

THE RURAL REPORT | NOV 10 2026

Updates on Federal Action and Funding Opportunities Supporting Development in Rural Communities

Agriculture Committee Turnover Could Reshape the Farm Bill Debate

The House and Senate Agriculture Committees are headed for substantial turnover in 2027 as election losses, retirements, and departures for other offices create vacancies across both panels. House Agriculture will lose its top Democrat, Angie Craig (D-MN-02), along with several Republican members, while Senate departures include Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Tina Smith (D-MN), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Mitch McConnell (R-KY), and Dick Durbin (D-IL). Several incoming Democrats have already expressed interest in joining, including Wisconsin's Rebecca Cooke (D-WI-03) and Randy Villegas (D-CA-22) in the House and Peggy Flanagan (D-MN) in the Senate. Committee assignments and leadership selections remain pending, leaving important questions about who will guide the panels' work next year.

The changes could reshape both the priorities and the dynamics of the next farm bill debate. Incoming members have emphasized agricultural production costs, nutrition assistance, farmworker needs, and industry consolidation, suggesting those issues could receive greater attention alongside longstanding disagreements over conservation and farm safety net programs. The departure of experienced negotiators could also make consensus harder to build as new leadership, members, and staff establish their positions. If Congress leaves the farm bill unfinished this year, the incoming committees will inherit the unresolved disputes with a substantially different membership, adding uncertainty to the timing and substance of a comprehensive agreement.

USDA Proposal Would Narrow SNAP Eligibility

USDA is proposing to restrict broad-based categorical eligibility, a policy that allows states to simplify SNAP enrollment for households qualifying for certain other assistance programs. The department estimates that 6.3 million people (approximately 17.6% of participants) would lose eligibility when the proposal reaches full effect in fiscal 2029, reducing federal SNAP spending by nearly $45 billion over fiscal 2027–2031. USDA argues the change would restore congressionally established income and asset limits, while the proposal could also reduce access to school meals, summer nutrition assistance and WIC through linked eligibility pathways. Following tighter requirements enacted in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the proposal adds another point of conflict between the administration and incoming Democratic congressional majorities and could further complicate farm bill negotiations already stalled over SNAP cuts.

Funding Opportunities

Affordable Rural Cooperative (ARC) Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to electric cooperatives for nuclear energy and transmission efficiency projects serving rural areas. The program strengthens the resiliency, reliability, and affordability of rural electric systems. ***Application Deadline: Letters of Interest must be submitted by 11/20/2026***

Agriculture Innovation Center Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development makes grants to Centers that provide Producer Services to Agricultural Producers seeking to develop and market Value-Added Agricultural Products. ***Application Deadline: 1/31/2027***

Electric Infrastructure Loan & Loan Guarantee Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides insured loans and loan guarantees to nonprofit and cooperative associations, public bodies, and other utilities. Insured loans primarily finance the construction of electric distribution facilities in rural areas. ***Application deadline: Open***

Water & Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides funding for clean and reliable drinking water systems, sanitary sewage and solid waste disposal, and storm water drainage to households and businesses in eligible rural areas. ***Application deadline: Open***

Community Facilities Direct Loan Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas. Projects include fire and rescue stations, town halls, health care clinics, and hospitals. ***Application deadline: Open***

Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides loan guarantees to eligible lenders to develop essential community facilities (CF) in rural areas. Examples of community facilities include health care facilities, buildings like town halls, and public safety facilities such as fire departments. ***Application deadline: Open***

Timber Production and Expansion Guaranteed Loan Program (TPEP)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides financial support to qualified lenders whose loan applicants want to establish, reopen, expand, or improve a sawmill or other wood processing facility that process ecosystem restoration byproducts from USDA Forest Service National Forest System lands. ***Application deadline: Accepted until funds are expended.***

Rural Business Investment Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture

USDA Rural Development provides a Rural Business Investment Company (RBIC) license to newly formed developmental capital organizations to help meet the equity capital investment needs in rural communities. ***Application deadline: Rolling Basis***