

by RCIS Government Relations Director Jeff Sands

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Date: Monday, February 10, 2025 at 10:40 AM EST



## BY RCIS GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR JEFF SANDS

### *WHAT'S GOING ON?*

#### CONGRESSIONAL UPDATE

##### **Senate Agriculture Committee Holds First Hearing of New Congress**

The Senate Agriculture Committee held a hearing on February 5 titled "Perspectives from the Field: Farmer and Rancher Views on the Agriculture Economy, Part 1" to gather insights from producer stakeholders. The hearing was designed as a part of a series aimed at informing decisions for the upcoming Farm Bill deliberations, which starts as a new slate in 2025. The goal of the committee is to develop policies to support current and future generations of farmers and ranchers.

##### **Key Participants and Testimony:**

###### **Panel 1:**

- **Zippy Duvall**, President of American Farm Bureau Federation
- **Rob Larew**, National Farmers Union

###### **Panel 2:**

- **Nathan Reed**, National Cotton Council
- **Kenneth Hartman, Jr.**, National Corn Growers Association
- **Keeff Felty**, National Association of Wheat Growers
- **Josh Gackle**, American Soybean Association
- **Jennifer James**, USA Rice Federation

- **Chris Englestad**, National Barley Growers Association
- **Amy France**, National Sorghum Producers
- **Garrett Moore**, US Peanut Federation
- **Tim Deal**, American Sugarbeet Growers Association and American Sugar Alliance

### **Key Messages in Testimony**

- Economic Challenges
  - Net farm income decreased by \$41 billion, a 25% drop from 2022
  - Crop prices have significantly declined since 2022, with corn and wheat down 37%, soybeans down 28% and cotton down 22%
- Farm Bill
  - All groups and witnesses stressed the urgent need for a new fully funded Farm Bill in 2025
  - Calls for strengthening the farm safety net and bolstering risk management tools, specifically stating the importance of crop insurance for the coverage it provides, its role in allowing farmers to access credit, and the need for more options for specialty crop producers
- Market Fairness
- Tariffs and Trade
  - Senators inquired about the potential impact of proposed tariffs on farmers
  - Concerns were expressed about shrinking markets and increased costs for inputs like fertilizer
- Conservation
  - Emphasis on investing in voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs.

### **Rollins Sails Through Committee Vote, Awaits Full Senate**

USDA Nominee Brooke Rollins sailed through the Senate Agriculture Committee on February 3, with a unanimous 23-0 vote. While an exact date has not yet been set for her consideration by the full Senate, most anticipate it will occur in the very near future, possibly as soon as next week. Given this unanimous vote, it is anticipated that Rollins should sail through the Senate and be confirmed. Additional nominations of interest for crop insurance at USDA include Richard Fordyce as Undersecretary for the Farm Production and Conservation mission area.

The crop insurance community still awaits the announcement on the individual who will become the RMA Administrator. This is a non-Senate confirmed position.

Lastly, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. is anticipated to also go before the full Senate for consideration at Secretary of Health and Human Services. For more on Trump Administration nominees, please click [here](#).

### **Tariff and Executive Order Update**

President Trump recently signed executive orders imposing new tariffs on imports from China, Canada and Mexico, which could have impacts on the agriculture sector. These proposed tariffs and resulting retaliatory measures are causing concern among farmer and industry groups. Status update below:

#### **Tariff Rates and Targets**

- 25% tariffs on all imports from Canada and Mexico
- 10% tariffs on all imports from China
  - Agricultural commodities NOT included in retaliatory measures; ag machinery is included
- Additional tariffs on computer chips, pharmaceuticals, steel, aluminum, copper, oil and gas to be implemented by mid-February

#### **Implementation Timelines**

- Tariffs on Chinese goods took effect on February 1, 2025
- Tariffs on Canadian and Mexican goods were initially set for February 1, but have been delayed one month based on agreements reached by leaders of respective countries centered around immigration, curbing drug trafficking, and other considerations

It is well-known and no surprise now to anyone that President Trump has acted quickly in issuing multitudes of executive orders aimed at enacting key concerns and pledges made during his campaign. Many of these executive orders, including the most controversial, are currently being considered in courts with a number being delayed or restrained due to the need for further consideration of their constitutionality. Many agents have reached out regarding their concerns over the executive orders regarding the potential effects on retention within the Federal workforce, specifically RMA. We appreciate your concerns and are monitoring the situation closely, the state executive order issuance remains very fluid and we will keep you apprised as they unfold.

### **RCIS Attending Annual Crop Insurance Conferences**

RCIS Leaders Dalynn Hoch, Jeff Bahr and Jeff Sands, along with Emerging Leader Program Participants Jon Clarke (Area Claims Manager, Virginia) and Sandy Johnson (Field Service Representative, MN) have spent the last few days at the Crop Insurance and Reinsurance Bureau (CIRB) Annual Convention in Bonita Springs, FL. The conference brings together many players in the crop insurance industry, offering a great opportunity to network and take in great content impacting the crop insurance industry from renowned experts across different facets of agriculture.

Many thanks to CIRB for another great meeting and our Emerging Leaders for participating and making impactful contributions to the future of crop insurance. This week we will be attending the National Crop Insurance Services (NCIS)/American Association of Crop Insurers (AACI) Annual Crop Insurance Convention and will be sure to report back in our next edition on any insights garnered.

***Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or comments. I can be reached at [jeffrey.sands@rcis.com](mailto:jeffrey.sands@rcis.com)***

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