

EMANUEL CLEAVER, II

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
HOUSING AND INSURANCE SUBCOMMITTEE
RANKING MEMBER
CAPITAL MARKETS SUBCOMMITTEE



FIFTH DISTRICT, MISSOURI

COMMISSION ON SECURITY
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
(HELSINKI COMMISSION)
[HTTPS://CLEAVER.HOUSE.GOV](https://cleaver.house.gov)

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

February 25, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

I am writing with concern and outrage over reports that organizations and individuals in my congressional district have been notified that their federal grants or contracts have been cancelled or frozen. These actions are having immediate devastating impacts on non-profit organizations, farmers, and families in the Kansas City region and the state of Missouri. I urge you to rescind these cancellations and to ask President Trump to rescind Executive Order 14154, which has resulted in the pause or cancellation of funding from the Inflation Reduction Act and Executive Order 14151 ending all diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility programs, activities, and contracts and grants.¹

Last Friday, the Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council, located in my congressional district, was notified by the Agricultural Marketing Service within USDA that their three-year **Farmers Market Food Equity & Minority Farmer Empowerment Initiative** federal grant contract was canceled. This multi-year grant, which totaled \$165,000 over three years, helped Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council train small, urban, and minority farmers to help them increase production capacity and connect with local farmers markets in Kansas City. In addition, Ivanhoe planned to increase outreach to members of the urban core who historically have not had access to fresh foods or farmers markets. After beginning their work, interviewing for new staff positions, and receiving a small amount of their \$165,000 three-year grant, Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council now is forced to regroup and retrench.

It is inconceivable why this small grant - which helped farmers and increased access to healthy foods for residents of the inner city – was canceled mid-contract. If the Trump Administration's goal is Making America Healthy Again, canceling grants like this one has the opposite effect.

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/unleashing-american-energy/> ;
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/>

Farmers across Missouri and the nation are concerned about the federal funding freeze and their ability to do business next season. Producers are afraid that they will not receive the funding promised to them by USDA, leaving them wondering whether they can rely on USDA programs moving forward. The Inflation Reduction Act actually increased investments in programs that farmers have used for decades, providing nearly \$20 billion for farmland conservation programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Renewable Energy Assistance Program (REAP). These programs are immensely popular; prior to the IRA, these programs were only able to fund 30 percent of applications.²

The pause in USAID foreign aid and firing of USAID employees will also impact farmers. USAID is one of the biggest purchasers of sorghum and other excess grains, and more than 450 producers have contracts with USAID³. Without those purchases, excess grain could flood the market and drive down prices, and the mass firing of USAID employees will make it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to deliver food aid in a timely manner.

The USAID funding freeze impacted a multi-year grant for the Soybean Innovation Lab, which researchers from the University of Missouri were involved with. This grant supported a collaboration between 17 states and over 100 researchers to look at diseases affecting soybeans. Now these labs will lose collaboration, and the entire research project will be shut down in April.⁴

Farmers are already dealing with difficult economic situations and rising input costs. Now they are also dealing with canceled grants and contracts, as well as service center offices without USDA staff who can help them process loan applications or give technical advice during planting season. Recent news reports state that nationwide, at least 1,000 employees at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) were fired, at least 550 staff from the Rural Development agency, 3,400 from the U.S. Forest Service, plus additional staff from the Foreign Agricultural Service, the Economic Research Service, and the Farm Service Agency.⁵ However, your USDA website has no information detailing the grants that have been terminated, the number of Missourians affected by the funding pause, or the number of staff reductions per agency.

I am writing to request an answer, in writing, from your office by March 12:

- **The list of grants or contracts within USDA programs which have been terminated under the above Executive Orders within the State of Missouri;**
- **The list of grants or contracts which have been frozen and are currently under review within the state of Missouri;**

² <https://missouriindependent.com/2025/02/17/repub/billions-of-dollars-at-stake-for-farmers-hit-by-trump-funding-freeze-pause-on-foreign-aid/>

³ <https://missouriindependent.com/2025/02/17/repub/billions-of-dollars-at-stake-for-farmers-hit-by-trump-funding-freeze-pause-on-foreign-aid/>

⁴ <https://missouriindependent.com/2025/02/11/missouri-soybean-research-project-shuts-down-as-trump-cuts-off-funding/>

⁵ [POLITICO Pro | Article | Layoffs hit thousands of USDA employees across the country](#)

- **The number of USDA employees and contractors, by agency who have been fired within Missouri's Fifth Congressional District.**

I am deeply concerned that these funding cuts and employee terminations are happening with little regard to the human toll or the ability of USDA to continue to meet its legally mandated functions. I strongly urge USDA to honor its legal obligations to organizations with signed contracts, rescind grant terminations and release payments to farmers without delay, and halt employee terminations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Emanuel Cleaver, II". The signature is stylized with a large, circular loop at the beginning and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress