in our efforts to combat climate change. As Secretary Vilsack has said, however, climate change policies must be voluntary, incentives-based, and designed in partnership with producers. Approaches to combat climate change offer producers new market opportunities and sources of revenue. Should I have the honor of being confirmed, I will learn more about the details of the authorities and programs USDA has to work with our farmers and ranchers to combat climate change. In developing our policies to combat climate change I will commit that we will work closely with the Office of the General Counsel to ensure these policies are legally supported.

CCC Board Meetings

- 11) Per statute, the CCC is required to hold board meetings. It is my understanding that during the Obama Administration, the CCC did not do so. During the Trump Administration, USDA resumed having CCC board meetings to comply with the law. The Trump Administration set CCC on a course to correct all audit deficiencies and update its IT, which allowed it to pass an audit for the first time in years. Will the Biden Administration appoint a new CCC Board? Will the Administration continue the practice of holding CCC board meetings? Will it provide copies to the Committee of the annual CCC audit? Will the Administration commit to finish updating CCC's IT infrastructure? Will you commit to informing the Committee, through a briefing, of USDA's plans for the CCC Board?

Response: The Commodity Credit Corporation is a very powerful tool to carry out a variety of activities that help farmers and ranchers and rural communities. Should I have the honor of being confirmed, I will work with Secretary Vilsack and others to learn more about its operations and functions, including those of the Board of Directors. I will commit to respond to related inquiries from the Committee regarding the Commodity Credit Corporation, if confirmed.

COVID

- 12) As you know, Congress has acted to provide assistance in the CARES Act and most recently in the Omnibus appropriations bill to address needs in rural America. However, the Administration cited the White House memo “Regulatory Freeze Pending Review” and suspended the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program Additional Assistance (CFAPAA) Rule, which is designed to provide financial assistance to some producers who have yet to receive any help during this pandemic and greatly need it. Will you commit to quickly implementing the assistance that Congress has provided to USDA and minimize any delays in payments to farmers, ranchers, growers, and other stakeholders? Additionally, will you commit to keeping the Senators of the ag committee aware of implementation of these resources through regular meetings (at least monthly)?

Response: I understand that earlier this year USDA identified a number of gaps and disparities in assistance provided under the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program and that, in March, USDA announced plans to re-open CFAP2 sign-up to make the formula-based payments in the Omnibus appropriations bill passed in December. USDA plans to take into account the gaps and disparities identified as it implements the assistance that Congress has provided. If confirmed, I plan to seek more information on the status of the assistance and will ensure updates are provided to the Committee, as appropriate.

Food Safety

- 13) The COVID-19 pandemic created a unique strain across our food supply chain, impacting farmers, processors and consumers alike. That strain was also experienced by USDA personnel. Throughout the pandemic, USDA employees continued to do their important work, including Food Safety Inspectors that must be on site in order for meat and poultry processing facilities to conduct operations. Much attention has been given to the important work of food safety inspectors to ensure continuity of the food supply chain during the pandemic. Do you believe USDA adequately advocated for and protected these food safety inspectors? Would you have done anything differently had you been the Deputy Secretary at the onset of the pandemic?

Response: I agree with recent statements made by Secretary Vilsack emphasizing there were a series of steps the meat and poultry industry could have taken to better protect workers, particularly in the early stages of the pandemic, but unfortunately didn't take. This environment put workers in these facilities, including our inspectors, at risk. The federal government and the food industry have always been proud of the efficiency in the U.S. food system; however, protecting all individuals working in these facilities, including our workers, must be and should remain a top priority for both parties. If confirmed, I plan to work closely with Secretary Vilsack, along with other federal agencies, to use any existing authorities to ensure we continue to urge companies to do all they can to keep all individuals who work in these facilities and the food supply safe.

14) During the Obama Administration, USDA began work to modernize regulations for swine processing. That regulation was finalized in 2019 and is known as the New Swine Slaughter Inspection System (NSIS). Numerous swine processing establishments across the U.S. have transitioned to NSIS, investing millions of dollars to make this transition. Recently, a U.S. District Court ruled in a lawsuit brought against USDA that the agency did not comply with the Administrative Procedures Act in its consideration of whether increasing line speeds under the NSIS would affect worker safety. USDA is now tasked with responding to the District Judge by June 30 with the Department's plans for a remedy.

- a. As Deputy Secretary, will you commit to exploring all legal options to preserve the NSIS, and weigh those options against the ramifications that will be felt by American farmers and businesses?

Response: The Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) plays an essential role in ensuring the safety of our food and that the NSIS enables FSIS inspectors to focus their attention on the same. Should I have the honor of being confirmed, I will look into this litigation and work with the Department of Justice regarding the government's response to the District Court's order.

- b. Will you commit to leading USDA to act on this important matter, to ensure that farmers aren't harmed by a regulatory or legal decision?

Response: Should I have the honor of being confirmed, I will work with the Department of Justice on the government's response to the District Court's order keeping in mind the impacts on our producers.

Intra-Agency

15) USDA is viewed as the agency that always represents the interests for farmers and ranchers, though many issues that face this sector are overseen by other agencies or in some cases jointly between USDA and another agency. Can you describe how you view your role as it relates to working with these other agencies including FDA, EPA, and the Departments of Labor and Transportation? How will you ensure farmer and rancher perspectives are always taken into consideration and are understood by these agencies who may not always view agriculture as their primary constituency?

Response: I understand the importance of building strong intra-agency relationships to ensure the voice of Rural America and the broader agriculture industry have a seat at table in the development and implementation of all federal programs that impact them. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about how USDA is currently working with agencies across the federal government, including the FDA, EPA, DOL, and DOT, and the ways in which we can strengthen those relationships moving forward in the best interest of our nation's farmers and ranchers.

Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative (ACRSI)

16) Federal government agencies have a tendency to become stagnant and not up-to-date with available technology, including not being technologically advanced enough to share the same data between agencies within the same mission area. USDA agencies are no different. Several initiatives have tried to address this, including the Acreage Crop Reporting Streamlining Initiative (ACRSI). ACRSI sought to

allow farmers the ability to submit acreage reports to one agency, rather than submitting two duplicative reports to two different agencies. Unfortunately, this initiative has stalled. Related is the effort to allow farmers to submit precision agriculture data and the inability of the Farm Service Agency to be able to download and utilize the data. Worse yet, the system that FSA currently utilizes requires that staff re-input acreage reporting data on an annual basis even if it hasn't changed from year to year. In other words, the data for a farm or farmer does not automatically upload, it has to be completely redone every year. If confirmed, how will you work to foster collaboration among USDA agencies and improve technological advancement, specifically regarding the ACRSI/Acreage Reporting initiatives? What do you intend to do to ensure ACRSI/Acreage Reporting is best positioned to succeed going forward?

