

**Senator Jerry Moran Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies**

**Markup of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration
and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2017**

May 17, 2016

(As prepared for delivery)

Good afternoon. Today this Subcommittee meets to report the 2017 appropriations bill for Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and related agencies. I am pleased to report this bill, and I want to thank all of the members of this Subcommittee for their help.

In particular, I'd like to thank our ranking member, Senator Merkley. I appreciate our partnership and the close working relationship of our staffs. I would like to thank both him and his staff for their outstanding work throughout this process.

The bill we will be recommending today is written to our allocation of \$21.250 billion, which is \$250 million below last year's enacted level. Despite funding reductions, I believe we are recommending a solid, bipartisan bill that addresses critical needs and maintains proper oversight. The bill reflects careful consideration of agriculture and Food and Drug Administration priorities and is a prime example that those priorities can be met while maintaining fiscal discipline.

The investments made in this bill reaffirm our commitment to being at the forefront of production agriculture and provide our rural communities the ability to compete – both here and abroad. This bill also provides increases in areas of food safety and public health that directly benefit consumers and touch the lives of every American, every day.

I won't go over every single account in the bill, but I do want to briefly point out a few highlights.

- The bill places significant emphasis on agricultural research conducted by the Agricultural Research Service and our land grant and non-land-grant university system through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Total research funding is \$2.54 billion – a \$70 million increase above FY2016 enacted levels. This amount includes \$375 million for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, a \$25 million increase above last year's enacted level, representing the highest funding level since the program's inception.
- The bill directly supports our nation's farmers and ranchers. \$3.5 billion in farm ownership loans and \$2.892 billion in farm operating loans are provided, as well as funding to waive farm loan application fees for veteran farmers and ranchers. The bill also prohibits closure of any FSA county offices.

- For conservation, the bill protects our rural communities and natural resources by providing needed support for watershed projects. The Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program is funded at \$150 million, the first funding the program has received since fiscal year 2010.
- For nutrition, the bill provides \$6.35 billion for the WIC program, and fully funds participation. It also fully funds the budget request levels for the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program.
- The bill includes \$1.6 billion for the PL 480 Food for Peace Program. It also includes \$10 million for local and regional procurement through the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program.
- The bill provides \$2.759 billion for the Food and Drug Administration, which is \$39 million above the FY2016 enacted level and \$29 million above the budget request. Increases are provided for Food Safety Modernization Act implementation and medical product safety activities.
- Finally, the bill includes funding for an issue of great importance to me: creating pipelines for our country's military veterans to explore career opportunities in production agriculture. The bill provides \$5 million for the Office of the Secretary for veteran outreach initiatives and \$2.5 million for the Food and Agriculture Resilience Program for Military Veterans – or FARM-Vets program. We owe it to our men and women in uniform returning home from service – from agribusiness training to the behavioral therapeutic benefits of agriculture – for the Department of Agriculture to play a significant role in exploring these transitional opportunities for our nation's veterans.

Overall, I believe we have achieved a balanced approach with this bill. I would now like to ask Senator Merkley for any remarks he may have, and then I will ask him to make the motion for adoption of the bill and report so that we can proceed to consideration by the full Committee.

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