

Senate Agriculture Committee Hearing

Nomination of Brooke Rollins for Secretary of Agriculture

Jan. 23, 2025

The below notes are not exhaustive, but highlight some of the topics that may impact Tribal governments, producers or nutrition programs/participants that have been discussed as part of Indian Country's preparations on the Farm Bill.

[Senate Agriculture Full Confirmation Hearing Video](#)

[Written Testimony – Brooke Rollins, nominee](#)

Rollins Opening Remarks:

- Emphasis on the importance of farmers and ranchers to the U.S..
- Pledge to ensure the prosperity of farmers, ranchers, and rural communities if confirmed.
- Top Priorities:
 - Efficient deployment of disaster and economic assistance.
 - Addressing animal disease outbreaks.
 - Modernizing and realigning the USDA.
 - Supporting rural communities for long-term prosperity.
- Long-term Goals:
 - Improving rural development programs.
 - Ensuring strong domestic and export markets for agriculture.
 - Eliminating burdensome regulations.
 - Enhancing nutrition programs.
 - Preparing the next generation of farmers and innovators.
- Commitment to serving the American people and supporting the farm bill.

Notes:

First 100 Days:

- Rollins emphasized a fast and efficient deployment of economic aid.
- Focus on addressing animal disease and aligning with President Donald Trump's vision for the USDA.

Trade and Tariffs:

- Committee Chair [Sen. John Boozman \(R-AR\)](#) asked about the President's trade agenda and its impact on farmers.
 - Rollins discussed the importance of reducing the \$45 billion trade deficit and managing the impact of tariffs on farmers.

Farm Bill Commitment:

- [Sen. John Hoeven \(R-ND\)](#) emphasized the importance of the Farm Bill for family-based farmers and ranchers.
 - Rollins committed to working on the Farm Bill, ensuring affordable crop insurance and a counter-cyclical safety net.

Rural Development:

- [Sen. Tina Smith \(D-MN\)](#) highlighted the unique challenges faced by small towns and rural communities.
 - Rollins expressed excitement about revitalizing rural America and emphasized a comprehensive approach that includes housing, childcare, and education.
- Sen. Smith discussed the shortage of affordable housing in rural communities and the need to modernize the Rural Housing Service.
 - Rollins committed to working on rural housing issues and supporting the Rural Housing Service Reform Act.
- [Sen. Peter Welch \(D-VT\)](#) highlighted the importance of rural broadband for farm communities and the need to continue expanding access.
 - Rollins agreed and committed to supporting rural broadband initiatives.

Nutrition Programs:

- Sen. Smith stressed the importance of SNAP for rural communities and asked about work requirements.
 - Rollins acknowledged the importance of work requirements and committed to understanding and addressing concerns related to SNAP.
- [Sen. Dick Durbin \(D-IL\)](#) questioned whether work and asset requirements should be applied to other agricultural programs.
 - Rollins expressed her commitment to learning more about all nutrition programs and ensuring they are effective and efficient.
- [Sen. Corey Booker \(D-NJ\)](#) discussed the high levels of ultra-processed foods in school meals and their impact on children's health.
 - Rollins committed to improving children's nutrition by reducing ultra-processed foods in school meal programs.
- [Sen. Raphael Warnock \(D-GA\)](#) discussed the importance of maintaining a basic safety net for vulnerable families, including children, seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities.
 - Rollins agreed on the importance of these programs and committed to working together to support vulnerable families.
- [Sen. Amy Klobuchar \(D-MN\)](#) asked if SNAP benefits should be calculated based on current food costs.
 - Rollins acknowledged the importance of considering current food costs in program calculations.

USDA Remote and In-Office Work Policies:

- [Sen. Joni Ernst \(R-IA\)](#) raised concerns about low space utilization at USDA headquarters and emphasized the need for federal employees to work in the office.
 - Rollins committed to achieving the 60% utilization goal and ensuring employees are present in the office.
- [Sen. Tommy Tuberville \(R-AL\)](#) criticized the low utilization of USDA office buildings and emphasized the need for employees to be present to support farmers.
- [Sen. Jerry Moran \(R-KS\)](#) highlighted the relocation of [NIFA](#) and [ERS](#) to Kansas City and the need for employees to work in the office to support rural America.
 - Rollins agreed on the importance of having employees in the office and committed to addressing this issue.

Catfish Inspection:

- [Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith \(R-MS\)](#) raised concerns about the inspection of imported catfish by the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).
 - Rollins committed to improving the inspection process and ensuring it is a priority.

Packers and Stockyards Rules:

- Sen. Hyde-Smith mentioned the impact of USDA packers and stockyards rules on poultry growers.
 - Rollins committed to addressing these issues and working with Hyde-Smith on solutions.

Young and Beginning Farmers:

- Sen. Welch raised concerns about young farmers' ability to access farmland, noting the threat from private equity and foreign buyers.
 - Rollins acknowledged the issue and emphasized the need to support young farmers.
- [Sen. John Thune \(R-SD\)](#) highlighted the challenges faced by beginning farmers and the need to make entry into agriculture easier and less expensive.
 - Rollins committed to supporting young and beginning farmers and working on strengthening safety net programs.
- Sen. Klobuchar emphasized the need to support the next generation of farmers and ranchers.
 - Rollins committed to prioritizing support for young people entering agriculture.

Support for 1890 Land Grant Institutions:

- [Sen. Raphael Warnock \(D-GA\)](#) expressed concern about a recent executive order potentially terminating USDA liaisons to 1890 land grant institutions.
 - Rollins committed to learning more about the issue and ensuring these institutions are supported.

Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Funds:

- [Sen. Chuck Grassley \(R-IA\)](#) criticized the misuse of CCC funds in past administrations from both parties, emphasizing spending should be authorized by Congress and urged avoid wasting these dollars.

Conservation:

- Sen. Boozman highlighted the importance of voluntary, locally led conservation programs for farmers and ranchers.
 - Rollins committed to supporting these programs and acknowledged their value.
- Sen. Klobuchar discussed investments in climate smart agriculture through the Inflation Reduction Act and the impact of recent executive orders on these programs.
 - Rollins committed to understanding the executive orders and ensuring alignment with agricultural interests.

USDA Work on Serving All Producers and Program Participants:

- Sen. Warnock discussed the history of discrimination at USDA and the need for equity and diversity in the Department's work serving all American farmers, ranchers and programs.
 - Rollins committed to considering the recommendations of the Equity Commission's report and recruiting a diverse workforce.