Response: As a former state executive director for the Farm Service Agency, I know how important it is for IT investments to provide tangible positive results and be driven by the needs of the customers and field office staff. If confirmed, I will seek more information not only on ACRSI, but other efforts to streamline processes and make sure decisions are informed by those needs. I will pay particular attention to ensuring the agencies reach a common vision on cross-agency projects like ACRSI and that that common vision drives decision-making.

Animal Biotech

17) Advancements in biotechnology give agricultural producers a significant tool in fighting pests & diseases, increasing yield, producing more on fewer acres, and countless other benefits in between. For some time U.S. livestock producers have been frustrated with: (1) the lack of FDA's regulatory certainty in reviewing these technologies; (2) the idea that FDA would label these innovations or the animals themselves as "drugs"; and (3) the fact that our competitors around the world are actively working to make these technologies available to their livestock producers. The benefits from these technologies have the potential to help reduce methane emissions, protect against devastating animal diseases, and improve animal care practices. Unfortunately, our current regulatory system is confusing, misleading, and has a chilling effect on the development, review, and adoption of these critical tools. Last December, USDA and FDA executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to help modernize the federal government's regulatory oversight of certain GE animals used for agricultural purposes. USDA also published an Advanced Notice of Public Rulemaking seeking the public's comments on how USDA should implement a predictable, science-based regulatory approach that will ensure the safe and timely review of these technologies.

- a. If confirmed, will you commit to continuing the effort of a predictable, science-based review of these technologies under USDA's jurisdiction and defend the safety of agricultural biotechnology products by educating the public, consumers, and our trading partners around the world?

Response: It is my understanding that USDA recently published a notice in the *Federal Register* and is currently analyzing the input provided by the public. I know that stakeholders have expressed strong views about this subject. If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the comments that were submitted and working with the appropriate agencies on next steps.

Pesticides

- 18) USDA plays an important role working with EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs in reviewing the registration and re-registration of crop protection tools. Ensuring EPA conducts a timely, predictable, transparent, and science-based review of these products is critical for the crop protection community, including large and small companies ranging from pesticide and biopesticide manufacturers, antimicrobial companies, and biotech firms to provide producers safe and effective tools against pests and diseases. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure USDA continues the essential interagency work with EPA in the registration and re-registration of crop protection tools and how will you ensure the benefits and impacts to agriculture are appropriately considered in EPA's review process?

Response: Cooperation and collaboration between USDA and EPA is essential to ensuring that the latest scientific knowledge and a full understanding of agriculture are incorporated into regulatory decision-making. My understanding is that Secretary Vilsack and Administrator Regan have begun meeting and have an excellent working relationship. If confirmed, I look forward to immediately helping build relationships across our respective organizations at all levels. It is vital that we work closely not only at the policy level, but also at the technical/regulatory staff level as well.

4-H Emblem

- 19) The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 included the Clean Up the Code Act of 2019 which repealed section 707 of Title 18 United States Code relating to fraudulent use of the 4-H club emblem. What authorities now remain for use by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to protect against the fraudulent use of the 4-H name and emblem? What authorities may be used by USDA to enforce those protections?

Response: The December Consolidated Appropriations Act included language that removed from United States Code the section that provided a federal mark for the 4-H name and emblem. This had been previously introduced as the Clean Up the Code Act of 2019. By eliminating 18 USC 707, Congress decriminalized the use of the emblem, along with several other federal marks. If confirmed, I pledge to keep the Committee informed of any findings related to this change and will protect the integrity of the 4-H program.

India (Rice Exports from)

- 20) I have always been supportive of holding our trading partners accountable, especially in the agriculture sector. As you know, India is often at the top of the list of employing tariff and non-tariff trade barriers as well as providing their domestic producers with support that far exceeds their WTO commitments. Arkansas grows over half of the U.S. rice crop, and in the past decade, rice imports from India have soared, displacing U.S. production that simply cannot compete with the generously subsidized Indian rice. In late March, USTR announced proposed action against India, among other countries, for an investigation into digital services taxes imposed by those countries. Part of the list of proposed retaliatory duties to be imposed is a 25% duty on brown Basmati imports. Stakeholders have been requesting that USTR expand the proposed retaliatory duties to all other rice and rice products exported from India. USTR is currently taking comments on this issue and plans to hold hearings in May to determine final retaliatory duties later this year. If confirmed, can I count on you to quickly coordinate with USTR on these retaliatory duties on Indian rice imports?

Response: I understand how important fair trade is to the success of our farmers and ranchers. If confirmed, I plan to look into this issue and see how USDA can best coordinate with USTR.

Iraq and Cuba (U.S. Rice Exports to)

- 21) My home state of Arkansas grows about one-half of the entire U.S. rice crop. About 50 percent of the U.S. rice crop is sold in exports each year. My rice farmers have known for decades what the U.S. Department of Agriculture concluded in 1997, and is still true, that "Of all grains exported by the United States, rice has been particularly hard-hit by trade restrictions." We are still laboring to reclaim our markets in countries like Iraq, after the U.S. imposed sanctions on Iraq for over a decade beginning in 1990. While it is technically legal to export U.S. rice to Cuba, restrictions on private financing reduce our attractiveness as a trading partner. I have worked with my Congressional colleagues and previous Administrations to address both of these issues. Will you commit to working with me to encourage trading partners like Iraq and Cuba to buy U.S. rice?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working with you and others on ways we can expand markets for U.S. rice.

UK

- 22) Since the United Kingdom (UK) formally left the European Union (EU), the UK offers a significant market for our farmers and ranchers. In particular, two of the top ag products from my home state – poultry and rice – have significant potential to gain market access through a UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Before Brexit, the UK was tied to the EU's practices of employing tariff and non-tariff trade barriers. For poultry, it is a ban on products treated with certain pathogen reduction treatments, and for rice, it was protectionist tariffs meant to prop up EU rice farmers elsewhere in the EU. Now that the UK is free to make their own trade deals, I have been supportive of an FTA with them that is rules-based, mutually beneficial, and rooted in science. What are your plans, if confirmed, to work with USTR to advocate for an FTA with the UK that includes more market access for US farmers and ranchers?

Response: I believe that free and fair trade is critical to the success of our farmers and ranchers, and I understand how important it is to have export markets for their agricultural products. If confirmed, I will ensure that USDA works closely with USTR to expand market access throughout the world.

UN Food Systems Summit

- 23) As you know, the UN is holding a Food Systems Summit this year, and this summer there will be a major pre-summit meeting convened by the UN focused on driving changes to global food systems – throughout the food chain. This, and its subsequent summit meeting in the fall, are a great opportunity for the U.S. to lift up how sustainable U.S. food and agriculture production is and the strides our industry is making to continue to improve. At the same time, some of the proposals being put forward by Summit leadership are concerning and may be at odds with the need to meet the growing global demand for food and feed, and with our existing international commitments. It's critical that the U.S. play a key leadership role in shaping this process and working with other countries to secure a result that's positive for American farmers, ranchers, and processors.

