

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 22, 2026

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

The New World Screwworm (NWS) continues to pose a serious threat to America's ranchers, livestock, wildlife, and food supply. With cases now detected in the United States, ranchers across the country are counting on the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to respond quickly, responsibly, and with the urgency this threat demands. That is why we are deeply concerned by recent reports that your Department potentially delayed construction of a critical NWS containment facility while pursuing a proposal from a politically connected contractor that lacked necessary experience in biocontainment.

This Administration came into office promising to root out waste, fraud, and abuse and protect taxpayer dollars. Recent reporting raises serious questions about whether those principles were followed in USDA's response to NWS. Recent [reports](#) raise concerns that USDA leadership pursued a proposal of approximately \$25 million from a firm with political ties to the Administration, despite concerns about the company's lack of experience completing a highly specialized biocontainment facility.

According to the report, USDA spent approximately six months considering that proposal before the contractor determined it could not complete the project within its proposed budget or timeline. USDA then was forced to spend several additional months reviewing proposals before moving forward with another contractor on the facility, which is now estimated to cost approximately \$750 million.

If accurate, these allegations are unacceptable. NWS is not an abstract threat. Every month lost preparing our defenses puts American cattle producers, rural communities, and our food supply at greater risk. Ranchers should not have to pay the price for a federal contracting process influenced by political connections instead of experience, science, and the ability to get the job done.

The reports also raise serious questions about USDA's stewardship of taxpayer dollars. A proposal hundreds of millions of dollars below the eventual projected cost should have prompted immediate and rigorous scrutiny, particularly for a facility requiring specialized biocontainment capabilities. The American people deserve to know how this proposal was evaluated, who was involved in the decision, and whether political relationships played any role.

To better understand USDA's handling of this project, we request answers to the following questions:

1. When did you or other USDA officials first become aware of the original contractor's connections to President Trump, his Administration, his campaign, or organizations affiliated with him? Has the contractor, its executives, or its principals made political contributions to President Trump, his campaign, or affiliated political organizations?
2. When did USDA become aware that the contractor lacked significant experience constructing or operating biocontainment facilities?
3. What due diligence did USDA conduct to determine whether the approximately \$25 million proposal was realistic, particularly given the substantially higher projected cost of the facility ultimately selected?

4. What factors led USDA to continue considering a contractor without demonstrated expertise in biocontainment for a project where biocontainment is a central requirement?
5. Why did it take approximately six months to determine that the contractor could not meet the proposed budget or construction timeline? Did you or any other USDA official direct staff to continue pursuing the proposal despite concerns about the contractor's qualifications or ability to complete the project?
6. Please provide the proposed scope, cost, timeline, and other material terms of the original proposal, as well as the criteria USDA used to evaluate it.
7. To what extent did USDA's consideration of the original proposal delay construction of the final facility? Please provide USDA's estimate of any additional costs to taxpayers associated with that delay.
8. What effect, if any, has this delay had on USDA's ability to contain and eradicate NWS and protect U.S. livestock producers?

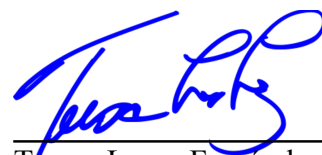
The federal government has a responsibility to move quickly when the livelihoods of American ranchers and the security of our food supply are at stake. It also has a responsibility to ensure contracts are awarded based on qualifications, value to taxpayers, and the ability to deliver, not political connections.

We request a written response to these questions by October 1, 2026.

Sincerely,



Gabe Vasquez
Member of Congress



Teresa Leger Fernandez
Member of Congress



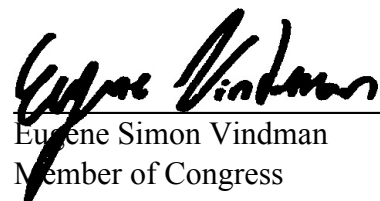
Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



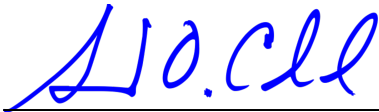
Eugene Simon Vindman
Member of Congress



Angie Craig
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee on
Agriculture



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress