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"Rummaging in the government's attic"

Description of document: Department of Agriculture (USDA) Emails containing the words "relocation" or "relocate" in specified individuals at the Economic Research Service (ERS), January 1, 2019, - June 5, 2019

Requested date: 26-May-2019

Released date: 06-March-2020

Appealed date: 01-April-2020

Released date: 12-February-2021

Posted date: 20-February-2023

Source of document: Freedom of Information Act Request
Department of Agriculture
Departmental FOIA Officer
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 4039-A
Washington, DC 20250-0706
[USDA Public Access Link \(PAL\)](#)
Email: USDAFOIA@usda.gov
[FOIA.gov](#)

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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of the General Counsel
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, DC 20250-1400

February 12, 2021

Delivered via Electronic Mail

Re: Response to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Appeal No. 2020-REE-00263-A

This is the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Departmental FOIA Office's (DFO's) final response to FOIA Appeal No. 2020-REE-00263-A. You are appealing the DFO's response to FOIA Request No. 2019-REE-04175-F. Your appeal was received by the DFO on April 1, 2020. For the reasons explained below, USDA affirms your appeal in part and denies your appeal in part.

The subject FOIA request was received on May 26, 2019, and it sought, as amended:

Email correspondence from January 1, 2019, to June 5, 2019, that contains either the word "relocation" or "relocate," as well as one of the following words: Congress, Congressional, White, President, Trump, Concerns, Concerned, Problem, Political, Secretary, Purdue, Analysis, Retention; in the accounts of the following Economic Research Service (ERS) personnel:

- ERS Administrator;
- ERS Associate Administrator;
- ERS Assistant Administrator;
- ERS Administrative and Financial Services Director; and
- ERS Training and Career Development Officer

On February 24, 2020, you agreed to exclude news media emails, attachments, and emails that did not discuss ERS's relocation to Kansas City.

On March 6, 2020, the DFO issued its final response to your request. The DFO released 70 pages of records, with portions withheld pursuant to Exemptions 4, 5, and 6 of the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. §552(b)(4), (5), (6).

In your appeal, you challenged the DFO's decision to withhold information pursuant to FOIA Exemption 5, the deliberative process privilege. After careful review, we have determined that some information that was initially withheld under Exemption 5 may now be released. Our application of FOIA Exemption 5 is explained below.

Exemption 5 of the FOIA protects from disclosure those "inter-agency or intra-agency memorandums or letters which would not be available by law to a party other than an agency in litigation with the agency." One of the frequently invoked FOIA Exemption 5 privileges is the deliberative process privilege. To fall within FOIA's deliberative process privilege, the records

2020-REE-00263-A

must be both pre-decisional and deliberative; the records must precede the adoption of an agency policy and include the opinions, recommendations, or deliberations on a legal or policy matter. We are continuing to withhold pre-decisional intra-agency emails under the deliberative process privilege. Disclosure of such information would have a chilling effect on the ability of agency officials to engage in free and frank discussions regarding policy but also may cause confusion on the agency's actual position on the policy at issue. Due to the sensitivity and controversial nature of the topic of these emails, we have confirmed that there is foreseeable harm in the release of this pre-decisional and deliberative content.

However, we have determined that there is no foreseeable harm in release of certain portions that were previously withheld. We have segregated and are now releasing additional portions of these records. Additional information has been released on pages 37, 43, 44, and 61 of the enclosed records.

If you are dissatisfied with this final decision on your appeal, you may seek judicial review of our response in the appropriate U.S. District Court. Prior to seeking judicial review, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. Using OGIS services does not affect your right to pursue litigation. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, Room 2510, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001; email at ogis@nara.gov; telephone at 202-741-5770; toll-free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

If you have any questions regarding this appeal response, please contact FOIA analyst Harald Fuller-Bennett at Harald.FullerBennett@usda.gov.

For additional information regarding USDA FOIA regulations and process, please refer to the information available online at www.dm.usda.gov/foia. The DFO appreciates the opportunity to assist you in this matter.

Sincerely,

CAMILLE
APONTE-
ROSSINI

 Digitally signed by
CAMILLE APONTE-ROSSINI
Date: 2021.02.12 13:00:22
-05'00'

Camille C. Aponte-Rossini
Appeals Officer
Departmental FOIA Office

Enclosure: Revised records (70 pages)

From: [Sclopis, Itzel - ERS](#)
To: [Pompelli, Greg - ERS](#); [McPherson, Lori A. - ERS](#); [Harris, Dominique - ERS](#); [Lockhart, Shaina - ERS](#)
Subject: FW: Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move
Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 3:40:37 PM

FYI, in case you haven't seen this.

 Itzel del C. Sclopis
 Director
 Administrative and Financial Service
 Economic Research Service
 U.S. Department of Agriculture
 355 E Street, S.W. Room 6-184
 Washington, DC 20024
 Email: isclopis@ers.usda.gov
 Voice: 202-694-5616
 Fax: 202-645-5472

From: Cheeks, Sheila
Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 3:38 PM
To: Robinson, Alan <Alan.Robinson@ARS.USDA.GOV>; Troutman, Tracey - ARS
 <Tracey.Troutman@ARS.USDA.GOV>; Thompson, Helena <Helena.Thompson@ARS.USDA.GOV>
Subject: Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move



Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move

By Charles S. Clark

2:50 PM ET

Hundreds of employees of two key Agriculture Department research offices on Tuesday learned that they're on the list to be transferred outside of Washington as part of Secretary Sonny Perdue's [disputed plan](#) to move operations closer to farm industry stakeholders.

At the Economic Research Service a list was circulated showing the job titles and descriptions (but not the names) of 76 positions that will remain in the national capital region, leaving the rest of that office's 350 employees to assume their job will move to the still-unspecified new location.

The "stay/go" list, obtained by *Government Executive*, was supplemented during a staff meeting with names, according to a source who spoke on condition of

anonymity. This employee called the steps—for which there is still no timetable-- “a disaster” that will “split up operational groups that work together. It will engender departures,” the employee added, noting that supervisors are being separated from their underlings.

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Asked for comment, a department spokeswoman confirmed the meetings and said similar steps were taken at the 350-employee National Institute of Food and Agriculture. “As part of our vision to make USDA the most efficient, most effective and most customer-focused department in the federal government, USDA recently shared information with NIFA and ERS employees describing the proposed functionality of each agency which has been determined to remain within the National Capital Region versus the functionality that will be re-located,” the statement said. “Currently, USDA’s highest priority regarding the relocation is communicating with our employees. As there is additional information to share with the public, USDA remains committed to doing so.”

The location of the new sites is being determined by a bidding process in which some 136 localities, nonprofits and companies are participating.

Perdue’s plan, however, has drawn fierce opposition from academics and many in Congress, and his authority to continue pursuing the plan is in question. In late January, a week after President Trump signed an omnibus spending bill that ended the 35-day partial government shutdown, agricultural appropriators in the House and Senate released [“explanatory statements”](#) to earlier committee reports expressing concerns about “unknown costs” of the moves, which it called “premature” pending a cost-benefit analysis.

“In submitting the fiscal year 2020 budget justification, the department is directed to include all cost estimates for the proposed move of the two agencies, as well as a detailed analysis of any research benefits of their relocation,” the Senate statement read. “There is an expectation that this process will be followed in the future for any other potential proposed agency relocations by the department.”

In addition, the statements assert that, “The bill supports an indefinite delay in the proposed transfer of ERS to the Office of the Chief Economist. At this time, the bill finds it appropriate for ERS to remain under the Research, Education and Economics mission area.”

In February, a group of Democrats led by Rep. Chellie Pingree, D-Maine, re-introduced earlier legislation ([H.R. 1221](#)) that would block the moves.

The explanatory statements and the bill were cheered by the American Statistical Association, which since last August has been mobilizing researchers to oppose the moves, which they see as arbitrary and a hindrance to professional operations centered in Washington that will cause an exodus of experienced employees.

Association Executive Director Ron Wasserstein said in a statement to *Government Executive*, “This latest action reinforces the need for Congress to prevent this counterproductive upheaval of the USDA research arm. USDA promised to take seriously signals from Congress and the input from stakeholders but has not done so. This is unfortunately no surprise, since USDA did not consult Congress or their partners and experts in the agricultural and food research community in making these plans last summer.”

The department spokesman did not address the questions surrounding the intent of Congress in delaying the moves.

From: [Thomas, Lorie - ERS](#)
To: [Shabazz, Alia - ERS](#)
Subject: FW: ERS Relocation Announcement
Date: Thursday, March 28, 2019 11:04:39 AM

Alia, here is the other video.

Lorie Thomas, MA
 Management Service Specialist
 355 E Street, SW
 Room 6-225A
 Washington, DC 20024
 (202) 694-5412
LThomas@ers.usda.gov

*"Patience can be bitter but, her fruit is always sweet."
 Habeeb Akande*

From: Hartley, Chris - ERS
Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2019 5:21 PM
To: Hartley, Chris - ERS <CHARTLEY@ERS.USDA.GOV>
Subject: ERS Relocation Announcement

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for attending the all hands meeting held last week to present and discuss the "Middle List" with USDA Leadership and Ernst and Young. I appreciate your continued participation in these conversations – it makes a difference.

In support of the Department's ongoing commitment to provide information as it comes available, I am writing to inform you about a Congressional hearing scheduled for March 27 on the ERS and NIFA relocation. Details about the hearing, including the panel members and how to access the live stream can be found below or at this [link](#). A recording of the hearing will be available after on the website for the Committee.

Thank you for continued commitment to ERS and the work that we do,
 -Chris

USDA's Proposed Relocation of the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Date:

Wednesday, March 27, 2019 - 11:00am

Location:

2358-A Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515

USDA's Proposed Relocation of the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Subcommittees:

- [Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies \(116th Congress\)](#)

Live-stream can be found here: <https://youtu.be/mkKH7XiAmwE>

Witnesses

Kristi J. Boswell

Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA

Gale A. Buchanan Ph.D.**John E. Lee, Jr. Ph.D.****Katherine Smith Evans Ph.D.****Catherine E. Woteki Ph.D.**

From: [Vilorio, Dennis - ERS](#)
To: [Weinberg, Marca - ERS](#); [MacDonald, James - ERS](#); [Maquire, Kelly B. - ERS](#); [Hopkins, Jeffrey W. - ERS](#); [Cromartie, John - ERS](#); [Gibbs, Robert - ERS](#); [Kassel, Kathleen - ERS](#); [Sneeringer, Stacy - ERS](#)
Subject: FW: Morning Agriculture: A Georgia Republican's rare rebuke of the White House — New ERS union looks to fight relocation — African swine fever fallout could hurt dairy
Date: Friday, May 10, 2019 11:04:08 AM

[Politico coverage today on the ERS/NIFA worker union:](#)

NEW ERS UNION LOOKS TO FIGHT RELOCATION: Now that the Economic Research Service has voted to unionize, the collective bargaining unit needs to set up shop. It will take about five days for the American Federation of Government Employees to certify the 138-4 vote on Thursday. Next, members will decide if they want to form a local chapter or join an existing one.