How do USDA and the Biden administration plan to engage in the UN Food Systems Summit, and build a coalition of like-minded countries, to ensure that the tremendous sustainability and nutritional benefits derived from the innovation, efficiency, and technology in American food and Ag are included in the outcomes of the Summit?

Response: It is my understanding that USDA is already engaged with the UN Food Systems Summit. I view the Summit as an opportunity to reinforce an approach to sustainability that balances the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability and an opportunity to promote the importance of innovation and sustainable productivity growth in feeding the world and enhancing sustainability. If confirmed as Deputy Secretary, I plan to work with Secretary Vilsack and partner countries to advocate for an approach that works for American agriculture, climate change, and the nutritional needs of the US and the world.

Low-fat, flavored milk in schools

- 24) Schools and their suppliers need certainty when it comes to procuring foods, and as you may know, the procurement process for school year 2021-22 is occurring now. Schools remain concerned about reverting to a looming school meal pattern final rule that is ten-years old and outdated from two sets of Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) and food production capabilities. For example, since the 2012 USDA rule, both the 2015-2020 DGAs and the 2020-2025 DGAs identified dairy, particularly fluid milk, as a “nutrient-dense” beverage, providing 11 essential nutrients. The DGAs have recommended increased milk consumption at the same time school milk consumption declined in the time-period when low-fat, flavored milk was prohibited. To increase intake of milk and dairy to recommended levels, the 2020-2025 DGAs noted “A small amount of added sugars... can be added to nutrient-dense foods and beverages to help meet food group recommendations.” The dairy industry has met this challenge by reducing the calorie and added sugar content of flavored milk by 57%, from 16.7 grams to 7.1 grams between School Years 2006-07 and 2019-20.

Another example—Schools and dairy suppliers had previously been planning for compliance with USDA’s Target 2 sodium levels by SY2024-2025 as promulgated, but are now, effective immediately due to the 2012 final rule, and Target 3 sodium levels are scheduled be effective in SY2022-2023 even though they had always been scheduled to be effective at least 5-years after Target 2. Certain products that are critical to school meal programs, such as cheese, need reconsideration due to food safety, food storage/handling, and functional roles of sodium that are necessary to make cheese.

Can we count on you to ensure that USDA follows through on the Secretary’s remarks at the House Agriculture Appropriations hearing when he encouraged USDA to be helpful to schools by providing schools with clear nutritional standards that ensure our kids continue to have access to food and milk that both tastes good and is good for them so they consume these needed nutrients?

Response: Secretary Vilsack has repeatedly emphasized his commitment to strengthening nutrition security, particularly for our children. If confirmed, I look forward to working Sec. Vilsack to execute on this commitment. USDA’s recent school meals announcement for the coming school year included a number of targeted flexibilities, including for milk, while also reaffirming the Department’s prioritization of child nutrition.

USDA & Electronic Records

- 25) Congress has passed statutes mandating the federal government switch to electronic record keeping. OMB, in consultation with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), has mandated that NARA stop accepting paper records on January 1, 2022. Some agencies within the REE Mission Area (NASS, ARS, ERS) have not updated their document retention policies since the 1970s. Therefore, those policies likely do not account for the digital era. It is understood that late in the Trump Administration, USDA's Office of General Counsel developed a plan to bring USDA into compliance with the upcoming deadline. What is the status of that plan? Will this administration build upon this plan, or develop its own plan? Can you confirm that USDA will follow the law and be prepared for the digital transition by the January 1, 2022 deadline? Further, do you commit USDA to providing the Committee with (1) quarterly reports on its progress toward meeting the deadline and (2) an anticipated compliance date?

Response: The ability to maintain its records consistent with the requirements and guidance of NARA is an important function of the Department. Further, this is an operational function that generally falls under the responsibility of the Deputy Secretary. Should I have the honor of being confirmed, I look forward to working with the Office of Information Affairs that is under the General Counsel to understand and guide the Department's records management policies to ensure that they are consistent with the requirements and guidance from NARA. Further, I plan to ensure the Committee stays informed about Department's efforts in records management, if confirmed.

Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis

- 26) In January President Biden issued an Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad. Included in that Order was the goal to conserve at least thirty percent of our nation's land and water by 2030. Earlier this week USDA announced changes to numerous USDA conservation programs to "to increase climate-smart agriculture... to demonstrate USDA's commitment to putting American agriculture and forestry at the center of climate-smart solutions to address climate change". In your view, are acres enrolled in the practices and programs outlined in Secretary Vilsack's April 20th announcement considered to be fulfilling the goals of the President's 30x30 initiative?

Response: I believe the 30x30 initiative should recognize the vital role that working lands can play in meeting our conservation goals. As such, it is my view that USDA's voluntary, incentive-based programs will play an important role in this initiative. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about USDA's role in fulfilling the goals of the initiative.

Communication

- 27) Do you commit to prioritizing Congressional requests for information, and timely communications between the Department and the Committee?

Response: If confirmed, I commit to prioritizing Congressional requests and timely communications with the Committee.

Senator Patrick Leahy

- 1) I look forward to supporting your swift confirmation for this critical position that is so important to achieving the important priorities that Secretary Vilsack has outlined for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), including climate change and racial equity.

In its response to the impacts of climate change on agriculture, and generally in providing risk management tools for farmers, USDA does well in supporting larger commodity crop producers where impacts are measured across thousands of acres and tons of production, and the impacts of droughts and floods are easily observed. Despite progress in recent farm bills, options for diversified producers of high-value crops remain slim and in some cases insufficient, where climate-related damage is often more difficult to quantify, yet still devastating. An example is this year's crop of maple syrup, a cornerstone of Vermont's agricultural economy. Drought and high heat conditions last summer stressed the region's maple trees and resulted in a sugar content of sap that was in many cases just half the of the recent average. Compounding the damage was an early, warm spring that ended the maple season several weeks early, a challenge that scientists expect to become more common as New England continues to feel the impacts of climate change. As a result, the maple harvest statewide was reduced by at least one third, based on early reports, likely due to climate and weather impacts but not associated with a single catastrophic event.

- a. What tools does USDA have available now to assist maple producers facing significant climate and weather related crop loss this year?

Response: I am unfamiliar with the particular programs that maple producers are eligible to receive. If confirmed, I will seek more information on the resources and make sure USDA shares the materials with your office as well.

- b. What can USDA do to build better risk management opportunities for diversified producers of high value crops like maple syrup?

Response: I know that the 2018 Farm Bill contained several directions for the Risk Management Agency to consider improvements to Whole Farm Revenue Protection and a feasibility study related to providing crop insurance for local food producers. If confirmed, I will seek a status update on these efforts and ensure USDA share information with your office as well.

- c. As USDA continues to develop its plans for the newly-announced Pandemic Assistance for Producers initiative, can Vermont's maple producers expect continued and improved support, particularly given that they were excluded from the previous administration's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) until August 2020?

