



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

September 4, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary of Agriculture  
Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write to express my strong opposition to your recently announced policy to relocate the Economic Research Service (ERS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

This proposal will be extremely disruptive to the employees of these agencies, many of whom reside in my congressional district, while doing nothing to improve the work these agencies do for the American public. In fact, the proposal raises serious concerns that the quality of work being done at ERS and NIFA may well be undermined.

Many of the employees at this agency have worked at USDA in the Washington region for years, if not decades. They have put down roots here: they own property here, they have children enrolled in the local schools, and they have spouses with jobs in the area. Forcing them to leave Washington to continue doing the jobs they excel at does them, and their families, an extreme disservice. The likely result is that many will choose to leave the Department, contributing to a serious brain drain that will degrade the quality of work at these agencies.

I am aware of absolutely no evidence to back up the assertion that it is hard to recruit talented employees to work at these agencies because prospective employees do not want to live and work in the Washington, DC, region. That groundless assertion is belied by the talented work force currently at the two agencies, as well as the large numbers of applicants for vacancies.

Moreover, moving NIFA and ERS out of the region will disrupt synergies with other USDA agencies that benefit from and inform the work done at these two agencies.

Finally, I am very concerned by the proposal to move ERS from the Research, Education and Economics Mission Area to the Secretary's office. ERS is world renowned for the high-quality information it produces and which benefits not just our farmers and ranchers but the scientific research community more broadly. Moving it to the Secretary's office would compromise its independence and put at risk its reputation for unbiased products.

I urge you to reconsider and reverse this short-sighted and counterproductive move.

Sincerely,

STENY H. HOYER

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