Top of the union's list will be addressing the proposed relocation of ERS outside of Washington, a decision by Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue that has [angered](#) ERS employees and some lawmakers.

Following the vote, Perdue said in a statement that "we will work with this group of employees just as we work with all USDA employees."

"We will be pressing for delay and reconsideration of the relocation decisions," said Peter Winch, an organizer for AFGE. He said the new ERS union plans to ask to meet with agency leadership, which is "in flux" since ERS is currently led by an acting administrator. Winch added that the union wants employees to be given more than 30 days to decide whether to relocate, as well as for USDA to pay for them to visit the location before deciding if they want to move.

Winch also said that the union plans to ask lawmakers to block USDA from using appropriated funds for the relocation. Rep. [Rosa DeLauro](#), vice chair of the House Appropriations subcommittee on agriculture, said in a statement: "With today's overwhelming vote, ERS employees have sent a resounding message to the Trump administration: The continued undermining of ERS must stop."

Mark your calendars: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture, which will also be relocated, plans to hold its own union vote June 11.

-Dennis

From: POLITICO Pro Agriculture [mailto:politicoemail@politicopro.com]
Sent: Friday, May 10, 2019 5:51 AM

To: Vilorio, Dennis - ERS <DENNIS.VILORIO@ERS.USDA.GOV>

Subject: Morning Agriculture: A Georgia Republican's rare rebuke of the White House — New ERS union looks to fight relocation — African swine fever fallout could hurt dairy

[View online version](#)



05/10/2019 05:50 AM EDT

By LIZ CRAMPTON ((b) (6) @politico.com; @((b) (6))

With help from Catherine Boudreau

QUICK FIX

— **GOP Rep. Austin Scott sharply criticized the Trump administration for failing to deliver a disaster aid package to farmers** dealing with massive flooding and crop damage due to recent storms.

— **The newly formed Economic Research Service union wants to meet with agency leadership to discuss its proposed move**, which organizers hope can be delayed or canceled.

— **The African swine fever epidemic in China** could hurt the U.S. dairy industry as demand for hog feed containing dairy continues to slide.

HAPPY FRIDAY, MAY 10! Welcome to Morning Ag, where your host is siding with her home state sports writer in this [accent dispute](#). Send tips to ((b) (6) @politico.com and @((b) (6)), and follow us [@Morning_Ag](#).

DRIVING THE DAY

A GEORGIA REPUBLICAN'S RARE REBUKE OF THE WHITE HOUSE:

The White House and Congress are still wrangling over a \$17 billion disaster aid package, months after hurricanes and wildfires left a trail of destruction across the country. One Georgia Republican is fed up. In a rare rebuke of the administration by a GOP lawmaker, Rep. [Austin Scott](#) on Thursday said the White House is undercutting its pledge to farmers, Pro Ag's Catherine Boudreau [reports](#).

The cold shoulder from OMB: Scott pointed out that the White House Office of Management and Budget hasn't sent to Congress a formal disaster request to supplement already-authorized federal emergency aid, yet it has done so for other priorities. Just last week, OMB asked for \$4.5 billion to address what Trump has described as a humanitarian and security crisis at the Mexico border, Scott said.

When the House in January passed a disaster aid package, [H.R. 268 \(116\)](#), OMB issued a [statement of administration policy](#) opposing funds for crop and livestock losses, arguing that existing USDA programs like crop insurance were enough to cover the damage.

Scott said his phone calls to Mick Mulvaney, the acting White House chief of staff and former director of OMB, have been ignored. He is also waiting for confirmation of a meeting with Trump.

"[W]hen things are then handed off to people at the Office of Management and Budget, who consider the American farmer and the American farm family nothing but subsidy-sucking freeloaders, then there's a disconnect in what is actually coming out of the administration, and what the administration is telling us that they're going to do," Scott said during a House Agriculture subcommittee hearing.

Negotiations moving at snail speed: Several issues are snagging the disaster aid talks, including Trump's opposition to Democrats' demands for more money for Puerto Rico and a push by Senate Appropriations Chairman [Richard Shelby](#) (R-Ala.) to free up more money for harbor maintenance.

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AFRICAN SWINE FEVER FALLOUT COULD HIT DAIRY: The African swine fever outbreak in China that has killed millions of pigs may have another victim: the U.S. dairy industry. Fewer hogs means less demand for ingredients used in feed, many of which are derived from cow's milk, such as milk and whey permeate, whey powder and lactose.

As many as 200 million pigs are expected to be infected or slaughtered due to ASF, which translates to a decline in demand of lactose in piglet feed of between 54,500 metric tons and 72,500 metric tons, according to a [report](#) from Rabobank, a Dutch financial services firm.

Early signs of declining demand appeared in November. Global trade data showed that demand sank 30 percent in March compared with the same period the year prior. U.S. exports of whey and permeate to China saw a 60 percent decline in demand, attributed to ASF and Chinese tariffs on dairy exports, which the firm called a "double whammy" on the dairy industry.

No end in sight: The firm said it believes that "the impacts of ASF are not short-lived and that it may take years to replenish the hog numbers that have been lost. Thus the demand for dry whey, permeate, and lactose will be

negatively impacted, lowering the potential returns to cheese and whey manufacturers through this period."

There are only two episodes of Game of Thrones left, and it's still anyone's game. POLITICO's Westeros Playbook is the must-read guide to what's happening in the realm. [Sign up](#) to receive a detailed breakdown every Monday for the duration of the final season.

TRADE CORNER

PENCE: MORE TRADE AID MAY BE COMING: Farmers could see a fresh round of trade assistance if trade tensions between the United States and China drag on, Vice President Mike Pence said Thursday.

"We have already had preliminary discussions in the White House for additional support for farmers if this impasse with China continues," Pence said during a visit to a farm in Glyndon, Minn.

His comments are the first official indication the administration acknowledges the need for more aid. Perdue previously said farmers won't see money beyond the \$12 billion they've already received to offset the impact of retaliatory tariffs.

That comes as Trump escalates the trade dispute with China. High-level talks between the countries continue today, even though Trump's tariff increase on \$200 billion in Chinese goods took effect after midnight. The president [said](#) Thursday that the administration has begun taking steps to impose a 25 percent duty on all remaining imports from China, though it would take months before those tariffs could be finalized.

China's move: The Chinese Ministry of Commerce vowed to take "countermeasures" in response to the higher tariffs but didn't get more specific on what actions it would take. China has already slapped tariffs on nearly all U.S. exports to China, so the country may respond with non-tariff action.

Trump is making a major gamble that the U.S. economy can handle

steeper tariffs on China as the 2020 election looms, [report](#) our colleagues Nancy Cook and Ben White.

ROW CROPS

— **A House appropriations subcommittee today will consider a bill** that would keep the U.S. from leaving the Paris climate accord. Pro Energy's Anthony Adragna has [more](#).

— **The Western Growers Association criticized California's decision to ban chlorpyrifos**, saying that producers "now stand to lose yet another arrow in their quiver." Read the full statement [here](#).

— **A \$40 million [settlement](#) between the milk marketing cooperative DairyAmerica and tens of thousands of dairy farmers was approved** on Thursday by a California federal judge, after nine years of litigation. Dairy farmers argued that the cooperative boosted profits by underreporting milk prices to the USDA in order to lower what they were required to pay farmers.

— **Movers and shakers:** USDA confirmed this week that Joby Young is Perdue's new chief of staff. Young previously served as chief of staff for Censky and before that held other chief of staff roles within USDA. Before joining the department, he was chief of staff for Scott for several years. He's an alum of the University of Georgia and University of Georgia School of Law.

— **Starling heads back to North Carolina:** Young replaces Ray Starling, who recently left USDA to head back to his home state of North Carolina. Starling was [just named](#) general counsel of the North Carolina Chamber and president of the North Carolina Chamber Legal Institute.

ON THE CALENDAR

— **Noon.** Food Tank holds a briefing on "The Intersection of Food and Health." 2168 Rayburn House Office Building.

— **12:30 p.m.** Former FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb [speaks](#) about his tenure at the agency during a National Press Club Headliners Luncheon. National Press Building, 13th floor, 529 14th St. NW.

THAT'S ALL FOR MA! Drop us a line: [\(b\) \(6\)](#) [@politico.com](#) and

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This email was sent to dennis.vilorio@ers.usda.gov by: POLITICO, LLC 1000 Wilson Blvd. Arlington, VA, 22209, USA

From: [Vilorio, Dennis - ERS](#)
To: [Weinberg, Marca - ERS](#); [Gibbs, Robert - ERS](#); [MacDonald, James - ERS](#); [Maguire, Kelly B. - ERS](#); [Cromartie, John - ERS](#); [Hopkins, Jeffrey W. - ERS](#)
Cc: [Sneeringer, Stacy - ERS](#); [Kassel, Kathleen - ERS](#)
Subject: FW: Morning Agriculture: EPA eyes new ethanol waivers — Leadership change at ERS as relocation looms — Climate change's ag impact
Date: Thursday, May 2, 2019 12:16:19 PM
Attachments: [ERS gets new acting leader - POLITICO PRO.pdf](#)

Good morning, everyone! Politico covered the ERS move and Ephraim's new role. Full article attached, highlights below.

-Dennis

From: POLITICO Pro Agriculture [mailto:politicoemail@politicopro.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 2, 2019 5:47 AM
To: Vilorio, Dennis - ERS <DENNIS.VILORIO@ERS.USDA.GOV>
Subject: Morning Agriculture: EPA eyes new ethanol waivers — Leadership change at ERS as relocation looms — Climate change's ag impact

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2018 Newsletter Logo: Morning Agriculture



05/02/2019 05:45 AM EDT

By RYAN MCCRIMMON ((b) (6)) [@politico.com](#); @((b) (6))

With help from Helena Bottemiller Evich, Liz Crampton and Catherine Boudreau

QUICK FIX

— **EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler** is considering granting partial exemptions to relieve small oil refiners of half their ethanol blending requirements under the Renewable Fuel Standard.

— **The Economic Research Service has a new acting administrator.** The leadership change comes as the agency faces a potential relocation outside the Beltway.

— **The House will vote today on more ag and rural issues** as the chamber debates a Democratic climate bill, after approving amendments on Wednesday dealing with food security, rural development and other issues.

HAPPY THURSDAY, MAY 2! Welcome to Morning Ag, where we think these "[maggot sausages](#)" and "insect ice cream" might need some rebranding if they're going to catch on. Send tips to ((b) (6)) [@politico.com](#) and @((b) (6)), and follow us [@Morning_Ag](#).

DRIVING THE DAY

EPA EYES NEW ETHANOL WAIVERS: Wheeler is weighing a plan to offer small refiners partial relief from RFS requirements, two industry sources [told](#) Pro Energy's Eric Wolff. The move could be seen as a potential compromise between two of President Donald Trump's core constituencies: biofuel backers and the oil industry.