Response: I know that USDA has announced plans to address gaps in the previous rounds of pandemic assistance, which seemed to include specialty crop producers such as maple producers. If confirmed, I will seek more details on these plans.

Senator Amy Klobuchar

- 1) This week, I led a letter with a bipartisan group of 11 Senators to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) urging the agency to continue to support farmers and rural communities by upholding and restoring confidence in the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS). The EPA implements the RFS in consultation with the Departments of Agriculture and Energy.

Will you commit to working with me to advocate for consistency and integrity in the implementation of the RFS through the interagency process with EPA?

Response: Throughout my state and federal service I have seen firsthand the impact that renewable fuels play in incentivizing sustainability and additional environmental benefits. I have also seen the positive impact for rural economies and the viability of family farms. It is my understanding that biofuel producers have had an especially difficult time during the pandemic due to the economic impacts to transit and shipping industries. If confirmed, I look forward to taking proactive action and serving as a voice to help get things back on track and back on schedule with respect to renewable fuels.

- 2) Agricultural exports are critical to our farmers' success. With 95 percent of the world's customers living outside our borders, opening up new markets and lowering trade barriers is critical to sustaining and growing U.S. agriculture. From 2000 to 2016, Minnesota's total agricultural exports grew by 226 percent—higher than the national growth of 163 percent and supporting more than 57,000 jobs on and off the farm. I have worked to keep existing markets open, support fair-trade agreements, and create new opportunities for Minnesota producers, including leading the effort to end the embargo against Cuba, in part because it offers export market opportunities for Minnesota farmers.

If confirmed, will you commit to working with me to support expanded export opportunities for American farmers and businesses?

Response: I agree with you about the critical role export markets have in the success of farmers and ranchers. If I am confirmed, I will work to expand export opportunities for U.S. producers and look forward to working with you on these efforts.

Senator Richard Durbin

- 1) For nearly twenty-five years, Illinois has operated a unique model to provide affordable, assisted living to low-income seniors and persons with disabilities in their communities. The purpose of these Supportive Living Facilities is to create a healthy, empowering environment for these people on Medicaid to have their care needs addressed. There are roughly 150 of these Senior Living Facilities in Illinois, which serve more than 8,000 frail and low-income people. There is one in every Congressional district and facilities in 73 of our 102 counties. To serve these seniors and residents with disabilities, Illinois obtained a federal Medicaid waiver and passed a state law. The way it works is that the facilities pool their residents' SNAP benefits to make it easier to provide them with a nutritious meal—rather than having these vulnerable people go out and shop, which has been especially important during the pandemic.

For 20 years, USDA has approved this model—routinely re-certifying these facilities to administer the SNAP benefits for residents, so that those who qualify for the nutrition assistance can be fed. But three years ago, USDA decided there was a problem and that these facilities are out of compliance with regulations. USDA commissioned an independent report that found no allegations of fraud or abuse. Working with Senator Duckworth, Senator Stabenow, and then-Chairman Roberts, we added language to the Farm Bill - and the Appropriations bill - for the last two years to halt USDA from decertifying these facilities, which would have catastrophic implications for the residents. I'm really hoping that under Secretary Vilsack and the Biden Administration that the new

team at USDA can take a fresh look at this issue and work collaboratively to address an apparent issue that was only caused in the first place by USDA's ongoing and repeated approvals. I know my team is in touch with USDA already, so I'd like to ask two very basic questions:

- a. Will you commit that USDA will work with the residents, the facilities, the Illinois Department of Human Services, Senator Duckworth, and myself to provide adequate notification *prior* to any de-authorization actions?

Response: Thank you for bringing this issue to my attention. Should I have the honor of being confirmed, I will work with Secretary Vilsack and the Food and Nutrition Service to review this issue and will ensure USDA provides adequate notifications.

- b. Will you commit to work with me and Senator Duckworth to reach a long-term resolution for this issue, either through regulation or statute, and ensure the continuity of SNAP benefits for these 8,000 seniors in Illinois?

Response: Yes, if confirmed, I will commit to working with you, Secretary Vilsack, and Senator Duckworth to reach a long-term resolution.

- 2) Recently, I participated in a panel at the Chicago Council for Global Affairs to discuss the USDA Food Box Program. Panelists included Ambassador Ertharin Cousin, who is the former Executive Director of the UN World Food Program, Emily Broad Leib, who is chief author of the Harvard Food Box study, Kate Maehr, who is executive director and CEO of the Greater Chicago Food Depository, and Basil Gooden, who, as you know, is a former Virginia Secretary of Agriculture, and others.

On the whole, these panelists informed me the Food Box program has proven remarkably effective at helping America's families and food distributors weather the worst public health and economic crisis in our lifetimes. For example, 57 percent of the food distributed by the Greater Chicago Food Depository came from the Farm Box program and mirrors other food pantries and providers throughout the state. In some rural areas of the nation, the Food Box program accounted for as much as 80 percent of all charitable food distributions.

The panelists also discussed the food box shortcomings identified by Harvard, and the need to address those shortcomings: for example, using more locally-grown, smaller, minority or women farmers; better targeting food insecure populations; better addressing "last mile" deliveries, both rural and urban; and other issues.

Recently USDA announced the food box program would end in May, and food assistance would continue through existing authorities, like TEFAP and other USDA feeding programs. From my interpretation from Illinois stakeholders, few anticipated such an abrupt, surprise change in direction, which has left them, and many policymakers, with more questions than answers. Stakeholders have highlighted that there were good things about the food box program that should not be abandoned to address the shortcomings of the program, that the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet over, and food insecurity is still high.

- a. There are families in need who do not qualify for TEFAP, SNAP, or other existing USDA feeding programs – what are USDA plans to respond to those families "using existing authorities?"

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed on the findings of USDA's listening sessions, USDA's experience with the food boxes over the past year, and the Department's existing authorities to address the ongoing needs of producers and consumers resulting from the pandemic.

- b. How will the use of existing authorities accommodate using more minority- and women-owned farming operations?

Response: It is clear to me that efforts on diversity, equity and inclusion are priorities for the Biden Administration. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about efforts to engage with and support minority and women-owned farming operations through USDA's programs.

- c. How will existing authorities allow for food banks to continue the use of "flexible distribution" networks that many food banks support and use now with food box distributions?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Vilsack to learn more about the existing authorities available to the Department to support the critical work of food banks across the country supporting their local communities.

- 3) CREP is one of USDA's flagship agricultural conservation programs, using a federal-state partnership to address state and nationally important environmental issues. The Illinois CREP is the second oldest in the nation, and has been one of the most successful, helping to reduce nitrogen runoff into the Illinois and Mississippi River basin. Since 2015, the Illinois CREP has been suspended due to state-level budget issues, but in 2019, Illinois has allocated \$57 million for the next decade and hired staff to begin outreach to landowners. Illinois is still waiting for the USDA Farm Service Agency to finalize this CREP agreement. Also, for 20 years, Illinois has funded acres adjacent to the CREP acres (known as "additional acres") as the state match, but inexplicably, FSA has refused to approve this state match, which will jeopardize the Illinois program.

- a. If you are confirmed, can I count on your support for approving the longtime state match approach of the State of Illinois, and for approving this Illinois CREP agreement quickly, so that Illinois can begin enrolling acres this year?

Response: From my time in Virginia, I know the CREP authority can help create powerful partnerships that leverage federal, state, and private resources to address water quality and other important conservation priorities. If confirmed, I plan to seek more information on the status of CREP generally, and specifically for Illinois, and will ensure USDA provides your staff with an update.

- 4) Each year, farmers submit crop reports to USDA twice: to the Farm Service Agency to qualify for safety-net payments, and to the Risk Management Agency to qualify for crop insurance. Ten years ago, USDA began streamlining and unifying this process. This began under Secretary Vilsack's first tenure, and progress was made to where farmers now can report common information just once – such as names and addresses and other basic information. But the substantial aspects of reporting crops and crop maps remain separate, with the two USDA agencies still unable to unify their

software after many years. Congress included language in the FY21 Omnibus Appropriations bill requiring USDA *“to identify software options necessary to ensure ACRSI technology is adopted and deployed ... within 120 days of enactment of this Act.”* That deadline is April 25. I know my office has been in touch with USDA and that additional time is needed for review by the new administration, but I do remain interested in the following questions:

- a. What are the top reasons this process has taken 10 years?
- b. Is this technology being constructed in house, or is USDA considering commercially available technology?
- c. Which approach could get this project finished by this year?
- d. When will the next substantive, measurable, crop reporting streamlining progress be implemented by USDA -- not from the perspective of internal technology dashboards -- but from the external perspective of the farmers who do the crop reporting and would benefit from this streamlining?

Response: I recall some aspects of the ACRSI effort while I was FSA State Executive Director for Virginia at the end of the Obama Administration and know there had been some progress on aligning the definitions and procedures between the FSA and the Risk Management Agency, but do not know the status of the project. If confirmed, I plan to seek more information on the status of the project and will ensure USDA shares information with your staff as well.

- 5) I am a strong supporter of electric vehicle (EV) technology, which is a long overdue part of our national energy policy. In fact, a major electric vehicle manufacturer is now located in Bloomington, Illinois, creating strong jobs and spinoff economic opportunities for the region.

Harvard recently published an analysis that shows ethanol is at least 46% lower than the average carbon intensity of gasoline. Studies by Argonne National Laboratory report that cellulosic ethanol can reduce carbon emissions by more than 70%, and biodiesel by at least 74%, or more. Recent projections of future vehicle sales by both the U.S. Energy Information Administration and the *New York Times* show that combustion engines will still be a large part of our transportation sector in the coming decade.

I support the bold investments in American Jobs Plan released by President Biden for EV deployments, although I am concerned that the no funding or provisions were made for biofuels infrastructure. The urgency cannot be overstated in exploring every sound technology at our disposal for addressing climate change, and reducing carbon emissions to meet our aggressive and imperative national goals by 2030 and by 2050.

- a. Should biofuels infrastructure be part of the American Jobs Plan?

Response: I believe biofuels and biofuel infrastructure can and should play a significant role in any infrastructure proposals considered by Congress as well as other agriculture and climate-related legislation.

- b. If confirmed, can we count on your support for ensuring biofuels infrastructure is part of the American Jobs plan?

Response: If confirmed, I plan to work closely with Secretary Vilsack to look closely at existing authorities currently being implemented as well as pending legislation to identify appropriate tools available to support biofuels infrastructure.

- c. What is the timeframe for USDA to provide direct assistance to biofuel producers negatively impacted by COVID-19?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to being briefed by the USDA team on the current timeline and roadmap for implementation of pandemic assistance and ensuring we prioritize providing relief as quickly as possible.

- d. What are USDA's plans to urge the EPA to update its GREET analysis on lifecycle carbon emissions for ethanol, and to resume the process for approving pathways for next generation biofuels feedstocks?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to being fully briefed on the internal technical details of ongoing interagency policy discussions.

- e. If confirmed, will you urge the EPA to reject all pending and future waiver applications that do not meet the 10th Circuit Court's criteria, which found that EPA exceeded its statutory authority?

Response: It is my understanding this matter is under pending litigation. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Vilsack to ensure the USDA team is fully engaged on this matter, as appropriate.

- f. If confirmed, will you work to ensure EPA issues strong 2021 and 2022 Renewable Volume Obligations with blending targets that reflect the 10th Circuit's decision?

Response: What has become clear in the beginning months of this Administration is that very little progress has been made in recent years on biofuels. Timelines have slipped, deadlines have been missed and there has not been clear policy and direction. This uncertainty impacts the ability of this industry to plan and grow. I look forward to engaging with EPA in a constructive way and being part of this effort as Deputy Secretary, if confirmed.

- 6) Clothing sales dropped during the pandemic and will remain significantly below pre-COVID levels for the foreseeable future. A clothing manufacturer in my state, Hart Shaffner & Marx, which produces tailored business wear and employs more than 250 individuals, furloughed employees but remained operational due to mask manufacturing. Since 2014, USDA has administered the Wool Trust Fund and the Pima Cotton Trust Fund to provide payments to domestic suit and shirt manufacturers and textile companies, which are based on tariffs paid by the sectors, and is designed to preserve domestic apparel and textile manufacturing. Domestic apparel and textile industries that consume cotton and wool fibers, yarns and fabrics have sought support from USDA from these funds or other authorities to assist with maintaining jobs in the wake of pandemic financial impacts.

- a. Has USDA met with these domestic clothing manufacturers?

Response: I understand the Wool Trust Fund and Pima Cotton Trust Fund were established by Congress to reduce the economic injury to domestic manufacturers resulting from tariffs on wool and cotton fabrics that are higher than tariffs on certain apparel articles made of wool or cotton fabric. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about USDA's work to administer these payments, along with any related engagement with domestic clothing manufacturers.

- b. What is the status on financial assistance for these clothing domestic manufacturers?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about USDA's work to administer the Wool Trust Fund and the Pima Cotton Trust Fund, along with any related engagement with, or financial assistance for, domestic clothing manufacturers.

- 7) As you know, existing farm extension programs are about getting information into the hands of farmers and rural households, information generated from research at land-grant universities on agriculture, food, nutrition, business, and other rural issues. For decades, this has been done using university experts who conduct in-person, on-the-ground outreach. As technology increases, extension has made greater use of websites, videos, webinars, and other computer outreach.

