

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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March 19, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Rollins,

Congratulations on your recent confirmation to lead the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). I am looking forward to working with you on issues impacting South Dakota producers.

Since the founding of our nation, American producers have worked hard to help feed the world. While American farmers and ranchers continue to experience tremendous success, the agriculture sector will always face significant risk.

During the last two years, farmers across the United States have dealt with a multitude of natural disasters. This includes severe drought, flooding and derecho weather events. In response, Congress has rightfully stepped up to provide disaster assistance to farmers and ranchers. While producers are thankful for this needed disaster assistance, USDA's ambiguous program guidance has created real problems for some farm families.

After Congress appropriated funding for Phase 2 of the Emergency Relief Program (ERP), USDA established an application process to determine producer eligibility. USDA required Phase 2 applicants to list "all eligible yield-based crops that could have been affected by a qualifying disaster event." As a consequence, many producers initially believed only impacted acres had to be listed on the application.

These unclear administrative guidelines have created headaches for some producers. After USDA discovered some applicants mistakenly did not list a farm's entire acreage, the agency required these producers to return ERP 2 payments. This requirement burdened producers that were already dealing with an uncertain farm economy.

As USDA prepares to allocate additional disaster assistance, it is my hope the agency will consider the lessons of ERP 2 when preparing for the next application cycle. This would entail providing farmers with a transparent set of crop insurance requirements.

American farmers and ranchers are the backbone of this nation. Our producers consistently deal with a number of uncontrollable factors, including extreme weather and volatile markets. Improving disaster assistance program guidelines will provide additional certainty for American producers.

I look forward to collaborating with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "M. Michael Rounds". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a stylized "Rounds".

M. Michael Rounds  
United States Senator