

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250**

Dear Employees,

I'm writing to let you know that effective today, Brian Baenig has been appointed as the new USDA Chief of Staff. Since 2011, Brian has served as Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations at USDA, and prior to that served for many years on Capitol Hill. He brings to the Chief of Staff position sound judgment, strong leadership and a long history of service to U.S. agriculture. He has worked hard to effectively support your great work across the nation, and he will continue to help USDA achieve great things for rural America as Chief of Staff. Ann Wright, who is our Deputy Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, will serve in an interim capacity as Acting Assistant Secretary to ensure that our communications with Members of Congress remain strong.

As Brian takes over this important role, I also want to express my sincere appreciation to Matt Paul for stepping up as Acting Chief of Staff in recent weeks. Matt did a great job, and as a result USDA's work continued uninterrupted during this senior staff transition.

Our senior staff handle many responsibilities, but none so important as ensuring that you are empowered to achieve your mission. We are lucky to have folks like Brian, Ann and Matt on our leadership team, and today's staff announcement will ensure that we're in the best position to continue delivering record accomplishments for all Americans.

Sincerely,

Tom Vilsack