EPA has received requests from 36 refineries for exemptions from their 2018 blending requirements. Corn and ethanol groups see the waivers as undermining the ethanol standard and reducing demand for biofuel.

Reuters [reported](#) Wednesday that EPA has suspended its work on a plan to publish the names of refineries securing biofuel blending exemptions,

following opposition from the oil industry and White House.

Back-and-forth over the blend wall: Earlier this week, Republican senators led by Oklahoma's [Jim Inhofe](#) urged Wheeler to "account for the ethanol blend wall" and reset statutory targets so that the "contribution of conventional biofuel is below an implied 10 percent level for 2020, or 14.2 billion gallons," per Pro Energy.

In response, Jessica Johnson Bennett of the Renewable Fuels Association said in an email that EPA should instead "utilize its reset authority to reallocate lost volumes from its excessive use of small refinery waivers" and increase biofuel volumes above 15 billion gallons per year.

NEW LEADERSHIP AT ERS AS RELOCATION LOOMS: Ephraim Leibtag, previously the ERS assistant administrator, was named acting administrator starting Wednesday, according to an internal memo obtained by POLITICO. Chris Hartley was required to step down due to tenure limits on acting positions, [writes](#) Pro Ag's Liz Crampton.

Leibtag served as deputy director for research and as product coordinator for the agency's Food Economics Division. He recently helped prepare the agency's strategic plan and also oversees the ERS staff analysis team.

Hartley will stay on at ERS to help steer the relocation process, according to the internal [memo](#) from Scott Hutchins, the Agriculture Department's deputy undersecretary for research, education and economics.

Local tensions: The proposed relocation has caused some friction between Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and fellow Georgian [Sanford Bishop](#), who has tried to use his powers as chairman of the House Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee to quash the proposal, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution [reports](#).

CLIMATE CHANGE'S IMPACT ON AG: The House on Wednesday adopted a handful of amendments related to food, agriculture and rural issues as the chamber considers a broader Democratic [climate change bill](#), with more votes on tap today.

Among the proposals: safeguarding food security against climate change,

allowing states and cities to write their own rules for curbing emissions and calling for a report on clean energy job development in rural regions. Each of those amendments were adopted by voice vote.

Today: Amendments on infrastructure resiliency and using voluntary ag practices to meet goals under the Paris climate agreement are scheduled for floor debate.

Climate change continues to cause headaches for farmers and ranchers. Increasingly severe weather events have recently caused billions of dollars in damage to farmland, livestock, stored crops and infrastructure from California to the Midwest and Southeast.

The changing climate is also forcing farmers and agricultural scientists to adapt crops to warmer weather, shifting growing seasons and spreading invasive pests. (The New York Times has a rundown of [fruits and veggies](#) facing climate disruption.)

Congress is still grasping for a disaster aid deal. Senate Republicans this week sent Democrats an offer including an extra \$300 million in community development funds for Puerto Rico, on top of about \$600 million in nutrition assistance for the island, Pro Budget's Caitlin Emma [reports](#).

On Wall Street, fund managers are rethinking investments in agriculture and farm equipment makers, wary of the long-term impacts of climate change on the sector, Reuters [reports](#).

Are you a young lawyer or law student? Join POLITICO Editor Carrie Budoff Brown for an exciting conversation about 2020, politics and media at the [American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division Spring Conference](#), May 2-4, in Washington, D.C. Registration is available on-site.

FOOD RETAILERS PUSH FOR TAX BILL FIX: Members of the National Grocers Association and Food Marketing Institute flew to Washington this week to promote bipartisan [legislation](#) aimed at fixing a glitch in the 2017 tax code overhaul that's affecting restaurants and retailers looking to upgrade

their stores.

Retail glitch reminder: Republicans intended to allow businesses to write off the full cost of renovating their facilities in the same year the upgrades were made, rather than over 15 years, as under previous law. But due to a drafting error in the GOP [tax bill](#), restaurants and grocery stores now have to deduct renovations over 39 years.

That's prompted some grocers to delay making interior improvements or face higher-than-expected tax bills, industry groups say. "The retail glitch has created uncertainty for independent grocers across the country and has inadvertently stifled their ability to upgrade and reinvest in their stores," Greg Ferrara, NGA's executive vice president, told MA.

On the Hill: Republicans and Democrats in each chamber have filed bills to let retailers immediately write off renovations. While there's wide support within the industry and Congress for addressing the issue, the tricky part is getting Republicans and Democrats to agree on fixing the tax law at all, our Pro Tax friends pointed out.

USDA ASKS STATES TO CRACK DOWN ON CHILD SUPPORT AS THEY

ADMINISTER SNAP: The Agriculture Department on Wednesday issued a [memo](#) to states urging them to adopt stricter policies to bar individuals who fail to make child support payments from getting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.

"Increasing the number of states that implement child support cooperation requirements will benefit families, help non-custodial parents assume responsibility for the well-being and stability of their children, and provide more children with the support they deserve," Perdue said in a statement.

States have the option to take a harder line on this issue under existing rules, but the vast majority don't use it. Anti-hunger advocates argue it's little-used because it's costly to implement, there's no evidence it works and it risks food access for low-income individuals who may already be struggling to get by.

Conservative thumbs-up: The Foundation for Government Accountability lauded the memo Wednesday. "Child support is critical to minimizing single-parent families' reliance on welfare and to helping them escape dependency,"

said Kristina Rasmussen, vice president of federal affairs at FGA. Rasmussen noted that state legislatures are increasingly passing laws that require child support cooperation under SNAP.

There's a new POLITICO newsletter in town. Authored by Cristiano Lima and Zack Stanton, POLITICO's Westeros Playbook is the must-read guide to what's happening in the final season of "Game of Thrones." [Sign up](#) to receive POLITICO Westeros Playbook every Monday for the duration of the final season.

ROW CROPS

— **Former Vice President Joe Biden has largely avoided talking trade on the campaign trail** as he seeks the Democratic nomination for president, but rival campaigns see his trade record as a vulnerability. Biden voted for NAFTA as a Delaware senator and backed the Trans-Pacific Partnership as VP. POLITICO's Holly Otterbein has the [story](#).

— **New York's Legislature passed a bill to ban chlorpyrifos by 2021**, becoming the [second](#) state after Hawaii to eventually forbid use of the insecticide linked to neurological damage in children.

— **Recent severe weather has damaged U.S. corn production in the Midwest**, according to a [study](#) from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It found that during some years excessive rainfall reduced yield by as much as 34 percent, while drought and heat caused a yield loss of up to 37 percent.

— **The Florida House passed a bill to regulate hemp production in a 112-1 vote**, sending the [legislation](#) back to the state Senate. More [here](#) from Pro Florida's Arek Sarkissian.

— **Canadian canola farmers affected by Chinese import [restrictions](#) will receive additional government support**, Cabinet members promised on Wednesday. The aid includes higher caps on interest-free loans and advance payment for crops, up to C\$1 million per farm, Pro Canada's Alexander

Panetta [reports](#).

— USDA [announced](#) its approval of five Chinese citrus fruits for import, if Beijing adopts certain phytosanitary measures. The fruits include pomelo, honey mandarin and sweet orange.

— Soybean farmers this month will have the chance to call for a referendum on whether their federal checkoff should continue. USDA, in a Federal Register [notice](#) on Wednesday, said 10 percent of the more than 515,000 producers pooling their money into the checkoff must request a vote by May 31 to trigger it. Only 324 farmers did so during the most recent opportunity in 2014, making it unlikely USDA will be forced to call a vote.

ON THE CALENDAR

— 8 a.m. (CT) A group of agribusinesses host a [symposium](#) on "Food and Ag at the Intersection." 222 N 10th St., Omaha, Neb.

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This email was sent to dennis.vilorio@ers.usda.gov by: POLITICO, LLC 1000 Wilson Blvd. Arlington, VA, 22209, USA

From: [Vilorio, Dennis - ERS](#)
To: [Weinberg, Marca - ERS](#); [MacDonald, James - ERS](#); [Maguire, Kelly B. - ERS](#); [Hopkins, Jeffrey W. - ERS](#); [Cromartie, John - ERS](#); [Gibbs, Robert - ERS](#); [Kassel, Kathleen - ERS](#)
Subject: FW: Morning Agriculture: Next steps in the fight over ERS, NIFA relocation — California bans chlorpyrifos — Pesticide approvals another hurdle for hemp
Date: Friday, May 10, 2019 11:02:07 AM

More Politico coverage yesterday on the ERS relocation, and the ongoing unionization efforts. Have a good day!

-Dennis

From: POLITICO Pro Agriculture [mailto:politicoemail@politicopro.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 9, 2019 5:52 AM
To: Vilorio, Dennis - ERS <DENNIS.VILORIO@ERS.USDA.GOV>
Subject: Morning Agriculture: Next steps in the fight over ERS, NIFA relocation — California bans chlorpyrifos — Pesticide approvals another hurdle for hemp

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2018 Newsletter Logo: Morning Agriculture



05/09/2019 05:48 AM EDT

By RYAN MCCRIMMON ((b) (6) @politico.com; @((b) (6))

With help from Liz Crampton, Catherine Boudreau, Kelsey Tamborrino and Adam Behsudi

QUICK FIX

— **USDA economists will vote today on unionization** as department leaders speed toward relocating two agencies out of Washington. House Democrats with jurisdiction over government buildings are threatening to block USDA lease proposals until they receive more information about the move.

— **Green groups used California's decision to ban chlorpyrifos** to call out the EPA for dragging its feet in implementing a national ban of the pesticide.

— **Farmers looking to grow hemp** after the plant was legalized under the new farm bill have been frustrated by delays and confusion surrounding federal regulations. Another potential hurdle: EPA's pesticide approval process, which could take as long as a decade to green-light chemicals for use in hemp fields.

HAPPY THURSDAY, MAY 9! Welcome to Morning Ag, where we're getting hungry thinking about this record-breaking [tower of donuts](#). Send tips to ((b) (6) @politico.com and @((b) (6) , and follow us [@Morning_Ag](#).

DRIVING THE DAY

NEXT MOVES IN ERS, NIFA RELOCATION FIGHT: Employees of USDA's Economic Research Service will vote today on whether to unionize — and supporters are predicting the effort will succeed.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue's controversial plan to move ERS and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture out of Washington prompted agency employees to try to form a union, and organizing began late last year. Unionization at NIFA is in the works, too. The American Federation of Government Employees, the largest federal union, is taking the lead for both

initiatives.

If the union vote passes, employees would form a collective bargaining unit and enter into contract discussions with USDA. The backing of a union would give agency staff legal standing to engage with the department on the proposed move and other issues, organizers said.

"Work conditions at ERS are deteriorating and may continue to deteriorate in the future," states a [flyer](#) announcing the vote that was distributed to USDA employees.

