

JODEY C. ARRINGTON  
19TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

1029 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
(202) 225-4005  
FAX: (202) 225-9615

ABILENE OFFICE  
500 CHESTNUT STREET, SUITE B19  
ABILENE, TX 79602  
(325) 675-9779  
FAX: (325) 675-5038

LUBBOCK OFFICE  
1312 TEXAS AVENUE, SUITE 219  
LUBBOCK, TX 79401  
(806) 763-1611  
FAX: (806) 767-9168

COMMITTEE ON  
WAYS AND MEANS  
SUBCOMMITTEES:  
SOCIAL SECURITY  
SELECT REVENUE

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-4319

March 5, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I implore you to reopen county offices and implement reasonable protocols at USDA to enable your employees to perform the critical work needed to support our nation's farmers. As you know, our producers are the backbone of our economy and play a vital role as the nation recovers from the challenges of the pandemic.

The USDA's Pandemic Reopening Standard Operating Procedure is totally impractical and has significantly limited local Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices from fully re-opening and conducting in-person meetings. As a result, the review of applications for crucial relief programs has all but stopped in many offices and created significant backlog. The prolonged closure of FSA offices has limited producer's ability to apply for vital assistance programs like the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+), as well as disaster relief following Winter Storm Uri, which caused an estimated agriculture loss of over \$600 million. While ensuring the health and safety of employees is important, we must find a way for these offices to open safely for the sake of our nation's farmers and ranchers.

To address this issue, I urge you to reopen FSA offices and provide the necessary flexibility, including extensions of upcoming deadlines, to ensure all needs are met in a timely manner. Last fall, former Ranking Member Michael Conaway and I sent the attached letter to the previous administration addressing this concern. Unfortunately, the problem persists and requires your immediate attention. Thank you for your attention to this matter and your urgent consideration of my request.

Sincerely,



Jodey C. Arrington  
Member of Congress