

Dear Senator,

The undersigned farming, food, consumer and environmental organizations and businesses strongly oppose the nomination of Sam Clovis — a climate change denier with no background in food or agriculture — as the Undersecretary for Research, Education and Economics (REE) at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The USDA needs strong leadership to support the hard-working scientists who ensure the agency's scientific integrity and provide policymakers and the American public with the best information available. If confirmed, Mr. Clovis would serve as the USDA's chief scientist and oversee the agency's entire scientific mission, including its work on climate change. However, Mr. Clovis, a former economics professor, radio talk show host, and co-chair to Donald Trump's campaign, lacks formal training in the hard sciences and expertise in food and agriculture policy — credentials that are necessary to assess the complicated scientific issues that affect our agricultural systems, nutrition, and food safety.

Mr. Clovis has also [stated that climate science is “junk science”](#) and has made clear that Donald Trump's administration will not prioritize climate science in its agriculture policy. This is alarming given that our industrial agriculture systems are a leading cause of climate change and [contribute at least 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions globally](#). Our country's food and agriculture systems face complex challenges — from pollinator declines and deteriorating soil health to severe drought and flooding due to our rapidly changing climate — and without competent, science-based leadership, the USDA will be unable to protect our environment and help thousands of farmers and their communities adapt to these worsening burdens.

Our farmers and food and agriculture workers who work in [one of the most hazardous industries](#) in our country also deserve the attention of an Undersecretary who understands, rather than dismisses, their challenges— especially around fair labor and immigration. Almost 90% of workers in our food system earn low or poverty-level wages. These workers need a Chief Scientist who will be fair in his or her oversight of statistical reporting on farm labor, wages, and finances. Sam Clovis is not that person. He is vocally against fair wages for working people and [believes raising the minimum wage is “nonsensical.”](#) He is also [against a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants](#) and supports the construction of a [U.S.-Mexico border wall](#). Our agriculture system is driven by hard-working people who come to the U.S. from around the world, and having someone who does not understand the complexities of this system in a top position at the USDA is an insult to farmers and the workers who harvest, process, transport, prepare, and serve the food that we all eat.

Finally, Donald Trump's nomination of Sam Clovis violates the law. The [2008 Farm Bill states](#) that the nominee for undersecretary of REE, "shall be appointed by the President...from among distinguished scientists with specialized training or significant experience in agricultural research, education, and economics." Past REE Undersecretaries include highly credentialed scientists such as biochemists, plant physiologists and nutritionists. Donald Trump's pick of an anti-science, climate-denying talk show host with no credible science or agriculture background is a direct attack on science and our food and farm system, and is an insult to this law.

On behalf of the many people and organizations that are working to protect the environment, a safe and abundant food supply, and the well-being our food and farming communities, we strongly urge you to oppose the nomination of Sam Clovis as the Undersecretary for Research, Education and Economics at the USDA.

Sincerely,