

Dear APS members,

As some of you may know, US Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced on August 9th that the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) will be relocated outside of Washington, DC, with the intent to complete the move by the end of 2019 (see press release at:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2018/08/09/usda-realign-ers-chief-economist-relocate-ers-nifa-outside-dc>). As the primary federal agency funding competitive agricultural research, **this relocation is likely to have many significant impacts, both short- and long-term.**

This announcement has caught NIFA, Congress, and the research community by surprise. **The relocation will proceed unless Congress blocks it; thus, we are asking the community to provide feedback to Congress.** The APS Public Policy Board is appealing to all members to be proactive on this issue and contact your congressional representatives to let them know how you feel about it; the easiest way to contact them is to submit comments to their websites:

Senate: https://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

House: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

We have provided a letter below that you are welcome to use, modify, or select from in submitting comments.

If you live in the Washington, DC area or are travelling there in September, we encourage you to visit your congressional representatives and share your thoughts with them; if you would like to have talking points from the APS PPB, we would be happy to provide them.

If you are a resident of any of the 47 states shown at the bottom of this letter, we especially encourage you to provide feedback, as one or more of your congressional representatives are on the Senate-House Farm Bill Conference Committee or an Appropriations Committee and thus are optimally positioned to act on your comments.

The time to make your voice heard is now, even if your request is simply to slow down the process so that a well-planned move can occur. The process of deciding the new location is already underway, and without action, this relocation will proceed.

Thank you for your voice in influencing the future of our nation's agricultural research enterprise.

Sincerely,

Gwyn Beattie

Chair, APS Public Policy Board

Template letter that can be used or adapted:

Subject line: Opposition to relocation of NIFA

Dear Senator ___ or Representative ___,

On August 19, 2018, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced the relocation of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to a site outside of Washington, DC, with the completed movement of the agency expected by the end of 2019. NIFA provides critical leadership and funding for research in a breadth of sciences, both fundamental and applied, with the goal of ensuring the long-term viability of agriculture. I am writing to express my concern about the impacts of this proposed move on NIFA and its mission.

Concern #1: Agriculture is a vital component of our federal research portfolio. With this move, NIFA will be the only federal research funding agency outside of Washington, DC. This will greatly decrease the visibility of agricultural research and consequently weaken public support and recognition of the value of agricultural research to society.

Concern #2: Research advances in agriculture are strongly intertwined with research advances in other scientific fields. Cross-fertilization among disciplines is currently promoted through interagency communications and collaborations, such as NIFA's interactions with NIH, OSTP, NSF and the FDA on issues such as food safety, biosecurity, and microbiomes in human and plant health. Interagency collaborations have been fostered by close proximity and frequent interactions among federal agency staff. Moving NIFA outside of Washington, DC, will severely reduce opportunities for these interactions.

Concern #3: NIFA partners with other federal agencies to contribute to science policy decisions. Policies that influence, or are influenced by, agriculture or agricultural research need a voice at the table. This voice will be greatly silenced if NIFA is speaking from a distance.

Concern #4: NIFA administers federal funding for research; the public trust in managing federal funds for research requires the agency to be free from undue influence by individual stakeholders. Secretary Perdue has stated a desire to relocate NIFA in order to place USDA resources closer to many of its stakeholders. This relocation, however, runs the risk of increasing the influence of a small number of local stakeholder groups. Since agriculture is practiced in all of the states in our country, from California to Missouri to Florida, moving NIFA out of Washington, DC, would simply move it closer to some stakeholders and further from others. Moreover, the move could provide local stakeholders with a disproportionate influence on the administration of public funds for research.

Concern #5: NIFA's programs aim to promote discoveries that address significant issues affecting food, agriculture, and our nation's natural resources. The strategic investment of our tax dollars requires a good understanding of these issues, and this understanding comes from frequent interactions with a broad base of stakeholders. Many stakeholders, including policymakers and representatives of land-grant universities, incur cost-savings by combining visits to NIFA and other Washington, DC, agencies. If NIFA is at another location, either NIFA will need to incur the travel costs, which will negate some of the cost savings of relocating outside of Washington, DC, or the stakeholders will incur additional costs or minimize their interactions with NIFA and thus lessen NIFA's engagement and visibility.

In light of these concerns, I request that you take action to block the planned relocation of NIFA to a yet-to-be-designated site outside of Washington, DC, in 2019. Moreover, if relocation is planned for the future, inside or outside of the Washington, DC, area, I urge you to take action to ensure a reasonable timeframe to allow a smooth, planned transition by the agency; the announcement in August of an entire agency move within 15 months has the potential to cripple NIFA for at least a year. NIFA's activities are critical to agricultural research, and the agency deserves the opportunity to plan and execute a move that will strengthen rather than weaken its ability to serve the public.

