

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

2/10/2025

Brooke Rollins
Secretary-Designee
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Madam Secretary-Designee Rollins,

Congratulations on your nomination by President Trump to serve as the next Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We are proud to have a fellow Texan poised to serve in a role that is vitally important to our great State. Agriculture serves as the economic well-being for many Texas counties and regions, which is why we supported the disaster and economic aid portions of H.R. 10545, the American Relief Act, to provide vital disaster assistance to Texas agricultural producers.

Specifically, H.R. 10545 gave the Secretary of Agriculture the authority to issue a block grant to the State of Texas to provide targeted economic aid to agricultural producers in South Texas harmed by Mexico's failure to deliver water to the United States per a 1944 Treaty¹. We understand that Senators Cornyn and Cruz have discussed shared concerns with the 1944 Water Treaty, and we were glad to see Senator Cruz specifically mention it during your confirmation hearing.

In 2002, Senator Hutchison secured similar assistance for producers for this exact purpose. As such, the recently passed appropriation language intends to mirror what was previously executed. The Texas Department of Agriculture now has the authority to receive the funds, set the application requirements, and disburse the funds. We believe this is the quickest way to get this much-needed aid into the hands of producers facing economic losses at no fault of their own. Additionally, we ask that you consider the value of the water currently owed – currently over 1 million acre-feet – to the United States when calculating the amount of the block grant. Water users were paying, on average, around \$300 per acre-feet, if they could even get it. Right now, most agriculture producers in the region have zero water allocations due to the low reservoir levels.

¹ "Utilization of waters of the Colorado and Tijuana Rivers and of the Rio Grande."

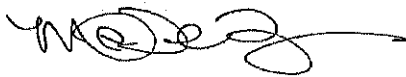
Mexico has a history, dating back to the early 1990s, of inconsistent water deliveries. This water feeds into two International Reservoirs, the Amistad and Falcon, which the Lower Rio Grande Valley water users draw from for crop irrigation and municipal use. Unfortunately for agriculture, as water is conserved for municipal use, irrigation water supplies become unavailable or limited, which has been the situation for the past three years. In February of 2024, the only sugar mill in Texas announced its closure due to a lack of water to grow a sufficient cane crop. Other irrigated crops such as citrus, vegetables, and cotton have also suffered economic losses and continue to reduce plantings due to the uncertainty of water.

Lower Rio Grande Valley agriculture producers need this assistance as quickly as possible to have the cash flow to try to survive another season. We intend to work closely with Secretary of State Marco Rubio to reset the dialogue with Mexico on its compliance with the 1944 Treaty. However, it does us no good if, in the meantime, we lose the agriculture production we are trying to assist.

We ask that one of your first actions as Secretary be to expedite the release of funds to the Texas Department of Agriculture for our South Texas agricultural producers, as authorized last Congress by H.R. 10545, the American Relief Act.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Monica De La Cruz
Member of Congress



Member of Congress
Henry Cuellar



Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress