



National Association of Conservation Districts

April 20, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Boozman
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture,
Nutrition, and Forestry
328A Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for the Nomination and Confirmation of Janie Simms Hipp as USDA General Counsel

Dear Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Chairwoman Stabenow and Ranking Member Boozman:

On behalf of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), I write in support of President Biden's nomination of Janie Simms Hipp to serve as General Counsel of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). As a strong Indigenous woman with an incredible depth of knowledge and experience that comes from working across this country and the world with all different types of producers, Janie is uniquely qualified to provide sound legal advice to Secretary Vilsack and all of USDA's agencies. We urge the U.S. Senate to swiftly confirm Ms. Hipp as the next General Counsel of USDA, as her expertise is critically important to the agency's ongoing pandemic response and the support USDA provides to all of our country's food and agriculture producers.

NACD represents America's 3,000 conservation districts and the more than 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. Conservation districts work with millions of cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on private and public lands in the United States.

In 2019, serving in her role as Executive Director of the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF), Janie delivered a speech to NACD's Tribal Outreach and Partnership Resource Policy Group (Tribal RPG) in Santa Fe, N.M. The Tribal RPG, first convened five years ago, continues to build positive relationships with tribes and tribal producers across the country. Janie's guidance and encouragement as a mentor to both myself and NACD has helped build and strengthen relationships with Native producers.

The nomination of Janie Simms Hipp to serve as USDA General Counsel is historic for several key reasons. As a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation, Janie represents America's first farmers. As a world-renowned food and agriculture legal mind with more than 35 years of experience, Janie's legal experience and expertise with food and agriculture law is unparalleled. As an agricultural lawyer during the devastating farm financial crisis of the 1980s, Janie also has experience assisting ag and food producers through incredibly tough times, an essential need for public servants today as our country's ag and food producers weather the economic and health crises brought on by the pandemic. Janie's nomination is a strong statement that agriculture and Rural America must have people in the building at USDA who know what they are going through, and most importantly, how to help during



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these very difficult times. Janie Hipp is exactly the right person at the right time, because difficult times call for extraordinary leadership.

Janie Hipp's career and reputation are extraordinary. She has dedicated her entire legal career to working on behalf of Rural America and our food producers. It's not only her passion, but it's in her heart. Being from a small, rural southeastern Oklahoma town that was agriculture-dependent and infrastructure-poor, she planted her professional and home roots firmly in Arkansas while traveling the country and world to help farmers and ranchers. Whether speaking one-on-one with a producer or speaking on a stage in front of thousands, she always brings the same passion and brilliance and speaks truth to power on behalf of agriculture and Rural America. Janie grew up there, lives there, and serves the people there.

In working alongside producers to solve the complex legal changes they face, Janie's expertise spans the entirety of USDA's programs and authority. She has extensive experience in food law and policy, trade, credit and finance, conservation, sustainable and regenerative ag, ag business, risk management, federal nutrition programs, research and education, and rural development, to name a few. Janie is an encyclopedia of agricultural legal knowledge and directly connects the law to the histories and challenges our producers face, with a specific eye on how it can be applied to make it better for the producer.

Janie also has over seven years of experience working at USDA in various capacities, including serving as a national program leader for Farm Financial Management, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Risk Management Education, and the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development programs at the United States Department of Agriculture National Institute for Food and Agriculture. She was then tapped by Secretary Vilsack to work closely with him as Senior Advisor for Tribal Relations and Director of the Office of Tribal Relations during the Obama Administration. In a majority of these roles, Janie worked across programs and USDA agencies to create new connections to help farmers and ranchers. With her legal mind back at USDA as General Counsel, we believe that she will help Secretary Vilsack get the Department running better than ever during a time when we need USDA the most.

While Janie's legal expertise is unmatched, so is her experience working on behalf of Rural America. Janie sat at kitchen tables to help producers during the farm financial crisis of the 1980s. Janie sat at conference tables across the country listening to Tribal leaders and state and local government officials looking to build strong agricultural economies. Janie has sat at tables at USDA, the White House, the U.S. Congress and the United Nations to guide lawmakers tackling the most difficult issues facing America's food producers at the national and international levels. In all of these spaces, Janie brings her unparalleled passion, heart, experience and intelligence to make sure that agriculture and Rural America are represented, and that everyone has a seat at the table and a voice in the effort.

We urge the U.S. Senate to swiftly confirm Janie Simms Hipp to serve as the next General Counsel of USDA. There is much work to do to address the systemic, historic and current barriers facing our nation's food producers, and we believe there is no one better than Janie Simms Hipp to lead USDA's Office of General Counsel.

Sincerely,

Michael Crowder
NACD President