It is time to explore to newer approaches to extension that increases the use technology that functions remotely, yet is highly-interactive. The goals are to expand rural access to specialists, while employ computer modeling that can rapidly adjust to changing data inputs from customers and other conditions on the ground, so that experts can respond to customer feedback in real time. The University of Illinois Extension Service has developed a concept, the Design Extension Initiative. It is a next generation approach that combines in-person expertise with high performance computing so that farmers can receive remote advice at home or in the field. The University of Illinois recently submitted a white paper to the USDA Agriculture Research Service.

- a. What is the status of USDA rolling out, this year, a prototype or pilot that can begin testing and generating data in the field to further develop this concept?

Response: I understand the importance of modernizing systems to better deliver programs and increase rural access to specialists. As a former Extension Specialist I also understand the need to promptly get research-based information into the hands of farmers and rural households to help them make informed decisions. As Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), I pushed for the launch of VDACS' COVID-19 webpage to provide up-to-date guidance and resources to Virginia farms, industry and agribusiness operations. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about USDA's work in this area.

- 8) In a 2020 editorial in the *Des Moines Register*, Secretary Vilsack said "delivering low-cost capital for rural investment in farming technologies and biomanufacturing is the key for responding to our national emergency and in the economic recovery ahead." His editorial also stated, "Today, USDA is sitting on top of more than \$220 billion of unused loans and grants for rural development. Let's build on the success of existing USDA programs and the USDA Rural Business Investment Program

(RBICS) by allowing rural lenders to tap into that capital, similar to the Small Business Administration's authority to leverage capital available to the Small Business Investment Companies (SBICs)."

- a. Does USDA have plans to expand leverage for RBICs for rural economic development? If so, in what ways?

Response: I am especially focused on making sure that we improve access to capital in ways that facilitate broad participation in and support of all sectors of our rural economy. The Rural Business Investment Program is just one of the tools available through USDA Rural Development to help our businesses start and grow, and I look forward to working with the Committee to strengthen these programs and to deploy more support and technical assistance to rural communities

- 9) President Obama issued an Executive Order relating to the hiring of people with disabilities for federal jobs, which included provisions on the centralization of federal funds for reasonable accommodations and accessible technologies. According to information provided by the National Association of the Deaf, USDA has decentralized interpreting services for the deaf among its 17 different sub-agencies. They say this has led to steep learning curves for staff, budget shortfalls for contracting with interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing, challenges with securing interpreters with subject-matter expertise specific to those 17 sub-agencies, and created great difficulties with accommodating staff who are deaf and hard of hearing.

- a. What is the reasoning behind USDA decentralization of these services?
- b. Were the objectives of that reasoning achieved?
- c. Have interpretation services for the deaf improved with decentralization? Please provide documentation in that regard.
- d. What are the USDA plans to re-centralize of funding for these purposes? If not, why not?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about USDA's work to comply with any executive actions related to the hiring of persons with disabilities for federal jobs, including the centralization of funds for reasonable accommodations and accessible technologies. As part of the administration's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, I am happy to work with Secretary Vilsack to provide your office with an update on the Department's work in this area, if confirmed.

Senator Ben Ray Lujan

- 1) As you know, the American Rescue Plan set aside funds for research, education, extension, and scholarships at Land Grant and Minority Serving Institutions. New Mexico has three 1994 Tribal Land Grants and with New Mexico State University being both our 1862 Land Grant and a Hispanic Serving Institution. Transparent and equitable disbursement of these funds is going to be critical in ensuring the intended recipients benefit from this provision in the American Rescue Plan.

Dr. Bronaugh, given your time at Virginia State University, what is the best model on how these funds can equitably disburse to Minority-Serving Institutions, especially to Hispanic Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities and land grant colleges?

Response: I have seen first-hand the significance of federal investments in research, education, extension and scholarships can have on the reach of minority serving institutions. As Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, I worked with our internal teams to leverage federal dollars to establish the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture (SASDA) Career Development Scholarship Program to create opportunities for minority students to study and participate in national agricultural policy development. During my time as the Dean of the College of Agriculture at Virginia State University (an 1890 land-grant institution), federal resources allowed us to expand research in specialty crops, vertical food production, and predatory wildlife management. We were able to support outreach to small farms throughout the state of Virginia and develop international agricultural research projects that provided agriculture-related learning opportunities with universities in South America and Africa. Ensuring minority serving institutions have the resources they need to further agriculture research and engage minority students is a passion of mine and if confirmed, I plan to work closely with these land grant institutions, Congress and Secretary Vilsack to explore ways that both USDA and Congress can equitably allocate and disburse funding and resources for these institutions to continue to make significant contributions to the agriculture research and the broader agriculture industry.

Senator John Hoeven

- 1) One of my biggest concerns in the ag sector right now is the lack of transparency and competition in the cattle market. We've seen the negative effects of low levels of negotiated sales and the volatility it creates in the market.
 - a. Will you commit to working with my colleagues and I to improve competition and transparency in the cattle market?

Response: I understand the importance of price discovery for ranchers and all participants in America's cattle markets. Cash negotiated transactions have been declining nationally in recent years, with many ranchers especially in certain parts of the country utilizing alternative market arrangements. If confirmed it will be a top priority to work with you and your colleagues in Congress to improve transparency and competition in the market structure around negotiated sales, address volatility and other risks in the market, and ensure ranchers are able to secure a fair return for their investment and hard work.

- 2) The sugar industry contributes over 14,000 jobs in my state and generates an economic impact of \$1.8 billion annually. Nationally, the industry supports 142,000 jobs and generates \$20 billion a year in economic activity. This economic activity and job creation is possible because U.S. sugar policy operates effectively.
 - a. Do you agree that it is important to continue farm programs, like sugar policy, that make good use of taxpayer dollars?

Response: I understand the value of this industry and believe we should continue these policies that help the industry succeed.

3) Crop insurance remains the number one risk management tool for producers. Over the past few years, we've worked closely with USDA to strengthen and improve coverage for growers. It is critical that we protect the program from harmful cuts that would reduce program effectiveness and integrity. We've worked to include provisions in the Agriculture appropriations legislation and the Farm Bill to prohibit unnecessary changes or reductions in funding for crop insurance.

a. If confirmed, will you reject any cuts to crop insurance?

Response: Federal Crop Insurance is a critical private-public partnership that provides a valuable safety net for producers. The 2018 Farm Bill continued to expand its availability to make crops, types of production and areas. If confirmed, I am committed to maintaining and improving this important tool.

b. Will you work to maintain and improve prevented planting coverage to ensure producers receive meaningful support?

Response: I understand that the previous Administration made some adjustments to prevented planting coverage and, if confirmed, I would be interested in hearing more from you or your producers about the impact of these changes.

Senator Roger Marshall, M.D.

1) As a former FSA State Executive Director, you saw the important role the CCC played in funding programs for producers. If funds in CCC run low, many producers can be severely impacted by program delays.

a. How do you plan on addressing the concerns of many producers who believe the CCC is at risk of running out of funds as a result of implementing carbon programs?