On the Hill: House Democrats are starting to flex their authority over government buildings and leases in the ongoing agency relocation fight, your host [writes](#). Top lawmakers on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee say they want new details from Perdue to justify the relocation before they'll approve lease proposals for the USDA's research wing.

In a warning shot to USDA, the panel on Wednesday quashed a 2018 proposal for a new lease for NIFA. The current lease on the agency's waterfront building in southwest D.C. ends in January 2020.

CALIFORNIA MOVES TO BAN CHLORPYRIFOS: California's decision on Wednesday to ban the pesticide chlorpyrifos, which research has linked to neurological damage in children, will have major repercussions on how fruits and vegetables are grown in the country's largest farm state.

Use of chlorpyrifos, which is sprayed on specialty crops to dispel insects, has already been declining across the nation. The California Environmental Protection Agency said that use of the pesticide dropped more than 50 percent from 2 million pounds in 2005 to just over 900,000 pounds in 2016.

"California's action to cancel the registration of chlorpyrifos is needed to prevent the significant harm this pesticide causes children, farm workers and vulnerable communities," said CalEPA Secretary Jared Blumenfeld.

Timetable: The ban will fully take effect in two years. In the meantime, state officials plan to form a working group to identify a safer alternative to chlorpyrifos, and Gov. Gavin Newsom has requested \$5.7 million from the state Legislature to fund additional research and give assistance to farmers who help that effort, Pro California's Debra Kahn [reports](#).

Environmental groups praised the decision and contrasted it with the Trump administration's inaction on a petition requesting that the EPA implement a nationwide ban. A federal appellate court has already forced the agency's hand, ruling in April that EPA has 90 days to respond to the chlorpyrifos petition, but it's unclear how the agency will move forward.

PESTICIDE APPROVALS ANOTHER HURDLE FOR HEMP: The EPA could take five to 10 years to green-light new pesticides for farmers to use on hemp fields to control weeds, insects and fungi, a researcher from North Dakota State University predicted on Wednesday. His comments came during a [meeting](#) held by the agency's Office of Pesticide Programs, which is exploring how to approach the issue after hemp was legalized by the [2018 farm bill](#).

Path to approvals: Companies seeking to register a new pesticide, or add a new use — i.e. hemp production — must submit an application to EPA. The agency then reviews the chemicals' potential impacts on public health, wildlife and the environment, and ensures the directions and safety measures on its label mitigate risks.

EPA by law also has to set tolerance levels, or the amount of pesticide residue allowed in certain foods, by considering the effects of people's exposure to the chemical, among other things. That will be a new and complex undertaking for hemp, which is used to make a wide range of products from building materials to oils and animal feed, in part because there's minimal data available. It was only in the 2014 farm bill that some states were authorized to research hemp as part of a pilot program.

In the meantime: There are about five pesticides already approved for use on hemp, according to Ed Messina, acting deputy office director for EPA's pesticide office. But several hemp researchers and industry officials said farmers are "desperate" for better tools. Bio-based, or naturally occurring, pesticides are a good first option, but they aren't as reliable, one researcher said.

EPA'S NEW WOTUS TIMELINE: The Trump administration's timeline for repealing and replacing the Waters of the U.S. rule has slipped slightly, but EPA still intends to finish by the end of year, said Jeffrey Clark, assistant attorney general of the environment and natural resources division.

— **Repeal:** EPA had been aiming to finalize its rule repealing the Obama-era

rule by March, but Clark said Wednesday that's been kicked back to August, Pro Energy's Annie Snider [reports](#).

— **Replace:** Meanwhile, the agency's target for finalizing its rewrite has slipped from September to December.

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TRADE CORNER

TARIFF HIKE LOOMS OVER CHINA TALKS TODAY: U.S. and Chinese negotiators will meet today in Washington, with less than 24 hours until the Trump administration dials up the trade tension on Friday by increasing tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese goods.

There's some hope that China could provide just enough assurances it would concede to President Donald Trump's demands so the administration will delay a tariff hike — but there's far more doubt that an eleventh-hour resolution can be reached, our Pro Trade friends told MA.

Beijing promised to hit back against Trump's tariff hike, threatening "[necessary countermeasures](#)" against Washington. It's not clear what the retaliation would entail; China has already slapped duties on \$110 billion in U.S. goods, which represents most of what the U.S. exports to China. Beijing could potentially increase the duties it already has in place, or direct future action against U.S. companies operating in China or services exports.

ROW CROPS

— **The EPA sent its 2020 and 2021 Renewable Fuel Standard requirements to the White House for review.** The rule is expected to preserve the 15-billion-gallon requirement for conventional ethanol, but

advanced biofuel advocates hope the rules will raise volume requirements for cellulosic ethanol and biodiesel, Pro Energy's Eric Wolff [reports](#).

— **Coca-Cola was allowed to exert influence over research funded by the beverage giant** under agreements with four public universities, according to a report [published](#) in the Journal of Public Health Policy. POLITICO's Jesse Chase-Lubitz has the [story](#).

— **Florida tomato farmers said they're "open" to a new tomato deal between the U.S. and Mexico**, according to a state industry group. POLITICO's Oma Seddiq has more [here](#).

— **The House unanimously passed a [bill](#) to create a new Commerce Department broadband office** focused on connecting more communities to high-speed internet, Pro Technology's John Hendel [reports](#).

— **Rural obesity is rising faster than urban obesity across the globe**, according to a sweeping new study that shakes up long-held assumptions about the trend. NPR has [more](#).

— **A pair of Missouri state bills would block local regulations over concentrated animal feeding operations, or CAFOs.** Food & Environment Reporting Network has the [details](#).

— **Pennsylvania farmers are trying to fix their labor shortage by recruiting workers** through inmate work-release programs and organizations that help find work for veterans or the visually impaired. More [here](#) from the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Join POLITICO on Thursday, May 9, for two deep-dive conversations **exploring policy solutions to the barriers facing small-business owners and entrepreneurs**. We will talk with entrepreneurs and small-business owners about the innovative policies federal, city and state leaders should pursue to support growth. We also will get insights into what is moving on Capitol Hill and in federal agencies to help business owners and entrepreneurs succeed. [RSVP Today](#).

ON THE CALENDAR

— **8:30 a.m.** USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service holds a [meeting](#), through Friday, of the Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee to examine fruit and vegetable industry issues and provide suggestions for how USDA can tailor its programs to meet the industry's needs. Hyatt Regency Crystal City Hotel, 2799 Jefferson Davis Hwy., Arlington, Va.

— **9:30 a.m.** The International Trade Commission holds a [meeting](#) to consider Inv. No. 731-TA-747, Fresh Tomatoes from Mexico. Pro Trade's Doug Palmer has more on the case [here](#).

— **10 a.m.** The House Agriculture subcommittee on farm commodities and risk management holds a [hearing](#) to review the state of the farm economy. 1300 Longworth House Office Building.

— **4:30 p.m.** The Brookings Institution holds a [discussion](#) assessing China's growing role in the world. Falk Auditorium, 1775 Massachusetts Ave. NW.

Send any calendar items to agcalendar@politico.com.

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From: [Thompson, Helena](#)
To: [Sclopis, Itzel - ERS](#)
Subject: FW: USDA Economists Seek to Unionize Amid Relocation Effort
Date: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 7:01:24 AM

From: Cheeks, Sheila
Sent: Tuesday, February 5, 2019 6:56 AM
To: Robinson, Alan <Alan.Robinson@ARS.USDA.GOV>; Thompson, Helena <Helena.Thompson@ARS.USDA.GOV>; Troutman, Tracey - ARS <Tracey.Troutman@ARS.USDA.GOV>
Subject: USDA Economists Seek to Unionize Amid Relocation Effort



USDA Economists Seek to Unionize Amid Relocation Effort

By Erich Wagner

February 4, 2019

Later this year, employees at the Agriculture Department's Economic Research Service will vote on whether to join the nation's largest federal employee union, in an effort to protect themselves as the department considers whether to [relocate the agency](#) outside of the Washington, D.C., region.

Peter Winch, special assistant to the American Federation of Government Employees' District 14 national vice president, told *Government Executive* that he filed paperwork with the Federal Labor Relations Authority last week to move forward with a union election at the research service, which USDA leadership plans to move and realign under the department's Office of the Chief Economist.

"[The FLRA] was closed during the shutdown, but I had collected the showing of interest right around the new year," Winch said. "There was a strong showing of interest, and we want to represent all of the employees no matter where they end up located, and potentially stop them from being shipped out to some other location."

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Winch said that although it is not necessarily predictive of the results of a union election, which he expects to happen by June, more than half of the proposed

bargaining unit signed onto the petition seeking union representation.

One Economic Research Service employee, who asked to remain anonymous citing potential retaliation, said they hope that with a union's backing, they can shed light on the department's process to relocate the agency.

"This whole relocation and realignment under the Office of the Chief Economist took us by surprise, and that was last August, and since then there's been no engagement with staff," the employee told *Government Executive*. "There's been no interest in finding out how this would affect our work, or what it would do to the stats we create on a weekly or monthly basis . . . Unionization helps in the sense that it requires the administration to talk to the employees or anything along those lines."

The employee noted that although the Agriculture Department claims it has done a cost-benefit analysis that supports the relocation plan, officials have refused to divulge that study. Another employee of the agency said that they suspect the plan is part of an effort to politicize what has been until now an unbiased research organization, something the first employee described as an "existential threat."

"One thing that's really important about our agency is that we're one of the 13 principal statistical agencies, and so our mission is to provide the public with objective data, analysis and objective policy-relevant research," the employee said. "I think that the decision to relocate us outside the region is just one example of the many ways there can be threats to our ability to further our mission . . .

Administrations don't always necessarily like the work that we do or agree with results of the work that we do, and that's happened with every administration. So this unionization effort is another way to protect us as individuals and as a whole from retaliation for the important work that we do to provide information to the public."

Although the plan to relocate the agency outside of D.C. and reorganize it under the Office of the Chief Economist is not yet final, and has at times faced push back from Congress, it is already having an effect on morale and employee retention.

"There is a lot of human capital talent kept in the agency because of our ability to be nonpolitical, to just do our research and whatever the results show is what we end up publishing . . . that's what drives people to do the research," a third employee said.

"To put it into a political office, and to downplay the institutional costs of losing such human capital speaks to a lack of understanding [of what we do]. I would say that maybe half to two thirds of our most talented younger researchers are actively

looking [for other jobs], and we've already lost a lot of good people.”

Correction: The story has been updated to reflect that the Economic Research Service would be realigned under the Office of the Chief Economist, not the Office of the Chief Scientist.

