

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 11, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

I write to express my deep concern about the serious consequences President Trump's shutdown is having on rural communities in Wisconsin. The shutdown is having severe impacts on the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) operations, hurting rural economies in Wisconsin and across the country.

Rural communities in Wisconsin put USDA funds to work improving the prosperity, health, safety, and quality of life of their residents. USDA grants and loans allow rural communities to replace water infrastructure, provide high-speed internet, and build and enhance hospitals and other community facilities. USDA Rural Development funding makes buying a home possible for low- and moderate-income families and helps individuals start small businesses that create jobs and grow our economy.

I have heard from my constituents that the shutdown is having a serious impact on our communities. For example, Tomah Memorial Hospital in Tomah, Wisconsin, was awarded USDA grant funding to help build a new facility to replace the existing building. As a Critical Access Hospital, Tomah Memorial is an essential health care facility for rural Wisconsinites in an underserved area. However, the shutdown has seriously jeopardized the progress of the project, which was within six months of completion, as USDA is now unable to authorize payments for construction and the hospital will soon be unable to pay its contractors. This delay could result in substantial unanticipated costs and complications for the construction of the hospital. As such, I request the following information:

- How does USDA plan to promptly remedy the situation that Tomah Memorial Hospital is facing due to the lapse in federal funding?
- Please provide details as to how your agency will compensate Tomah Memorial Hospital, and facilities like it, for the consequences of the delay in construction, any additional costs incurred during the delay and ensure that the hospital can ultimately complete its new facility within its budget.

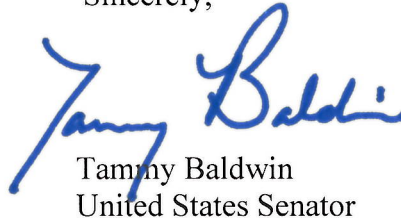
Further, given the wide scope of USDA's role in targeting financial resources to rural areas through grants, direct loans and guaranteed loans, I request answers to the following questions. Please provide both national and Wisconsin-specific data.

- How many USDA Rural Development grantees are not receiving the funding promised to them as a result of this shutdown?

- How many direct and guaranteed loans for communities and individuals have been put on hold?
- How has USDA communicated information about the status of grant funding, direct loans and guaranteed loans to communities and individuals, and what guidance has USDA provided those anticipating receiving funding?

This needless and useless government shutdown that President Trump proudly owns is severely harming our rural communities, and this harm will only multiply as it continues. President Trump should immediately end his shutdown for the sake of our rural communities and all Americans by supporting and signing bipartisan legislation to fund USDA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tammy" and last name "Baldwin" clearly distinguishable.

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

CC: Frank Frassetto, State Director of USDA Rural Development in Wisconsin