



June 15, 2026

The Honorable John Hoeven
Chairman
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural
Development, FDA, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Hoeven and Ranking Member Shaheen:

The Land Improvement Contractors of America (LICA) is the national trade association representing contractors who build and maintain conservation, water management, environmental, utility, transportation, and site development projects across the United States. LICA members have expertise in drainage, water management, and modern construction techniques. LICA thanks you for your consistent support of American agriculture and for your ongoing efforts to improve agricultural practices. LICA believes that the Fiscal Year 2027 Agriculture Appropriations legislation is a crucial opportunity to ensure this vital support continues.

Conservation initiatives on farm and ranch land have proven results by increasing yields, improving water quality and quantity, enhancing soil health, reducing erosion, and enhancing wildlife habitat. Soil and water conservation require ongoing efforts to address the ever-changing environment in agriculture and ranch lands. Historically, effective conservation initiatives have resulted from partnerships among landowners, land improvement contractors, and state and federal officials. This partnership has been a reliable way to ensure cost-effective practices can be implemented on individual farms and shared with the wider agriculture community.

On the federal level, a key component of this partnership has come from the US Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA). These agencies' local offices provide essential on-the-ground technical expertise and financial assistance necessary to support conservation initiatives. Programs administered by these agencies, such as EQIP and CSP, have long experienced demand far exceeding the available funding and staffing.

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In recent years, however, both NRCS and FSA have suffered from workforce shortages, which have been further exacerbated by additional staffing reductions. According to the USDA's December 2025 report, "U.S. Department of Agriculture Staffing Levels," between January 12 and June 14, 2025, NRCS has lost approximately 22% of its staff (2,673 employees), FSA has lost 24% of its staff (806 employees), and FSA's County offices have lost 7% of their staff (1,082 employees). Continuing this trend will significantly reduce USDA agencies' capacity to deliver conservation programs and technical assistance to agricultural producers.

As the subcommittee moves forward with the FY 2027 agriculture appropriations legislation in the coming weeks, LICA strongly urges you to support adequate funding levels for NRCS and FSA to enhance EQIP and other conservation programs, support necessary staffing, and prevent office closures and forced consolidations that would further reduce staffing at these vital USDA agencies.

Conservation programs are an important investment in this Nation's farming and ranching community. We urge you to continue your strong support to ensure these efforts continue and improve.

On behalf of LICA's contractor members across the country who help implement conservation practices and infrastructure improvements, thank you for your consideration of this request.

Best Always,

Dennis Mikula, Jr.

CEO, Land Improvement Contractors of America