From: [Stull, Josh - NIFA](#)
To: [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#); [Maguire, Kelly B. - ERS](#)
Subject: FW: Van Hollen blocks USDA chief scientist nominee
Date: Friday, May 24, 2019 11:31:55 AM

FYI:

From: POLITICO Pro Agriculture Whiteboard <politicoemail@politicopro.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 23, 2019 3:24 PM
Subject: Van Hollen blocks USDA chief scientist nominee

By Liz Crampton

05/23/2019 03:22 PM EDT

(b) (4)

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From: [Pompelli, Greg - ERS](#)
To: (b) (6)
Subject: Fwd: Special EBB - Congressional hearing scheduled for March 27 on the ERS and NIFA relocation - LINK for Live-stream included
Date: Wednesday, March 27, 2019 8:19:03 AM

(b) (6)

Here's the note with the link to live stream, which is a YouTube link.

(b) (6) Greg

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From: EBB EBB

Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2019 8:36:41 PM

To: OA; ISD; RRED; FED; MTED

Subject: Special EBB - Congressional hearing scheduled for March 27 on the ERS and NIFA relocation - LINK for Live-stream included

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for attending the all hands meeting held last week to present and discuss the "Middle List" with USDA Leadership and Ernst and Young. I appreciate your continued participation in these conversations. In support of our ongoing commitment to provide information as it comes available, I am writing to inform you about a Congressional hearing scheduled for March 27 on the ERS and NIFA relocation. Information on the hearing, including the panel members and how to access the live stream can be found below or at this [link](#). A recording of the hearing will be available after on the website for the Committee.

Thank you for continued commitment to ERS and the work that we do,
 -Chris

USDA's Proposed Relocation of the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Date:
 Wednesday, March 27, 2019 - 11:00am

Location:

2358-A Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515
USDA's Proposed Relocation of the Economic Research Service and the
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Subcommittees:

- [Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies \(116th Congress\)](#)

Live-stream can be found here: <https://youtu.be/mkKH7XiAmwE>

Witnesses

Kristi J. Boswell
Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture, USDA

Gale A. Buchanan Ph.D.

John E. Lee, Jr. Ph.D.

Katherine Smith Evans Ph.D.

Catherine E. Woteki Ph.D.

([Chris Hartley](#))

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From: [Cheeks, Sheila](#)
To: [Sclopis, Itzel - ERS](#)
Subject: RE: Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move
Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 3:49:09 PM

(b) (6)

Sheila

From: Sclopis, Itzel - ERS
Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 3:48 PM
To: Cheeks, Sheila <Sheila.Cheeks@ARS.USDA.GOV>
Cc: Thompson, Helena <Helena.Thompson@ARS.USDA.GOV>
Subject: RE: Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

 Itzel del C. Sclopis
 Director
 Administrative and Financial Service
 Economic Research Service
 U.S. Department of Agriculture
 355 E Street, S.W. Room 6-184
 Washington, DC 20024
 Email: isclopis@ers.usda.gov
 Voice: 202-694-5616
 Fax: 202-645-5472

From: Cheeks, Sheila
Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 3:45 PM
To: Sclopis, Itzel - ERS <ISCLOPIS@ERS.USDA.GOV>
Cc: Thompson, Helena <Helena.Thompson@ARS.USDA.GOV>
Subject: RE: Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move

(b) (6) (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

Sheila

From: Sclopis, Itzel - ERS

Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 3:44 PM

To: Cheeks, Sheila <Sheila.Cheeks@ARS.USDA.GOV>

Subject: RE: Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move

Thanks Sheila for sending this! Yes, we learned yesterday we are moving (my functions were not in the stay list).

There is an All-Hands-Meeting tomorrow led by Joon Park regarding retirement.

Itzel

 Itzel del C. Sclopis
 Director
 Administrative and Financial Service
 Economic Research Service
 U.S. Department of Agriculture
 355 E Street, S.W. Room 6-184
 Washington, DC 20024
 Email: isclopis@ers.usda.gov
 Voice: 202-694-5616
 Fax: 202-645-5472

From: Cheeks, Sheila

Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 3:38 PM

To: Robinson, Alan <Alan.Robinson@ARS.USDA.GOV>; Troutman, Tracey - ARS
 <Tracey.Troutman@ARS.USDA.GOV>; Thompson, Helena <Helena.Thompson@ARS.USDA.GOV>

Subject: Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move

Government Executive

Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move

By Charles S. Clark

2:50 PM ET

Hundreds of employees of two key Agriculture Department research offices on Tuesday learned that they're on the list to be transferred outside of Washington as part of Secretary Sonny Perdue's [disputed plan](#) to move operations closer to farm industry stakeholders.

At the Economic Research Service a list was circulated showing the job titles and descriptions (but not the names) of 76 positions that will remain in the national capital region, leaving the rest of that office's 350 employees to assume their job will

move to the still-unspecified new location.

The “stay/go” list, obtained by *Government Executive*, was supplemented during a staff meeting with names, according to a source who spoke on condition of anonymity. This employee called the steps—for which there is still no timetable-- “a disaster” that will “split up operational groups that work together. It will engender departures,” the employee added, noting that supervisors are being separated from their underlings.

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Asked for comment, a department spokeswoman confirmed the meetings and said similar steps were taken at the 350-employee National Institute of Food and Agriculture. “As part of our vision to make USDA the most efficient, most effective and most customer-focused department in the federal government, USDA recently shared information with NIFA and ERS employees describing the proposed functionality of each agency which has been determined to remain within the National Capital Region versus the functionality that will be re-located,” the statement said. “Currently, USDA’s highest priority regarding the relocation is communicating with our employees. As there is additional information to share with the public, USDA remains committed to doing so.”

The location of the new sites is being determined by a bidding process in which some 136 localities, nonprofits and companies are participating.

Perdue’s plan, however, has drawn fierce opposition from academics and many in Congress, and his authority to continue pursuing the plan is in question. In late January, a week after President Trump signed an omnibus spending bill that ended the 35-day partial government shutdown, agricultural appropriators in the House and Senate released [“explanatory statements”](#) to earlier committee reports expressing concerns about “unknown costs” of the moves, which it called “premature” pending a cost-benefit analysis.

“In submitting the fiscal year 2020 budget justification, the department is directed to include all cost estimates for the proposed move of the two agencies, as well as a detailed analysis of any research benefits of their relocation,” the Senate statement read. “There is an expectation that this process will be followed in the future for any other potential proposed agency relocations by the department.”

In addition, the statements assert that, “The bill supports an indefinite delay in the proposed transfer of ERS to the Office of the Chief Economist. At this time, the bill finds it appropriate for ERS to remain under the Research, Education and Economics mission area.”

In February, a group of Democrats led by Rep. Chellie Pingree, D-Maine, re-introduced earlier legislation ([H.R. 1221](#)) that would block the moves.

The explanatory statements and the bill were cheered by the American Statistical Association, which since last August has been mobilizing researchers to oppose the moves, which they see as arbitrary and a hindrance to professional operations centered in Washington that will cause an exodus of experienced employees.

Association Executive Director Ron Wasserstein said in a statement to *Government Executive*, “This latest action reinforces the need for Congress to prevent this counterproductive upheaval of the USDA research arm. USDA promised to take seriously signals from Congress and the input from stakeholders but has not done so. This is unfortunately no surprise, since USDA did not consult Congress or their partners and experts in the agricultural and food research community in making these plans last summer.”

The department spokesman did not address the questions surrounding the intent of Congress in delaying the moves.

From: [Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
To: [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#); [Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
Subject: RE: Congressional letters on ERS/NIFA
Date: Thursday, May 23, 2019 9:29:18 AM

10-4 will do this and cc all including OCE and NIFA

From: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS
Sent: Thursday, May 23, 2019 9:26 AM
To: Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC <kailee.tkacz@usda.gov>; Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC <Courtney.Knupp@usda.gov>
Subject: RE: Congressional letters on ERS/NIFA

Kailee and Courtney,

Thanks for jumping on the phone this morning and glad we arrived at a quick consensus on the process.

Here is the summary:

1. Kailee to email OES asking to re-direct the two letters that came in last week to REE/Courtney and to send all letters related to ERS/NIFA relocation in the future to Courtney.
2. Courtney will run point from REE and work with Michele Esch and Chris Hartley on drafting initial responses.
3. Draft responses then shared with Scott Angle and Ephraim Leibtag for agency review.
4. Mission area draft then shared with Kailee/Dep Sec's Office, OGC, and OBPA (b) (5), (??).
5. Final letter to OSEC for review and clearance.

(There may be times when Don Bice will also have to review/provide input, which I guess (b)(5) DPP (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative .)

Thanks!

Ephraim

From: Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC
Sent: Thursday, May 23, 2019 9:10 AM
To: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ephraim.leibtag@usda.gov>; Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC <Courtney.Knupp@usda.gov>
Subject: RE: Congressional letters on ERS/NIFA

(b) (6)

From: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS
Sent: Thursday, May 23, 2019 8:59 AM
To: Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC <Courtney.Knupp@usda.gov>; Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC <kailee.tkacz@usda.gov>
Subject: RE: Congressional letters on ERS/NIFA

I'll call you and connect the 3 of us.

What number is best for me to call you?

Ephraim

From: Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC

Sent: Thursday, May 23, 2019 8:59 AM

To: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ephraim.leibtag@usda.gov>; Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC <kailee.tkacz@usda.gov>

Subject: Congressional letters on ERS/NIFA

Do we have a call in number for this? (b) (6).

Congressional letters on ERS/NIFA

When: from May 23, 2019 at 8:00 AM to May 23, 2019 at 8:20 AM

Where: by phone

Invitees: Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC, Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS, Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC

From: [Esch, Michele - ARS](#)
To: [Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC](#); [Hutchins, Scott - OSEC, Washington, DC](#); [Angle, Scott - NIFA](#); [Variyam, Jay - ERS](#); [Hartley, Chris - ERS](#); [Bice, Don - OSEC, Washington, DC](#); [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#); [Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC](#); [Park, Joon](#); [Boswell, Kristi - OSEC, Washington, DC](#); [Boswell, Kristi J. EOP/WHO](#); [Young, Benjamin - OGC, Washington, DC](#); [Johansson, Robert - OCE](#)
Subject: RE: Cost Analysis Final Draft Discussion
Date: Thursday, May 30, 2019 4:52:46 PM
Attachments: [FOUO USDA Site Visits Summary Overview DRAFT v6.pptx](#)

All,

Attached is the updated brief for our meeting at 5:15.

Thanks,
Michele

Michele Esch

Special Projects Coordinator

Executive Director, NAREEE Advisory Board

U.S. Department of Agriculture

(o) 202.720.8408

(c) (b) (6)

michele.esch@ars.usda.gov

-----Original Appointment-----

From: Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC

Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2019 5:20 PM

To: Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC; Hutchins, Scott - OSEC, Washington, DC; Angle, Scott - NIFA; Variyam, Jay - ERS; Hartley, Chris - ERS; Esch, Michele - ARS; Bice, Don - OSEC, Washington, DC; Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS; Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC; Park, Joon; Boswell, Kristi - OSEC, Washington, DC; Boswell, Kristi J. EOP/WHO; Young, Benjamin - OGC, Washington, DC; Johansson, Robert - OCE; Catherine Von Seggern; Sanat Valecha; Francisco E Rodriguez; (b) (6) @ey.com'; James P Olmstead

Subject: Cost Analysis Final Draft Discussion

When: Thursday, May 30, 2019 5:15 PM-6:00 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada).

Where: (b) (6) or 1-888-844-9904 code (b) (6) #

From: [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#)
To: [Thomas, Nancy - ERS](#)
Subject: Re: ERS Hot Topics
Date: Friday, March 22, 2019 2:04:18 PM

Nancy,

Thanks for following up on this.

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

It was my understanding that (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative
(b)(5) DPP

Thanks,

Ephraim

From: Thomas, Nancy - ERS
Sent: Friday, March 22, 2019 1:03:28 PM
To: Hoffman, Eric - OBPA, Washington, DC; Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS
Cc: York, Kent - OBPA, Washington, DC; Rhone, Alana Y - ERS
Subject: RE: ERS Hot Topics

I have a couple comments:

For the first question, (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

For the second question, (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

Thanks.

Nancy

Nancy A. Thomas, CGFM
Agency Budget Officer
Office of the Administrator
Economic Research Service
355 E Street SW, Room 5-254
Washington, DC 20024-3231
Phone: (202) 694-5008
E-mail: NThomas@ers.usda.gov
Cell phone: (b) (6)

From: Hoffman, Eric - OBPA, Washington, DC

Sent: Friday, March 22, 2019 9:09 AM

To: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ELEIBTAG@ers.usda.gov>; Thomas, Nancy - ERS <NTHOMAS@ers.usda.gov>

Cc: York, Kent - OBPA, Washington, DC <kent.york@obpa.usda.gov>; Rhone, Alana Y - ERS <ALANA.Y.RHONE@ERS.USDA.GOV>

Subject: ERS Hot Topics

Good morning Ephraim and Nancy,

(b) (5), DPP

Below is a draft response I edited based on the ERS 2020 ex-notes. (b) (5), DPP

Can you please take a look at the below and let me know by 3pm today if you have any edits? I also sent the relocation response to NIFA for their review and will share any edits they may have.

Thanks!

Eric

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

- (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

- (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

- (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

- (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

Eric Hoffman

Program Analyst

Office of Budget and Program Analysis
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office: 202.720.1270
Mobile: (b) (6)

From: [Ver Ploeg, Shelly - ERS](#)
To: [Hartley, Chris - ERS](#); [Esch, Michele - ARS](#)
Cc: [Prager, Daniel - ERS](#); [Astill, Gregory - ERS](#); [Ferguson, Cathi - ERS](#); [Bersani, Peter - ERS](#); [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#)
Subject: RE: ERS relocation process and our team's input
Date: Wednesday, January 30, 2019 4:28:25 PM

Thanks Chris.

From: Hartley, Chris - ERS
Sent: Wednesday, January 30, 2019 4:28 PM
To: Ver Ploeg, Shelly - ERS <SVERPLOEG@ers.usda.gov>; Esch, Michele - ARS <Michele.Esch@ARS.USDA.GOV>
Cc: Prager, Daniel - ERS <DANIEL.PRAGER@ers.usda.gov>; Astill, Gregory - ERS <GREGORY.ASTILL@ERS.USDA.GOV>; Ferguson, Cathi - ERS <FERGUSON@ers.usda.gov>; Bersani, Peter - ERS <PBERSANI@ers.usda.gov>; Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ELEIBTAG@ers.usda.gov>
Subject: RE: ERS relocation process and our team's input

Shelly- Thank you for articulating the concerns of the Committee. I will raise them at our Leadership team meeting tomorrow.

-Chris

From: Ver Ploeg, Shelly - ERS
Sent: Wednesday, January 30, 2019 4:19 PM
To: Esch, Michele - ARS <Michele.Esch@ARS.USDA.GOV>; Hartley, Chris - ERS <CHARTLEY@ERS.USDA.GOV>
Cc: Prager, Daniel - ERS <DANIEL.PRAGER@ers.usda.gov>; Astill, Gregory - ERS <GREGORY.ASTILL@ERS.USDA.GOV>; Ferguson, Cathi - ERS <FERGUSON@ers.usda.gov>; Bersani, Peter - ERS <PBERSANI@ers.usda.gov>
Subject: ERS relocation process and our team's input

Hi Michele,

We greatly appreciate the efforts that you and Chris have put towards meeting with the ERS Relocation Committee and advocating on the behalf of ERS employees. It is our understanding that the ERS relocation is only one of the agency priorities that you are managing. And we imagine that your work has been severely complicated by the government shutdown. As we've talked as a committee this week, we feel that (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative.

At this point, (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative. We understand that (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative.

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

Furthermore, (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

ERS staff have asked us whether (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

. At this point, (b)(5) DPP

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

We take seriously our responsibility to act on behalf of ERS staff interests. We look forward to continued—and hopefully improved—communication, including the scheduled meeting next Thursday (2/7) morning. We understand that you are very busy, but if it is possible to schedule a brief phone call this Friday, we would appreciate it.

Thank you,
The ERS Relocation Committee

Shelly Ver Ploeg
Chief, Food Assistance Branch
Economic Research Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
355 E Street, SW 5-232
Washington, DC 20024-3221

Phone: (202) 694-5372
Cell Phone: (b) (6)
sverploeg@ers.usda.gov

From: [Maguire, Steven](#)
To: ["Maguire, Kelly B. - ERS"](#)
Subject: RE: ERS/NIFA Location Update
Date: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 9:50:22 AM

(b) (6)

From: Maguire, Kelly B. - ERS <KELLY.B.MAGUIRE@ERS.USDA.GOV>
Sent: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 9:47 AM
To: Maguire, Steven <SMAGUIRE@crs.loc.gov>
Subject: FW: ERS/NIFA Location Update

(b) (6)

Kelly Maguire, Ph.D.

Chief, Conservation and Environment Branch
 Resource and Rural Economics Division
 USDA's Economic Research Service
 202.694.5448 | kelly.b.maguire@ers.usda.gov

From: Censky, Stephen - OSEC, Washington, DC
Sent: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 9:36 AM
To: Everyone - NIFA Everyone Distribution List <everyone@nifa.usda.gov>; ERS Employees <ersemployees@ers.usda.gov>
Subject: ERS/NIFA Location Update

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to provide a brief update regarding our announcement to relocate most of the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture outside the National Capital Region.

The recent lapse in government funding affected us all, including our relocation consultant, Ernst & Young. During the Government shutdown, Ernst and Young's activities were not considered "excepted" activities, therefore no work was conducted during the government shutdown. We have since quickly gotten back to the work at hand and are making progress. In the past few weeks, we have consulted with Ernst & Young, Mission and Agency Leadership and Departmental Administration and have determined that our August 2019 relocation goal likely cannot be fully met. Therefore, we are exploring a range of options to ensure maximum mission function. We will provide a clearer timeline as soon as we can. In the meantime, we continue to press forward, and we look forward to continued engagement with employees.

Additionally, as I am sure many of you are aware, Congress included report language to accompany the recent funding bill asking the Department to include in its FY2020 budget submission cost

estimates and analysis of benefits regarding the relocation of both agencies. Additionally, report language expressed support for delaying the realignment of ERS under OCE until further information and justification is presented. While report language is not statutory language and is non-binding, we take the language seriously. We will be providing the requested additional information and justification to Congress in the weeks ahead.

If you have any questions, please contact your Agency leadership or send an email to ersnifa@usda.gov.

Thanks and best regards,
Steve

Stephen L. Censky
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office 202-720-6052

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From: [Shabazz, Alia - ERS](#)
To: [Wilson, Beattrra - FS](#)
Subject: RE: ERS/NIFA Location Update
Date: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 10:14:35 AM

(b) (6) Employees here have filed a petition with the American Federation of Government Employees union. I just saw the notice posted in one of the kitchenettes.

Alia M. Shabazz, MA
 Training and Career Development Officer
 USDA/ERS/OA, Room 6-188
 202-694-5111
ashabazz@ers.usda.gov

“Service, in short, is not what you do, but who you are.” Betsy Sanders

From: Wilson, Beattrra - FS
Sent: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 10:09 AM
To: Shabazz, Alia - ERS <ASHABAZZ@ERS.USDA.GOV>
Subject: Re: ERS/NIFA Location Update

(b) (6)

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From: Shabazz, Alia - ERS
Sent: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 9:49:04 AM
Subject: FW: ERS/NIFA Location Update

(b) (6)

Alia M. Shabazz, MA
 Training and Career Development Officer
 USDA/ERS/OA, Room 6-188
 202-694-5111
ashabazz@ers.usda.gov

“Service, in short, is not what you do, but who you are.” Betsy Sanders

From: Censky, Stephen - OSEC, Washington, DC
Sent: Tuesday, February 26, 2019 9:36 AM
To: Everyone - NIFA Everyone Distribution List <everyone@nifa.usda.gov>; ERS Employees <ersemployees@ers.usda.gov>
Subject: ERS/NIFA Location Update

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to provide a brief update regarding our announcement to relocate most of the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture outside the National Capital Region.

The recent lapse in government funding affected us all, including our relocation consultant, Ernst & Young. During the Government shutdown, Ernst and Young's activities were not considered "excepted" activities, therefore no work was conducted during the government shutdown. We have since quickly gotten back to the work at hand and are making progress. In the past few weeks, we have consulted with Ernst & Young, Mission and Agency Leadership and Departmental Administration and have determined that our August 2019 relocation goal likely cannot be fully met. Therefore, we are exploring a range of options to ensure maximum mission function. We will provide a clearer timeline as soon as we can. In the meantime, we continue to press forward, and we look forward to continued engagement with employees.

Additionally, as I am sure many of you are aware, Congress included report language to accompany the recent funding bill asking the Department to include in its FY2020 budget submission cost estimates and analysis of benefits regarding the relocation of both agencies. Additionally, report language expressed support for delaying the realignment of ERS under OCE until further information and justification is presented. While report language is not statutory language and is non-binding, we take the language seriously. We will be providing the requested additional information and justification to Congress in the weeks ahead.

If you have any questions, please contact your Agency leadership or send an email to ersnifa@usda.gov.

Thanks and best regards,
Steve

Stephen L. Censky
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office 202-720-6052

From: [Sclopis, Itzel - ERS](#)
To: [Leslie Hunter](#)
Subject: RE: FW: Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move
Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 4:10:28 PM

(b) (6)

 Itzel del C. Sclopis
 Director
 Administrative and Financial Service
 Economic Research Service
 U.S. Department of Agriculture
 355 E Street, S.W. Room 6-184
 Washington, DC 20024
 Email: isclopis@ers.usda.gov
 Voice: 202-694-5616
 Fax: 202-645-5472

From: Leslie Hunter [mailto:(b) (6)]
Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 4:07 PM
To: Sclopis, Itzel - ERS <ISCLOPIS@ERS.USDA.GOV>
Cc: BiAnca Feierstein ((b) (6)) <(b) (6)>
Subject: Re: FW: Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move

(b) (6)

(b) (6)

L

On Wed, Mar 6, 2019 at 3:45 PM Sclopis, Itzel - ERS <ISCLOPIS@ers.usda.gov> wrote:

FYI.

 Itzel del C. Sclopis
 Director
 Administrative and Financial Service
 Economic Research Service
 U.S. Department of Agriculture
 355 E Street, S.W. Room 6-184
 Washington, DC 20024
 Email: isclopis@ers.usda.gov
 Voice: 202-694-5616
 Fax: 202-645-5472

From: Cheeks, Sheila
Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2019 3:38 PM
To: Robinson, Alan <Alan.Robinson@ARS.USDA.GOV>; Troutman, Tracey - ARS <Tracey.Troutman@ARS.USDA.GOV>; Thompson, Helena <Helena.Thompson@ARS.USDA.GOV>
Subject: Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move



Agriculture Department Staff Given Marching Orders for Controversial Move

By Charles S. Clark

2:50 PM ET

Hundreds of employees of two key Agriculture Department research offices on Tuesday learned that they're on the list to be transferred outside of Washington as part of Secretary Sonny Perdue's [disputed plan](#) to move operations closer to farm industry stakeholders.

At the Economic Research Service a list was circulated showing the job titles and descriptions (but not the names) of 76 positions that will remain in the national capital region, leaving the rest of that office's 350 employees to assume their job will move to the still-unspecified new location.

The "stay/go" list, obtained by *Government Executive*, was supplemented during a staff meeting with names, according to a source who spoke on condition of anonymity. This employee called the steps—for which there is still no timetable—"a disaster" that will "split up operational groups that work together. It will engender departures," the employee added, noting that supervisors are being separated from their underlings.

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Asked for comment, a department spokeswoman confirmed the meetings and said similar steps were taken at the 350-employee National Institute of Food and Agriculture. "As part of our vision to make USDA the most efficient, most effective and most customer-focused department in the federal government, USDA recently shared information with NIFA and ERS employees describing the proposed functionality of each agency which has been determined to remain within the National Capital Region versus the functionality that will be re-located," the

statement said. “Currently, USDA’s highest priority regarding the relocation is communicating with our employees. As there is additional information to share with the public, USDA remains committed to doing so.”

The location of the new sites is being determined by a bidding process in which some 136 localities, nonprofits and companies are participating.

Perdue’s plan, however, has drawn fierce opposition from academics and many in Congress, and his authority to continue pursuing the plan is in question. In late January, a week after President Trump signed an omnibus spending bill that ended the 35-day partial government shutdown, agricultural appropriators in the House and Senate released [“explanatory statements”](#) to earlier committee reports expressing concerns about “unknown costs” of the moves, which it called “premature” pending a cost-benefit analysis.

“In submitting the fiscal year 2020 budget justification, the department is directed to include all cost estimates for the proposed move of the two agencies, as well as a detailed analysis of any research benefits of their relocation,” the Senate statement read. “There is an expectation that this process will be followed in the future for any other potential proposed agency relocations by the department.”

In addition, the statements assert that, “The bill supports an indefinite delay in the proposed transfer of ERS to the Office of the Chief Economist. At this time, the bill finds it appropriate for ERS to remain under the Research, Education and Economics mission area.”

In February, a group of Democrats led by Rep. Chellie Pingree, D-Maine, re-introduced earlier legislation ([H.R. 1221](#)) that would block the moves.

The explanatory statements and the bill were cheered by the American Statistical Association, which since last August has been mobilizing researchers to oppose the moves, which they see as arbitrary and a hindrance to professional operations centered in Washington that will cause an exodus of experienced employees.

Association Executive Director Ron Wasserstein said in a statement to *Government Executive*, “This latest action reinforces the need for Congress to prevent this counterproductive upheaval of the USDA research arm. USDA promised to take seriously signals from Congress and the input from stakeholders but has not done so. This is unfortunately no surprise, since USDA did not consult Congress or their partners and experts in the agricultural and food research

community in making these plans last summer.”

The department spokesman did not address the questions surrounding the intent of Congress in delaying the moves.

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From: [Talero, Andres - OES, Washington, DC](#)
To: [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#); [Jones, Tiffany K - OSEC](#)
Cc: [Proctor, Stephanie E - OES, Washington, DC](#); [Lindsey, Adrian - OES, Washington, DC](#); [Turner, Jimmie - OES, Washington, DC](#); [Daniel, Jean - OES, Washington, DC](#); [Holmes, Annette - OCE](#); [Johansson, Robert - OCE](#); [Preston, Warren - OCE](#)
Subject: RE: Question about ECM # 8505940 (ERS/NIFA Relocation)
Date: Wednesday, April 17, 2019 3:04:16 PM
Attachments: [8505940 ERS Draft.docx](#)
[8511647 \(Signed ERS Relocation Language\).pdf](#)

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

Andres

From: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2019 3:02 PM
To: Talero, Andres - OES, Washington, DC <andres.talero@usda.gov>; Jones, Tiffany K - OSEC <Tiffany.K.Jones@osec.usda.gov>
Cc: Proctor, Stephanie E - OES, Washington, DC <stephanie.e.proctor@usda.gov>; Lindsey, Adrian - OES, Washington, DC <adrian.lindsey@usda.gov>; Turner, Jimmie - OES, Washington, DC <jimmie.turner@usda.gov>; Daniel, Jean - OES, Washington, DC <jean.daniel@usda.gov>; Holmes, Annette - OCE <annette.holmes2@usda.gov>; Johansson, Robert - OCE <robert.johansson@usda.gov>; Preston, Warren - OCE <warren.preston@usda.gov>
Subject: RE: Question about ECM # 8505940 (ERS/NIFA Relocation)

Andres,

I spoke to Stephanie and she had talked to Tiffany. My understanding (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative
 (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative.

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

Thanks,

Ephraim

From: Talero, Andres - OES, Washington, DC
Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2019 2:56 PM
To: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ELEIBTAG@ers.usda.gov>; Jones, Tiffany K - OSEC <Tiffany.K.Jones@osec.usda.gov>
Cc: Proctor, Stephanie E - OES, Washington, DC <stephanie.e.proctor@usda.gov>; Lindsey, Adrian - OES, Washington, DC <adrian.lindsey@usda.gov>; Turner, Jimmie - OES, Washington, DC <jimmie.turner@usda.gov>; Daniel, Jean - OES, Washington, DC <jean.daniel@usda.gov>; Holmes, Annette - OCE <annette.holmes2@usda.gov>; Johansson, Robert - OCE <robert.johansson@usda.gov>; Preston, Warren - OCE <warren.preston@usda.gov>

Subject: RE: Question about ECM # 8505940 (ERS/NIFA Relocation)

Good afternoon, Ephraim:

We have been using the attached signed language for a couple of months now for all letters regarding NIFA/ERS relocation. (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

We just wanted to (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

I have included OCE, so they are aware of new language being used by ERS. OCE, attached is the word file and incoming response to a NIFA/ERS relocation response.

Andrés C. Talero

(202) 720-9302

Mobile (b) (6)

Office Hours: (b) (6)

Telework: (b) (6)

OES Connect Correspondence Resource: [HERE](#)

PLEASE RATE MY CUSTOMER SERVICE: [HERE](#)

From: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS

Sent: Wednesday, April 17, 2019 11:48 AM

To: Talero, Andres - OES, Washington, DC <andres.talero@usda.gov>; Proctor, Stephanie E - OES, Washington, DC <stephanie.e.proctor@usda.gov>

Subject: Question about ECM # 8505940

Importance: High

Stephanie and Andres,

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) DPP

Please advise.

Thanks,

Ephraim

Ephraim Leibtag, PhD
Assistant Administrator
ERS-USDA

355 E Street, SW

Washington, DC 20024-3221

Office: 202-694-5349

eleibtag@ers.usda.gov

Mobile: (b) (6)

Fax: 202-245-4779

From: [Angle, Scott - NIFA](#)
To: [Esch, Michele - ARS](#); [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#)
Cc: [Whittet, Kimberly M. - NIFA](#); [Hartley, Chris - ERS](#); [Whittet, Kimberly M. - NIFA](#)
Subject: RE: Relocation - Employee Info
Date: Thursday, May 30, 2019 11:00:34 AM

We will get it to you. (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative
 (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative. We are starting the process now but won't know who they are for several weeks. So for now, (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative
 (b)(5) DPP

Scott

From: Esch, Michele - ARS <Michele.Esch@ARS.USDA.GOV>
Sent: Thursday, May 30, 2019 10:01 AM
To: Angle, Scott - NIFA <scott.angle@usda.gov>; Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ephraim.leibtag@usda.gov>
Cc: Whittet, Kimberly M. - NIFA <kimberly.whittet@usda.gov>; Hartley, Chris - ERS <chris.hartley@usda.gov>
Subject: Relocation - Employee Info

Scott and Ephraim,

(b) (5), DPP
 [Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

(b) (5), DPP
 [Redacted]

Let me know if you have any concerns.

Thanks,
 Michele

Michele Esch
Special Projects Coordinator
Executive Director, NAREEE Advisory Board
 U.S. Department of Agriculture

(o) 202.720.8408

(c) (b) (6)

michele.esch@ars.usda.gov

From: [Hartley, Chris - ERS](#)
To: [Esch, Michele - ARS](#); [Angle, Scott - NIFA](#); [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#)
Cc: [Whittet, Kimberly M. - NIFA](#)
Subject: RE: Relocation - Employee Info
Date: Thursday, May 30, 2019 10:28:04 AM

How should (b) (5), DPP [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ?

-Chris

From: Esch, Michele - ARS
Sent: Thursday, May 30, 2019 10:01 AM
To: Angle, Scott - NIFA <scott.angle@usda.gov>; Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ephraim.leibtag@usda.gov>
Cc: Whittet, Kimberly M. - NIFA <kimberly.whittet@usda.gov>; Hartley, Chris - ERS <chris.hartley@usda.gov>
Subject: Relocation - Employee Info

Scott and Ephraim,

(b) (5), DPP [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

(b) (5), DPP [REDACTED]

Let me know if you have any concerns.

Thanks,
Michele

Michele Esch
Special Projects Coordinator
Executive Director, NAREEE Advisory Board
U.S. Department of Agriculture
(o) 202.720.8408
(c) (b) (6) [REDACTED]
michele.esch@ars.usda.gov

From: [Esch, Michele - ARS](#)
To: [Hartley, Chris - ERS](#)
Cc: [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#)
Subject: RE: Relocation - Employee Info
Date: Friday, May 31, 2019 3:34:40 PM

Thank you, Chris.

This list is anyone who should receive a letter. If that is correct then (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative I suggest (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative (b)(5) DPP. Please confirm.

Michele

Michele Esch
Special Projects Coordinator
Executive Director, NAREEE Advisory Board
 U.S. Department of Agriculture
 (o) 202.720.8408
 (c) (b) (6)
michele.esch@ars.usda.gov

From: Hartley, Chris - ERS
Sent: Friday, May 31, 2019 3:15 PM
To: Esch, Michele - ARS <Michele.Esch@ARS.USDA.GOV>
Cc: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ephraim.leibtag@usda.gov>
Subject: RE: Relocation - Employee Info

Michele- (b) (5), DPP

1. (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative
2. [REDACTED]
3. [REDACTED]
4. [REDACTED]

Please let me know if you need additional information.

-Chris

From: Esch, Michele - ARS <Michele.Esch@ARS.USDA.GOV>
Sent: Thursday, May 30, 2019 10:01 AM

To: Angle, Scott - NIFA <scott.angle@usda.gov>; Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS
<ephraim.leibtag@usda.gov>

Cc: Whittet, Kimberly M. - NIFA <kimberly.whittet@usda.gov>; Hartley, Chris - ERS
<chris.hartley@usda.gov>

Subject: Relocation - Employee Info

Scott and Ephraim,

(b) (5), DPP
[Redacted]

- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]
- [Redacted]

[Redacted]

(b) (5), DPP
[Redacted]

Let me know if you have any concerns.

Thanks,
Michele

Michele Esch
Special Projects Coordinator
Executive Director, NAREEE Advisory Board
U.S. Department of Agriculture
(o) 202.720.8408
(c) (b) (6)
michele.esch@ars.usda.gov

From: [Ferguson, Cathi - ERS](#)
To: [Hartley, Chris - ERS](#); [Astill, Gregory - ERS](#)
Cc: [Prager, Daniel - ERS](#); [Bersani, Peter - ERS](#); [Ver Ploeg, Shelly - ERS](#); [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#)
Subject: RE: Relocation site visit team needs
Date: Friday, March 29, 2019 3:31:58 PM

Please include a call in number.

Thank you!

Cathi T. Ferguson

202-694-5405 work

1-544-514-3283 Fax2Mail

(b) (6) cell

Cathi.Ferguson@usda.gov

NEW!! GSA Scheduling Tool Links

• **For Scheduling an appointment –** <https://app3.timetrade.com/tc/login.do?url=usaccess>

• **For Modifying/Cancelling –**

<https://timetrade.com/app/usaccess/workflows/usaccess001/find>

USDA Utility Map - <https://hspd12.usda.gov/protected/slu/allStations.aspx>

From: Hartley, Chris - ERS

Sent: Friday, March 29, 2019 3:29 PM

To: Astill, Gregory - ERS <GREGORY.ASTILL@ERS.USDA.GOV>

Cc: Ferguson, Cathi - ERS <FERGUSON@ers.usda.gov>; Prager, Daniel - ERS

<DANIEL.PRAGER@ers.usda.gov>; Bersani, Peter - ERS <PBERSANI@ers.usda.gov>; Ver Ploeg, Shelly - ERS <SVERPLOEG@ers.usda.gov>; Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ELEIBTAG@ers.usda.gov>

Subject: Re: Relocation site visit team needs

Greg- Thank you. We need to discuss the request, expectations for the visit, and ERS/NiIFA roles.

Can you coordinate a meeting for Monday?

-Chris

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Astill, Gregory - ERS

Sent: Friday, March 29, 2019 3:21:25 PM

To: Hartley, Chris - ERS

Cc: Ferguson, Cathi - ERS; Prager, Daniel - ERS; Bersani, Peter - ERS; Ver Ploeg, Shelly - ERS; Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS

Subject: Relocation site visit team needs

Hi Chris,

We had a very productive conversation with the NIFA relocation committee yesterday. We discussed

(b) (5), DPP

(b) (5), DPP

One idea (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

. If you have any questions or concerns we'd be happy to sit down and discuss early next week. Thank you for your continued support.

Gregory Astill
(202) 694-5583
Economic Research Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
335 E St. SW
Washington, DC 20024

From: [Kevin Hunt](#)
To: [Grondalski, Chris - ARS](#)
Cc: [Dave; Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS; Peter Winch](#)
Subject: Re: Union Notification- Relocation Committee Site Visit Recap on June 6
Date: Wednesday, June 5, 2019 9:53:11 PM

Good evening, Chris:

I received your invitation. I will plan to be there.

I would like to invite Local 3403 President Verardo and Special Assistant Winch.

Thank you,

On Wed, Jun 5, 2019 at 9:30 PM Grondalski, Chris - ARS <Chris.Grondalski@ars.usda.gov> wrote:

Good evening, Kevin:

The Department is holding a recap meeting tomorrow morning for the core group of employees (which includes ERS bargaining unit employees) who advised the site visit team prior to the Agency conducting site visits. The meeting will be hosted by Deputy Under Secretary, Scott Hutchins. The recap meeting will be from 9:30-10 a.m. on Thursday, June 6 in the USDA Whitten Building, 221-A. The invitation has been sent to the applicable ERS employees and the Agency is hereby notifying and inviting the Union to attend the meeting.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Thank you!

Chris Grondalski
Labor Relations Officer, REE

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--

Kevin Hunt
Acting Vice President
AFGE Local 3403

Sent from Kevin's iPhone

From: [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#)
To: [Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC](#); [Hutchins, Scott - OSEC, Washington, DC](#); [Hartley, Chris - ERS](#)
Cc: [Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
Subject: Re: visits
Date: Thursday, May 9, 2019 8:00:43 AM
Attachments: [image002.png](#)

Scott and Kailee,

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

Thanks,

Ephraim

From: Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC
Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2019 9:50:26 PM
To: Hutchins, Scott - OSEC, Washington, DC; Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS; Hartley, Chris - ERS
Cc: Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC
Subject: RE: visits

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

From: Hutchins, Scott - OSEC, Washington, DC
Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2019 5:56 PM
To: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ELEIBTAG@ers.usda.gov>; Hartley, Chris - ERS <CHARTLEY@ERS.USDA.GOV>
Cc: Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC <kailee.tkacz@usda.gov>; Knupp, Courtney - OSEC, Washington, DC <Courtney.Knupp@usda.gov>
Subject: RE: visits

(b)(5) DPP ... thank you.

Scott H. Hutchins, Ph.D.

Deputy Under Secretary



Research, Education, and Economics
United States Department of Agriculture
Office: 202.720.1542

From: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS

Sent: Wednesday, May 8,

2019 5:55 PM

To: Hutchins, Scott - OSEC, Washington, DC <Scott.Hutchins@usda.gov>; Hartley, Chris - ERS

<CHARTLEY@ERS.USDA.GOV>

Cc: Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC <kailee.tkacz@usda.gov>; Knupp, Courtney - OSEC,

Washington, DC <Courtney.Knupp@usda.gov>

Subject: RE: visits

Scott,

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

Ephraim

From: Hutchins, Scott - OSEC, Washington, DC

Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2019 5:50 PM

To: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ELEIBTAG@ers.usda.gov>; Hartley, Chris - ERS

<CHARTLEY@ERS.USDA.GOV>

Cc: Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC <kailee.tkacz@usda.gov>; Knupp, Courtney - OSEC,

Washington, DC <Courtney.Knupp@usda.gov>

Subject: RE: visits

Ephraim,

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative



Scott H. Hutchins, Ph.D.

Deputy Under Secretary
Research, Education, and Economics
United States Department of Agriculture
Office: 202.720.1542

From: Hutchins, Scott -
OSEC, Washington, DC

Sent: Wednesday, May 8,

2019 5:39 PM

To: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS <ELEIBTAG@ers.usda.gov>; Hartley, Chris - ERS
<CHARTLEY@ERS.USDA.GOV>

Subject: RE: visits

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) DPP



Scott H. Hutchins, Ph.D.

Deputy Under Secretary
Research, Education, and Economics
United States Department of Agriculture
Office: 202.720.1542

From: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS

Sent: Wednesday, May 8,

2019 5:36 PM

To: Hutchins, Scott - OSEC, Washington, DC <Scott.Hutchins@usda.gov>; Hartley, Chris - ERS
<CHARTLEY@ERS.USDA.GOV>

Subject: Re: visits

Scott,

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

I have two other approaches for consideration:

1. (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

2. (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

Happy to discuss whenever convenient.

Thanks,

Ephraim

(b) (6)

From: Hutchins, Scott - OSEC, Washington, DC <Scott.Hutchins@usda.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, May 8, 2019 5:09 PM

To: Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS; Hartley, Chris - ERS

Subject: FW: visits

I'm OK with this ... but (b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative



Scott H. Hutchins, Ph.D.

Deputy Under Secretary
Research, Education, and Economics
United States Department of Agriculture
Office: 202.720.1542

From: Johansson, Robert -
OCE

Sent: Wednesday, May 8,

2019 4:42 PM

To: Hutchins, Scott - OSEC, Washington, DC <Scott.Hutchins@usda.gov>; Boswell, Kristi - OSEC,
Washington, DC <kristi.boswell@usda.gov>

Subject: visits

Hi Scott and Kristi,

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b) (6)

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) Predecisional/Deliberative

(b)(5) DPP

Rob



Robert Johansson, Chief Economist

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Whitten Building, Room 112-A

Washington, DC 20250-3810

☎ 202-720-4164 & 202-720-5955

🌐 <https://www.usda.gov/OCE/>

From: [Leibtag, Ephraim - ERS](#)
To: [Tkacz, Kailee - OSEC, Washington, DC](#)
Cc: [Jones, Tiffany K - OSEC](#)
Subject: (b) (5), DPP
Date: Thursday, March 14, 2019 4:44:49 PM
Attachments: (b) (5), DPP
Importance: High

Kailee,

(b) (5), DPP

OES just called me and said (b) (5), DPP

Since it refers to both ERS and NIFA, I think (b) (5), DPP

(b) (5), DPP

Let me know what you think.

Thanks,

Ephraim

Ephraim Leibtag, PhD
 Assistant Administrator
 ERS-USDA
 355 E Street, SW
 Washington, DC 20024-3221
 Office: 202-694-5349
eleibtag@ers.usda.gov
 Mobile (b) (6)
 Fax: 202-245-4779

From: [EBB EBB](#)
To: [OA](#); [ISD](#); [RRED](#); [FED](#); [MTED](#)
Subject: Special EBB - Listening Session for ERS/NIFA Site Selection Today
Date: Tuesday, May 14, 2019 7:51:53 AM
Importance: High

Listening Session for ERS/NIFA Site Selection

The ERS Relocation team is providing input to the ERS/NIFA Site Selection Committee before they visit the finalist sites.

We are having another listening session to hear your thoughts on specific characteristics of these specific sites that are important to ERS staff so we can convey them to those who are going to visit the sites.

You are invited to attend a session on [Tuesday, May 14](#) at 1 pm in room **(b) (6)** to share your concerns or questions. ([Shelly Ver Ploeg](#))