Response: I understand the Commodity Credit Corporation to be a very power tool to support a variety of activities that help farmers and ranchers and rural communities. Specifically, I understand CCC funds are annually committed to a number of important programs for producers, including commodity and conservation programs authorized by the Farm Bill. Should I have the honor of being confirmed, I will work with Secretary Vilsack and others to learn more about its operations and functions, especially how USDA balances the annual commitments of CCC funds with additional CCC funded activities.

2) In your previous role as FSA State Executive Director in Virginia, you oversaw the implementation of critical voluntary programs to your state farmers and ranchers that relied on input at the local level thru county committees and state committees.

a. With President Biden's emphasis on climate and carbon programs, do you plan to continue that framework of success through voluntary programs driven by local input?

Response: As Secretary Vilsack has said in recent Congressional testimony, climate change policies must be designed in partnership with producers, voluntary, and incentives based. More

importantly, approaches to combat climate change offer producers new market opportunities and sources of revenue.

- 3) Under the previous administration, Trade representatives were unapologetic about the United States' cutting-edge technology in agriculture. Unfortunately, our technology is often used as a protectionist barrier against free trade.
- a. Will you continue to defend and fight for our ability to export agricultural products while still using the food technology that allows our farmers and ranchers to produce the quality, safe, and wholesome food that we do today?

Response: Exports are critical to the health of U.S. agriculture and maintaining current markets and opening new markets is a Departmental priority. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Secretary Vilsack and USTR to address unjustified barriers imposed by other countries against our products because our farmers use different production technologies.

- 4) The China Phase 1 agreement has created unprecedented export opportunities for agricultural commodities. China is importing record or near record amounts of sorghum, corn, wheat, soybeans, and beef. China also made commitments to significantly improve their WTO compliance, intellectual property rights, and other key issues to agriculture. More work is needed, however.
- a. How will you prioritize continuing engagement with China into a Phase 2?

Response: I understand the Administration is currently conducting a comprehensive review of U.S. China policy, including trade policy. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about USDA's role in that review process, the status of implementation of the Phase One agreement, and how the Department plans to work with USTR to make further progress on agriculture in any future agreements.

- 5) In the House, I was happy to champion the SALE Act, which makes it so unpaid sellers of livestock have priority to recover livestock or funds when a livestock dealer fails to pay. It was passed into law in December. Under the new law, USDA is required to enforce the dealer statutory trust if the dealer fails to perform their duties or the Secretary believes it will be in the best interest of the unpaid sellers.
- a. Is USDA committed to fulfilling this role and, if necessary, implementing guidance needed to be prepared to enforce the priority for unpaid livestock sellers?

Response: It is my understanding that USDA is committed to implementing the recently enacted provisions of the SALE Act to ensure livestock producers are paid for their animals. I know Secretary Vilsack supports transparency in pricing throughout the supply chain to ensure farmers and livestock producers are getting a fair price. If confirmed, I look forward to working with the Secretary and Congress to improve price discovery and protect against unfair treatment, particularly in the livestock industry.

- 6) Livestock haulers have unique animal welfare and biosecurity considerations hauling live animals that do not always work well with rigid Hours of Service requirements.

- a. If confirmed, would you work with the Department of Transportation to help ensure the need for livestock hauler flexibilities is understood?

Response: Livestock haulers are a critical part of the supply chain, and transporting live animals is characterized by unique considerations compared to other commodities. I understand certain factors must be taken into consideration while determining the hours of service regulations for livestock that offer flexibility for the haulers and protect the welfare of live animals being transported. If confirmed, I look forward to working with Congress, Secretary Vilsack, and the Department of Transportation to ensure any hours of service regulations ensure flexibilities to accommodate the unique needs of livestock haulers and the welfare of livestock.

- 7) In 2020 there was an agreement reached between USFWS and a local Groundwater Management District (GMD) in Kansas on a state water right concern. USDA-NRCS recently approved funding in the amount of \$846,800 through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (WPFPP) for the Rattlesnake Creek Watershed and Middle Creek Watershed. \$725,000 will be awarded to Rattlesnake Creek, and \$121,800 to Middle Creek to address water conservation efforts in Kansas.

- a. Can we get a commitment to continue to work with landowners and local citizens to continue along a voluntary path to reach an amicable solution regarding Rattlesnake Creek?

Response: I appreciate your question. I am not familiar with the project you have highlighted, but if confirmed I will request a briefing on the project, NRCS' involvement and any future plans in this area.

- b. Will you commit to continue to identify USDA resources that can assist in long-term solutions?

Response: I certainly support the goal of finding long-term solutions to issues when possible instead of temporary actions or leaving an issue unresolved. If confirmed, I would appreciate your thoughts on any specific related projects in Kansas to find such long-term solutions.

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Hearing to Consider the Nomination of Jewel H. Bronaugh, of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of
Agriculture
Questions for the Record
April 22, 2021

Ranking Member John Boozman

Biotechnology

- 1) Professionally produced quality seeds have been the basis of a resilient and productive U.S. agriculture economy. As we look for solutions to support sustainable agriculture under the challenges of the climate crisis, better seeds can help our farmers produce more on less land, be more efficient with inputs, and mitigate pest pressure and extreme weather. The ability to use advancements in plant breeding tools, such as gene editing, is vitally important in developing better seeds and varieties for all crops, from fruits and vegetables to row crops and ornamentals, to conservation seeds and cover crops.
 - a. If confirmed, how will you ensure that policies and actions at USDA allow for continued innovation in plant breeding and accessibility of these tools?

Response: Thank you for that question. I am aware of many of the technological advances in plant breeding and seed development. Based upon President Biden's priorities for addressing climate change and sustainability, it is important that we channel energy and innovation in the sector toward conservation goals above and beyond traditional yield focuses. My understanding is that USDA has recently issued regulations that provide an environment that helps empower innovation in plant breeding and, if confirmed, I plan to track implementation of these provisions.

- 2) USDA shares regulatory oversight of plants derived from biotechnology with the FDA and EPA. If confirmed, how will you coordinate with these agencies to ensure regulatory policy and implementation align, especially as it pertains to products of advanced plant breeding tools such as gene editing?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to establishing a working relationship with my counterparts at FDA and EPA. There are clearly many areas of focus for our two Departments to collaborate and I look forward to having that opportunity.

- 3) USDA is the premier supporter of agricultural research, intramurally through ARS and extramurally through NIFA. If confirmed, how will you leverage these mission areas within USDA to broaden the potential benefits of advanced plant breeding tools to all crops?

Response: I understand that ARS and NIFA play a pivotal role in advancing the development of plant breeding tools, working to improve production efficiency, increase resilience, and boost yields for producers. I've spent much of my career investing in, and promoting, agriculture research. While serving as the Dean of the Virginia State University (VSU) College of Agriculture, I led the development of, and guided the strategic vision for, the research and extension mission of the college to address critical issues in agriculture, economic development, communities, families and youth. I led VSU's

efforts to research vertical food production, wildlife predatory management, and oversaw the first statewide study to raise awareness of food deserts and hunger in Virginia. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing to work with ARS and NIFA to support ongoing research efforts and learn more about the ways in which the research agencies can best contribute to improving outcomes for our nation's farmers and ranchers.

National Agricultural Law Center

- 4) The National Agricultural Law Center (NALC), a unit of the University of Arkansas System Division Of Agriculture, is the nation's leading source of agricultural and food law research and information. The Center serves the nation's agricultural community, Cooperative Extension Service personnel, state and federal policymakers, attorneys, consumers, and others. While operating on a national scale, the Center conducts objective and scholarly agricultural and food law research and information. It is also a formal partner of the USDA National Agricultural Library (NAL), helping fulfill NAL's mission of "advancing access to global information for agriculture.
- a. If confirmed, what measures will you undertake to ensure the NALC continues to receive the full support and cooperation from USDA to continue their critical work, as mandated by Congress?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about USDA's partnership with the National Agricultural Law Center as it fulfills its mission to provide food and agriculture law information and research.

- b. Please provide an update on the status of the NALC's multi-year cooperative agreements with USDA.

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the National Agricultural Law Center's cooperative agreements with USDA.

Citrus

- 5) The citrus industry has faced severe challenges in recent years due to the continued threat posed by the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP) and the disease it vectors, huanglongbing or citrus greening. Congress has provided significant resources to establish and maintain multi-agency efforts to both address disease impacts and to prevent its spread. A few months ago, Texas suffered a devastating freeze causing wide-spread damage and crop losses to citrus producers. These dead and dying trees, if left in the fields and unmanaged will act as a refuge for ACP. According to stakeholders, it is estimated that the cost of tree removal and disposal will be approximately \$5 million. It is my understanding that stakeholders have unsuccessfully attempted to reach Farm Service Agency officials in Washington, D.C. for guidance. If confirmed, will you commit to ensuring that Farm Service Agency and other relevant agency officials follow up with these stakeholders?

Response: If confirmed, I will indeed discuss this with the Farm Service Agency to ensure we are being responsive and to ensure we are working to do all we can to fight this disease and preserve our citrus industry.

Pesticides

- 6) America's robust, science-based pesticide regulatory system is essential to providing consumers with assurances on the safety of pesticide products, which are vital in protecting our nation's food supply, public health, infrastructure, natural resources, and green spaces. USDA's Office of Pest Management Policy (OPMP) develops and coordinates the Department's policy on pesticides and integrated pest management. Further, OPMP provides vital input and data to EPA's Office of Pesticide Programs in reviewing the registration and re-registration of crop protection tools. Ensuring EPA conducts a timely, predictable, transparent, and science-based review of these products is critical for the crop protection community, including large and small companies ranging from pesticide and biopesticide manufacturers, antimicrobial companies, and biotech firms to provide producers safe and effective tools to protect against pests and diseases.
- a. If confirmed, what steps will you take to ensure OPMP continues the essential interagency work with EPA in the registration and re-registration of crop protection tools and how will you ensure the benefits and impacts to agriculture are appropriately considered in EPA's review process?

Response: The USDA Office of Pest Management Policy (OPMP) has historically had a direct connection and relationship with the USDA Office of the Deputy Secretary. If confirmed, I look forward to reaffirming that connection and engaging in regular briefings with OPMP on pesticide policy and regulatory issues. Crop protection is essential to successful farming. It is absolutely critical that USDA's scientific data and unique expertise in agriculture be part of regulatory decision making by EPA on the registration of new crop protection tools.

- b. If confirmed, will you ensure OPMP has the appropriate staff and resources to effectively work with EPA on behalf of growers, land management and conservation professionals, and others to strengthen and defend risk based regulation and the science supporting pesticide regulatory decisions?

Response: If confirmed I look forward to being briefed regarding the current budget, number of FTEs, and technical capacity of the USDA Office of Pest Management Policy.

- 7) For American farmers, access to the scientific technology that the U.S. government has evaluated and reviewed is crucial to their profitable and productive future. Currently, EPA is accepting public comment on two actions that relate directly to the intersection of those laws—the draft biological evaluations of the triazines and glyphosate, two important classes of herbicides that our farmers have relied upon for decades. Farmers and other agriculture stakeholders have expressed concern that these evaluation drafts have been rushed and may have not considered all of the best available scientific information. You understand the importance of weed management to crop productivity and farm profitability and the impact of these herbicides to farmer success.
- a. If confirmed, how will you ensure that USDA works with EPA on these two biological evaluations to make sure that the very best science is included before the process is finalized?

Response: If confirmed, I look forward to establishing a working relationship with my counterparts at EPA regarding USDA's procedural involvement on herbicide evaluations, as appropriate.

- 8) While USDA, EPA, DOI, and Commerce have taken steps to comply with the 2018 Farm Bill's requirements concerning pesticide consultations under the Endangered Species Act, the Interagency Working Group's (IWG) work has not yet made significant progress towards resolving the issue, as specified by the Farm Bill. Neither has the IWG sought substantive stakeholder input from industry, farmers or other landowners, non-governmental organizations, or others. It is critical to utilize the ESA and tools provided by the Farm Bill to conserve and protect endangered species and their habitats and to ensure continued access to tools needed to manage invasive and non-native species and for habitat restoration.
- a. If confirmed, will you ensure USDA (or EPA) commits appropriate resources to solving ESA consultation roadblocks for pesticide review and seek meaningful stakeholder input, including industry, farmers or other landowners, non-governmental organizations, and other interested parties?

Response: Thank you for this question. I am not familiar with the particular details outlined in your question. However, if confirmed, I look forward to working with the USDA team to identify what follow-up actions are appropriate.

Forestry

- 9) Arkansas is a heavily forested state and, as such, is home to a multitude of facilities that rely on those forests ranging from hardwood sawmills to large pulp and paper facilities. Throughout 2020 many logging businesses were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic across the country as lumber and paper mills either curtailed production or closed their facilities. Logging businesses and timber haulers experienced decreased demand for harvested trees, and their businesses suffered badly. Under the Logger Relief provision that was enacted as part of the year end omnibus deal in December, the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to provide relief to timber harvesting and timber hauling businesses that were affected. These businesses need guidance on how to access this much needed relief.
- a. If confirmed, how will the Department implement this provision and when will the Department complete the implementation?

Response: I noticed that timber hauling and harvesting was listed as one of the areas that USDA had identified as a gap in the previous pandemic assistance in a press release in late March, but I do not have any additional knowledge beyond what was made public. Should I be confirmed, I will seek more information on this area of pandemic assistance and request USDA to update your staff when more information is available as well.