Thank you for your consideration.
Respectfully,

Senate-House Farm Bill Conference Committee (FB); Appropriations Committee (A)

Alabama: Rep. Mike Rogers (FB); Rep. Martha Roby (A); Sen. Richard Shelby (A); Rep. Robert B. Aderholt (A)

Alaska: Sen. Lisa Murkowski (A)

Arizona: Rep. Raul Grijalva (FB); Rep. Tom O'Halleran (FB)

Arkansas: Sen. John Boozman (FB); Rep. Bruce Westerman (FB); Rep. Rick Crawford (FB); Rep. Steve Womack (A)

California: Rep. Ed Royce (FB); Rep. Jeff Denham (FB); Rep. Jim Costa (FB); Rep. Maxine Waters (FB); Sen. Dianne Feinstein (A); Rep. Barbara Lee (A); Rep. David G. Valadao (A); Rep. Ken Calvert (A); Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (A); Rep. Pete Aguilar (A)

Connecticut: Sen. Chris Murphy (A); Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro (A)

Delaware: Sen. Christopher Coons (A)

Florida: Rep. Austin Scott (FB); Rep. Neal Dunn (FB); Rep. Ted Yoho (FB); Sen. Marco Rubio (A); Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (A); Rep. John Rutherford (A); Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart (A); Rep. Thomas J. Rooney (A)

Georgia: Rep. David Scott (FB); Rep. Rick Allen (FB); Rep. Sanford D. Bishop (A); Rep. Tom Graves (A)

Hawaii: Sen. Brian Schatz (A)

Idaho: Rep. Michael K. Simpson (A)

Illinois: Rep. Cheri Bustos (FB); Rep. John Shimkus (FB); Rep. Rodney Davis (FB); Sen. Richard Durbin (A); Rep. Mike Quigley (A)

Indiana: Rep. Peter J. Visclosky (A)

Iowa: Sen. Joni Ernst (FB); Rep. David Young (A)

Kansas: Sen. Pat Roberts (FB); Rep. Roger Marshall (FB); Sen. Jerry Moran (A); Rep. Kevin Yoder (A)

Kentucky: Sen. Mitch McConnell (FB, A); Rep. James Comer (FB); Rep. Harold Rogers (A)

Louisiana: Rep. Ralph Abraham (FB); Sen. John Kennedy (A)

Maine: Sen. Susan Collins (A); Rep. Chellie Pingree (A)

Maryland: Sen. Chris Van Hollen (A); Rep. Andy Harris (A); Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger (A)

Massachusetts: Rep. Jim McGovern (FB); Rep. Katherine M. Clark (A)

Michigan: Sen. Debbie Stabenow (FB); Rep. John R. Moolenaar (A)

Minnesota: Rep. Collin Peterson (FB); Rep. Tim Walz (FB); Rep. Betty McCollum (A)

Mississippi: Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (A); Rep. Steven Palazzo (A)

Missouri: Rep. Vicky Hartzler (FB); Sen. Roy Blunt (A)

Montana: Sen. Jon Tester (A); Sen. Steve Daines (A)

Nebraska: Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (A)

Nevada: Rep. Mark E. Amodei (A)

New Hampshire: Rep. Ann Kuster (FB); Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (A)

New Jersey: Rep. Rodney P. Frelinghuysen (A)

New Mexico: Rep. Michelle Lujan Grisham (FB); Sen. Tom Udall (A)

New York: Rep. Eliot Engel (FB); Rep. Paul Tonko (FB); Rep. Grace Meng (A); Rep. José E. Serrano (A); Rep. Nita M. Lowey (A)

North Carolina: Rep. Alma Adams (FB); Rep. David Rouzer (FB); Rep. Mark Walker (FB); Rep. Virginia Foxx (FB); Rep. David E. Price (A)

North Dakota: Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (FB); Sen. John Hoeven (FB); Rep. Kevin Cramer (FB); Sen. John Boozman (A)

Ohio: Sen. Sherrod Brown (FB); Rep. Bob Gibbs (FB); Rep. Marcia Fudge (FB); Rep. Steve Chabot (FB); Rep. David P. Joyce (A); Rep. Marcy Kaptur (A); Rep. Tim Ryan (A)

Oklahoma: Rep. Frank Lucas (FB); Sen. James Lankford (A); Rep. Tom Cole (A)

Oregon: Sen. Jeff Merkley (A)

Pennsylvania: Rep. Glenn Thompson (FB); Rep. Matt Cartwright (A)

Rhode Island: Sen. Jack Reed (A)

South Carolina: Sen. Lindsey Graham (A)

Tennessee: Rep. Charles J. Fleischmann (A); Sen. Lamar Alexander (A)

Texas: Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (FB); Rep. Filemon Vela (FB); Rep. Jeb Hensarling (FB); Rep. Jodey Arrington (FB); Rep. Mike Conaway (FB); Rep. Henry Cuellar (A); Rep. John Abney Culberson (A); Rep. John R. Carter (A); Rep. Kay Granger (A)

The Virgin Islands: Rep. Stacey Plaskett (FB)

Utah: Rep. Chris Stewart (A); Rep. Rob Bishop (FB)

Vermont: Sen. Patrick Leahy (FB, A)

Virginia: Rep. Bob Goodlatte (FB); Rep. Scott Taylor (A)

Washington: Sen. Patty Murray (A); Rep. Dan Newhouse (A); Rep. Derek Kilmer (A); Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (A)

West Virginia: Sen. Joe Manchin (A); Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (A); Rep. Evan H. Jenkins (A)

Wisconsin: Rep. Sean Duffy (FB); Sen. Tammy Baldwin (A); Rep. Mark Pocan (A)