

**Chairman John Hoeven Opening Statement
Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration,
and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations**

**Markup of the FY2019 Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill**

May 24, 2018

(As prepared for delivery)

I am pleased to report the 2019 Appropriations Bill for Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA and Related Agencies for Full Committee consideration.

I want to thank all of the members of this Committee for their help. In particular, I'd like to thank our Ranking Member, Senator Merkley. I appreciate the partnership we have developed in crafting this bill.

I am proud of the bill that we are reporting today. It is written to our allocation of \$23.235 billion, which is \$225 million above the current enacted level. We have worked hard to invest these taxpayer dollars responsibly, funding programs that provide direct benefits to our farmers and rural communities and supporting programs that provide direct health and safety benefits to all Americans.

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

This bill provides strategic and important investments in rural America, including an additional \$425 million for rural broadband, putting our two-year investment over \$1 billion in bridging the digital divide for rural communities; \$150 million for Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations and \$774 million for landowner technical assistance; water and waste loans and grants of more than \$2.2 billion to help communities obtain clean water and sanitary waste disposal systems; and \$1 billion in business loans to generate new jobs and increase incomes in rural communities.

The bill also directly supports our nation's farmers, by including funding to support \$4.2 billion in farm ownership loans, and \$3.5 billion in farm operating loans.

For nutrition, the bill provides \$6.15 billion for the WIC program, which fully funds estimated participation. It also fully funds the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and maintains funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program.

This bill includes \$1.7 billion for the PL 480 Food for Peace Program. Funding for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition program is increased to \$210 million.

Research is prioritized in this bill, with the Agricultural Research Service salaries and expenses receiving \$1.3 billion, which is a \$98.2 million increase above the FY 2018 enacted level. This funding allows USDA to continue making critical investments in agricultural research throughout the country.

The bill provides \$1.4 billion for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. This amount funds the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative at \$405 million and maintains funding for our land grant and non-land-grant university system.

The bill provides over \$1 billion for the Food Safety and Inspection Service, which includes full funding for all federal, state and international inspection services.

In the area of public health, the bill provides \$2.97 billion for the Food and Drug Administration, which is \$159 million above fiscal year 2018. The bill fully supports FDA's food safety mission, funds opioid prevention activities at \$66 million, and provides \$70 million as authorized in the 21st Century Cures Act.

Overall, some difficult decisions had to be made, but I believe this is a well-balanced bill that allocates funds where they are needed most. Before closing, I would like to thank Senator Merkley's staff – Jessica Schulken, Dianne Nellor, and Bob Ross – for their work throughout this process. They have worked closely with my staff, and I appreciate their efforts in getting us to this moment.

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