

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 4, 2021

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

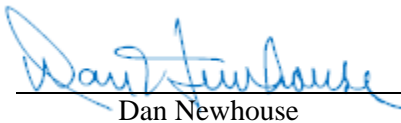
We write to express concern over the lack of staffing at the Washington State Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). We have heard from the agricultural producers we represent that their disaster relief applications are taking months to be approved. This is unacceptable. We urge USDA to prioritize appointing FSA Executive Directors and getting staff into place before this process becomes unmanageable.

As you are aware, agricultural operations in Washington have been significantly impacted by the wildfires and ongoing severe drought. We have heard from our constituents that the creeks have gone dry and that cattle and crops have been lost. Combined with these disasters, eligible producers are now waiting months for paperwork to be approved solely due to a lack of staffing. Getting timely assistance out to ranchers and farmers could mean the difference for many operations between being able to stay open or closing for good. Proper staffing will also translate to much-needed technical expertise at the start of the process for applicants seeking financial assistance, leading to efficient accurate reviews of documentation and timely aid being delivered to those who need it. The current reality is that farmers and ranchers are being bogged down in the paperwork process and experiencing significantly delayed financial assistance.

We appreciate your support through your recent disaster designations for droughts for many counties across the Western states. However, Congress has approved billions of dollars in emergency assistance intended for these communities affected by disasters. Failing to deliver this aid in a timely manner will prove catastrophic in an already difficult year.

We respectfully request that USDA focuses on putting FSA State Executive Directors in place and hiring staff in an expeditious manner. We thank you for your continued response to these disasters and stand ready to work with you on these efforts moving forward.

Sincerely,



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress