

THE MARKUP

POLICY BRIEF WITH COLBY DUREN

“The Markup” is IAC’s new policy brief update to keep Indian Country in the loop on what is going on in the Washington, D.C. beltway. A “markup” is when a congressional committee meets to offer changes, amendments, and to debate legislation, and we hope the information provided in the IAC Markup policy brief will provide the same opportunity for knowledge sharing and involvement in the process.

The Markup – 1/29/2021 Update

New USDA Office of Tribal Relations Director

This week kicked off with the exciting announcement that Heather Dawn Thompson (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe) will serve as the new Director of the Office of Tribal Relations for USDA. The IAC would like to extend our biggest congratulations to Heather on her appointment. Having her voice and presence at USDA in this critical position in the Office of the Secretary helps ensure that our tribal governments and our more than 80,000 tribal producers will continue to have a seat at the table and be included in USDA’s programs and services.

New Presidential Memorandum on Tribal Consultation

On January 25, 2021, President Biden issued a Presidential Memorandum directing all federal agencies to, after consulting with tribal governments, develop a detailed plan of how each agency will engage “in regular, meaningful, and robust consultation” with tribal nations. As soon as federal agencies start this process, we will provide more details on when and how to weigh-in. Check out the Presidential Memorandum [here](#).

USDA Farm Service Agency Pauses All Debt Collections, Foreclosures on Loans

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) announced this week that it will be temporarily stopping all debt collection on past due loans and foreclosures for distressed borrowers under its Farm Storage Facility Loan and the Direct Farm Loan programs. Additionally, USDA is temporarily suspending: non-judicial foreclosures, debt offsets/wage garnishments, and sending foreclosures to the Department of Justice as well as stopping judicial foreclosures and evictions that were previously referred to the Department of Justice. USDA also extended deadlines to respond to loan servicing actions.

IAC’s Executive Director Zach Ducheneaux applauded the announcement from FSA:

“We are pleased to see a proactive approach on behalf of those most troubled by the economic impacts of the pandemic. Suspending debt collection and halting foreclosures is a great step towards the full use of the tools at the disposal of federal, federally sponsored, or federally guaranteed lenders, not to mention private lenders. Tools that aren't used often enough.



It's important to note that this action, along with deferrals, forbearance or other actions aren't debt forgiveness, and often have cost savings in the long run. Rather they are simply changes to existing payment arrangements to preserve the longer term financial interests of everyone involved; borrower and lender alike. We are pleased to see President Biden's USDA take the lead on deploying these livelihood preserving tools.

We hope to see lenders of all types follow suit.”

For more information, please contact your [local USDA Service Center](#).

<https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator> To read the USDA press release, click [here](#).

Executive Actions on Climate Change Including Agriculture and Conservation

In a series of executive actions, President Biden committed to take action across federal agencies on climate change. Specifically for agriculture and conservations, the Biden Administration is committing to three main steps:

- Conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and oceans by 2030, with a process for engagement from agricultural and forest landowners, fishers, tribes, states, territories, and local officials;
- Establishing a Civilian Climate Corps Initiative, including supporting jobs to increase carbon sequestration in the agricultural sector and protect biodiversity; and
- Requires the Secretary of Agriculture to collect input from farmers, ranchers, and others on using federal programs to encourage adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices.

The White House Fact Sheet can be found [here](#).

USDA Freezes CFAP Processing and Payments

USDA just announced that it is temporarily freezing processing applications and payments under the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) for agricultural producers due a recent Presidential Memorandum requiring a pause and review of recent agency actions. USDA is still accepting new applications. For more information, contact your [local USDA Service Center](#) <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>, and visit [USDA's CFAP Page](#).

Upcoming Senate Ag Confirmation Hearing for Secretary Vilsack

On Tuesday, February 2, 2021, the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture is holding a hearing to consider the nomination of Secretary Tom Vilsack to serve as USDA Secretary in the Biden Administration.

The IAC supports the nomination and swift confirmation of Secretary Vilsack and sent a letter of support to the Senate Ag Committee which can be read [here](#).

For more information and watch the hearing, click [here](#).



Two State-Meat Inspection Bills Introduced

This week, two bills on state meat inspection were reintroduced in Congress.

Rep. Johnson and Rep. Cuellar's H.R. 547 - the Direct Interstate Retail Exemption for Certain Transactions (DIRECT) Act will "allow state inspected meat to be sold across state lines through e-commerce, allowing small producers and processors more options to directly market to consumers." A press release on the bill can be found [here](#).

In the Senate, S. 107 - New Markets for State-Inspected Meat and Poultry Act, which is co-sponsored by Sens. Rounds, Tester, King, Grassley, Cramer, Danies, Barrasso, Manchin, Lummis, Smith, Tester, and Thune, allows USDA approved state inspected poultry and meat products to be sold across state lines. A copy of the bill is available [here](#).

FDPIR 638 Pilot Program Accepting Proposals and IFAI Policy Resource

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service process for submitting proposals from tribes and tribal organizations for the 638 self-determination local procurement pilot project is now open. Proposals will be accepted until 11:59 p.m. ET on March 15, 2021.

The 638 FDPIR pilot project was established in the 2018 Farm Bill through the work of Native Farm Bill Coalition and its members. For more information on the application process, visit the [Federal Register notice](#).

Our partners at the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (IFAI) hosted a webinar last week on the new USDA 638 FDPIR Demonstration project application process and developed a great infographic on the process.

To see the IFAI infographic breaking the application process, [click here](#).

Upcoming Tribal Consultation on Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)

On February 25, 2021 from 11 am to 1 pm ET, USDA is hosting a FDPIR consultation with the FDPIR Tribal Leader Consultation Working Group. For more information, contact the Office of Tribal Relations at tribal.relations@usda.gov or 202-205-2249.

