



July 13, 2026

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
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Washington DC 20250

Ms. Sarah Aswegan
Agricultural Marketing Specialist
U.S. Department of Agriculture
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As members of the Democratic Women's Caucus, we write to express our deep concern with USDA's rejection of women farmers nominated to the United Soybean Board (USB). Your decision is not only disrespectful to the qualified women who were nominated, it sends a message to women farmers that their voices do not matter. Over the past two decades, the share of women farmers in the United States has steadily increased, with more than 1.2 million women farmers currently accounting for over 36% of all U.S. producers.¹ Yet women farmers have historically held a smaller share of leadership roles in commodity groups, such as USB. USDA's rejection of these nominations takes the USB and American farmers in the wrong direction. **We strongly urge USDA to reverse its decision and allow these nominees to serve their rightful terms.**

The United Soybean Board is intended to serve and be represented by American farmers. Leadership on the United Soybean Board is a volunteer position and determined by fellow farmers on the state boards. Your Department signs off on the selected members typically as a formality to respect the expertise of farmers.² This year, without any justification, the administration intervened and disrupted the usual process by rejecting the nominations of five farmers, including denying all four women farmers who had previously served on the USB and were up for reappointment. In doing so, your Department rejected dedicated and experienced farmers such as Susan Watkins, a seventh-generation soybean farmer from Virginia, who was initially appointed to USB under the first Trump administration. Ms. Watkins had already been selected as Treasurer for the subsequent term, and her seat is now empty as a result of your intervention.³

¹ Traceone. (2025, March 26). *The New Face of Framing: States Leading the Rise of Female Farmers*. <https://www.traceone.com/resources/plm-compliance-blog/states-leading-the-rise-of-female-farmers>.

² The Soy Hopper. (2026, February 12). *New farmer-leaders appointed to the United Soybean Board*. <https://unitedsoybean.org/hopper/new-farmer-leaders-appointed-to-the-united-soybean-board-2/>

³ Reuters. (2026, April 29). *Trump's DEI purge reaches farm country? Women picked for soybean board all replaced by men*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/trump-administration-rejects-women-picked-soybean-board-appoints-men-instead-2026-04-29/>

By denying the appointment of these four women farmers, your Department rolled back women farmers' participation in USB's membership to only five women farmers out of the 77-member body. This represents the lowest level of membership by women farmers on USB in at least a decade, even as the share of women farmers continues to grow.⁴ This decision turned away American farmers who were qualified and experienced, had already been approved by their peers, and were eager to serve their community on the USB. Your Department has failed to give any rationale for this decision.

The singling out of women farmers and the unprecedented intervention into the governance of the USB marks a new tactic in this administration's larger effort to target and penalize women. This action comes after this administration blocked promotions for women servicemembers and illegally fired women Commissioners at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and women officials on the National Labor Relation Board.⁵ Women have been disproportionately shut out of senior roles within this administration and disproportionately affected by the mass firings within the federal workforce.⁶ None of these actions, including the USB intervention, came with any logical explanation. This not only harms the individual women who were targeted, but the broader communities and organizations that they are members of. Women farmers face systematic disparities in U.S. agriculture, including receiving less technical and financial assistance from the government—disparities that representation on USB and other commodity boards can help address.⁷

Your decision to reject these USB nominees harms the nominees themselves, harms the soybean farmers represented by USB, and harms women farmers who already face steep barriers. USB and American soybean farmers across the country deserve autonomy in selecting their leadership—autonomy they previously had for the 35-year history of the board. The qualified farmers up for reappointment deserve the opportunity to serve their terms. We call on your Department to reverse its decision and allow these women to serve their terms on the United Soybean Board.

Sincerely,

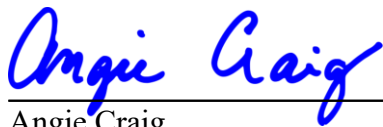
4 DTN. (2026, May 1). *Women Soybean Farmers Removed From USB*.

<https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/columns/washington-insider/article/2026/05/01/farmers-rejected-soy-checkoff-board>

5 The Guardian. (2026, June 3). *Pete Hegseth removes all women and some Black service members from navy promotion list*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jun/03/pete-hegseth-navy-promotion-list>. ; The New York Times. (2025, March 14). *Arlington Cemetery Website Loses pages on Black Veterans, Women and Civil War*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/14/us/politics/arlington-cemetery-website-dei.html>

6 Washington Post. (2026, June 9). *More women are getting shut out from senior positions in Trump's second term*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2026/06/09/trumps-second-term-fewer-seats-women-table/> ; (National Women's Law Center. (2025, May). *Attacks on the Federal Workforce Target Women and People of Color*. [Federal-Workforce-FS-5.5.25v2.pdf](https://www.nwlc.org/federal-workforce-fs-5.5.25v2.pdf)

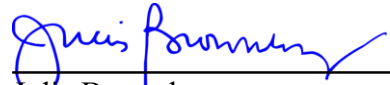
7 American Farmland Trust. (2024). *The State of Gender Equity in U.S. Agriculture*. <https://farmlandinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/12/AFT-gender-equity-report.pdf>.



Angie Craig
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture



Shontel M. Brown
Co-Chair
Communications Task Force
Democratic Women's Caucus



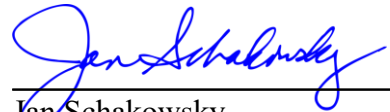
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



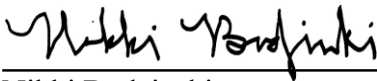
Andrea Salinas
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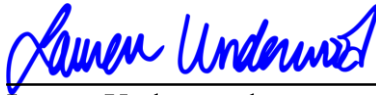
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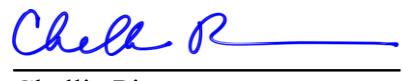
Jan Schakowsky
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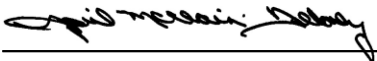
Nikki Budzinski
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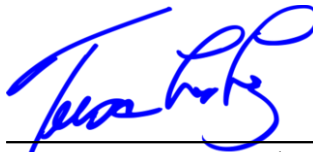
Lauren Underwood
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