



Intertribal Agriculture Council  
100 N. 27th Street, Suite 500, Billings, MT 59101

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January 29, 2021

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
*Chairwoman*  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry  
328A Russell Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boozman  
*Ranking Member*  
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,  
Nutrition, and Forestry  
328A Russell Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: IAC Letter of Support for the Confirmation of Secretary Tom Vilsack to Serve as Secretary of Agriculture**

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman:

On behalf of the Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) and its Native Farm Bill Coalition (NFBC), we are writing to voice our support for the nomination and swift confirmation of Secretary Tom Vilsack to serve as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in the Biden-Harris Administration. We believe that Secretary Vilsack's strong leadership at USDA will help the 80,000 tribal producers and all farmers and ranchers through these difficult times. We urge the Committee and the U.S. Senate to move thoroughly and quickly to confirm Secretary Vilsack so we can address the issues facing tribal agriculture and rural America.

Agriculture economies are the backbone of many tribal communities. Tribal agriculture and food production is a \$3.5 billion a year industry supported by over 80,000 tribal producers working over 59 million acres of land. As the pandemic continues, many tribal nations and tribal producers have been impacted by loss of markets, limited food access, lack of capital and access to credit, limited infrastructure, and lack of broadband as we adapt to a changing world and changing economy. Our tribal communities and producers are resilient, and have found ways to ensure that necessary services and support are provided to those who need it. However, we must have strong federal partners willing to work in a true nation-to-nation partnership with tribal governments and directly with our tribal producers to address these systemic and current issues. Based on our work with Secretary Vilsack in the Obama Administration, we know he understands the issues facing agriculture and Indian Country and is equipped with the partnerships and solutions to build strong rural economies.

Throughout his previous tenure at USDA, Secretary Vilsack showed a serious commitment to tribal producers and tribal governments. He established the Office of Tribal Relations (OTR) in the Office of the Secretary creating, for the very first time, a permanent seat at the table for Indian Country's voice to be heard. This week, USDA reaffirmed that OTR is established fully



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within the Secretary's Office showing their commitment to, and acknowledgement of, the trust and treaty responsibilities USDA has with tribal nations. Further, as USDA and all federal agencies develop their tribal consultation plans in collaboration with tribal governments, Secretary Vilsack's experience updating the agency's previous tribal consultation plan is important to build on what was successful and creates stronger consultation practices that model true nation-to-nation working relationships.

With the current COVID-19 pandemic, credit access issues, and climate change impacts, we need leadership that fully understands all of the tools USDA has at its disposal, and not be afraid to use them. We must create stronger, producer-centered programs to provide the assistance producers need, not just create programs that producers have to fit themselves into to get support. With his eight years of experience holding the reins, we believe that Secretary Vilsack can help agriculture and rural America through these crises when he is back in the saddle at USDA.

We look forward to building back better with Secretary Vilsack as we address the systemic, historical, and current challenges facing Indian Country agriculture.

Sincerely,

Zach Ducheneaux  
Executive Director  
Intertribal Agriculture Council  
605-222-3852  
zach@indianag.org