

Senators Lead Letter Calling On USDA To Restore Prevented Planting Coverage

U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Chairman John Boozman (R-AR) and Ranking Member Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) along with senior committee member John Hoeven (R-ND) led a letter to U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins urging the department to reinstate additional crop insurance coverage for acres prevented from being planted.

"Eliminating the option for producers to purchase additional buy-up coverage for prevented planting is troubling, especially at a time when our farmers need access to all risk management tools available to them," the senators wrote.

When weather conditions prevent timely planting, buy-up coverage provides critical protection for producers of covered commodities in all fifty states. USDA's decision to end prevented-planting buy-up coverage has raised concerns among growers nationwide.

In addition to Boozman, Klobuchar and Hoeven, the letter was also signed by Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) and Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Deb Fischer (R-NE), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS), Jim Justice (R-WV), Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Mike Rounds (R-SD), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Elissa Slotkin (D-MI) and Tina Smith (D-MN).

Read the full letter below:

Thank you for your recent work to expand access and reduce bur-

dens within crop insurance, including many provisions in the recently published rule by the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation on November 28, 2025, titled "Expanding Access to Risk Protection (EARP)." However, Section VI has caused great concern amongst our growers. Eliminating the option for producers to purchase additional buy-up coverage for prevented planting is troubling, especially at a time when our farmers need access to all risk management tools available to them.

While Congress has provided ad hoc disaster assistance for producers who experienced prevented planting losses in the past, this type of assistance is never guaranteed nor able to be relied upon, which is why Congress made it clear that "[b]eginning with the 1995 crop year, the Corporation shall offer to producers additional prevented planting coverage..." 7 U.S.C. §1508(h)(6). According to the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) data, removal of this critical tool impacts over 67 million acres across all fifty states and all covered commodities in 2025 alone.

As we work closely with USDA to get producers through this challenging time, we respectfully ask that USDA reverse this decision and allow producers access to the additional prevented plant coverage for 2027 and beyond to help provide a layer of certainty when disasters beyond their control render them unable to plant a crop.

Sincerely,

IRS Opens 2026 Filing Season

The Internal Revenue Service has opened the 2026 tax filing season and began accepting and processing federal individual income tax returns for tax year 2025.

The IRS expects about 164 million individual tax returns for tax year 2025 to be filed ahead of the Wednesday, April 15, federal deadline. Taxpayers can find a range of tools and filing options on IRS.gov to help them prepare and file their returns.

"As America celebrates its 250th anniversary, the IRS and its employees are excited to once again serve American taxpayers in meeting their tax filing obligations during the 2026 filing season," said IRS Chief Executive Officer Frank J. Bisignano.

"Not only does 2026 commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, but it also coincides with the 40th anniversary of electronic filing," Bisignano said. "Just as we did back in 1986, today the IRS encourages taxpayers to speed the processing of their returns by using e-file, instead of paper. And to speed the processing of any refund due, we also encourage the use of direct deposit," he added.

Get help preparing and filing electronically

Filing electronically and choosing direct deposit remains the fastest way to receive a refund.

* IRS Free File offers eligible taxpayers brand-name tax preparation software at no cost.

* Free File Fillable Forms are available to taxpayers who are comfortable preparing and filing their own returns, regardless of income level.

* Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly programs offer free basic

tax return preparation to qualified individuals.

More than half of taxpayers use a tax professional to prepare and file their tax returns. The IRS encourages taxpayers to review tips for choosing a tax preparer and learn how to avoid unethical "ghost" return preparers.

Most refunds are issued within 21 days

Direct deposit is the fastest way to receive a refund. Additionally, in accordance with Executive Order 14247, the IRS began phasing out paper tax refund checks on September 30, 2025, meaning most taxpayers must provide their routing and account numbers to receive refunds directly deposited into their bank accounts.

Taxpayers can track refund status using Where's My Refund?, the IRS2Go app, or their IRS Individual Online Account.

While the IRS issues most refunds in fewer than 21 days, some returns require additional review and may take longer.

EITC and ACTC refunds available by March 2

The IRS expects most refunds for the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Additional Child Tax Credit to be available in bank accounts or on debit cards by March 2, 2026, for taxpayers who chose direct deposit and have no other issues with their returns.

Some taxpayers may receive their refund earlier, depending on their financial institution. Where's My Refund? will provide projected deposit dates for most early EITC/ACTC refund filers by February 21, 2026.

For more information and tools to help file a complete and accurate return and avoid errors that can delay refunds, visit IRS.gov.

ND Farmers Adapt To Consumer Habits, New Federal Guidelines

By Mike Moen,
Prairie News Service

New dietary guidelines in the United States are raising eyebrows. As health experts debate the latest recommendations, family farm advocates in North Dakota hope producers are able to make needed operational changes amid shifting consumer demands.

This month, the Trump administration laid out what it calls "the most significant reset of federal nutrition policy in decades." The new food pyramid calls on American consumers to prioritize protein and full-fat dairy in their diets, along with whole grains and fresh vegetables. Highly-processed foods and added sugars are discouraged.

North Dakota Farmers Union President Matt Perdue said they're educating members about these moves and how they might affect each farm differently.

"That demand for whole foods certainly presents opportunities for our livestock sector," he said, "and it might create challenges for some of our commodity producers in North Dakota."

Perdue explained that consum-

ers themselves are already showing greater interest in beef products raised and processed locally. These topics will be covered during a summit hosted by the Farmers Union on February 17 in Jamestown.

Nutrition experts have said the new federal guidelines maintain valuable tips for a healthy diet, but they question whether the update overstates the need for more protein.

Perdue said the evolving consumer landscape should remind farmers of the need to tell their story when marketing their products, "help everyday consumers understand what we produce, how we produce it, the ways in which we manage our natural resources."

Perdue acknowledged that consumers remain very worried about the high cost of groceries, but he said the ability of American farmers to produce surplus food at lower costs compared to the rest of the world is a selling point. Currently, farmers do have higher production costs to contend with and trade-war effects. Perdue suggested expanding domestic markets can ease those pressures.

IRS Joins National Partners To Launch 20th Annual Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day

The Internal Revenue Service and partners nationwide launched the annual Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day outreach campaign to help millions of eligible low-to-moderate income, working Americans claim the Earned Income Tax Credit.

For the past twenty years, the IRS has invited community organizations, elected officials, state and local governments, schools, employers, and other interested parties to join this national grassroots effort. This year, IRS leaders and partners across the nation are participating in local events highlighting the importance of the EITC, which helps millions of taxpayers each year.

In North Dakota, more than 39,400 workers and families received about \$103.3 million total in EITC for tax year 2024. On average, taxpayers in North Dakota received \$2,621.

Dakota Datebook: The Boys Are Coming Home

By Carole Butcher

World War I caused changes throughout the world. When the war broke out in Europe, North Dakotans were very reluctant for America to get involved. Many of the state's citizens were isolationists, and the large number of German immigrants may have been a factor. Of North Dakotans may have had clear memories of sending troops to the Philippines only twenty years before. They knew the hardships that war would cause, from shortages of goods to shortages of agricultural labor.

But when the government called for troops, North Dakota responded. After serving on the Mexican border in 1916, North Dakota troops had been deactivated, but that soon changed, with the First and Second North Dakota Regiments drafted into federal service in March 1917. They were reorganized into the 164th Infantry Regiment and became part of the 41st Division. North Dakota soldiers were involved in many well-known battles including Cantigny and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

On January 28, 1919, the Fargo Forum announced that plans were being made to bring the boys home. The newspaper predicted that 1,800,000 troops would return within six months. It was an enormous undertaking. German ocean liners were being commandeered to help transport the troops.

Chief of Staff Peyton March said men in home training camps would be demobilized within twenty days, but it would take longer to get the troops home from Europe. March estimated

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Minutes Of White Earth City Council

CITY OF WHITE EARTH MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 12, 2026

Call to Order

Mayor Greg Gunderson called the regular meeting of the White Earth City Council to order at 7:02 p.m.

Roll Call

Present: Mayor Greg Gunderson, Alderman Justin LaBar, Jerold Ogden, Rocky Dubose, and Auditor Tami LaBar. Alderman Van Rice joined the meeting by phone during Executive Session.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Consent Agenda

Motion by Alderman Ogden to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Alderman LaBar. Motion carried.

Executive Session

Mayor Gunderson informed visitors that the Council would be entering Executive Session and cited the applicable North Dakota Century Code.

Return to Open Session

Motion by Alderman Ogden that contact be made by two board members to Jessie Swain and Shannon Swain to verify billing. Justin LaBar and Van Rice will make the calls. Seconded by Alderman LaBar. Motion carried.

Motion by Alderman Ogden to take the Side-by-Side to Whipperman Auto died for lack of a second.

Motion by Alderman Rice to take the Side-by-Side to Whipperman Auto died for lack of a second.

Motion by Alderman LaBar, seconded by Alderman Rice, to table the Side-by-Side purchase until the following meeting. Motion carried.

Floodplain Management Ordinance

The Floodplain Management Ordinance was discussed. Ryan will work on fine-tuning the ordinance. Once completed, a Town Hall meeting will be held to discuss the ordinance with residents.

Designated Depositories

Bravera Band, BNC Bank, and Western Cooperative Credit Union were designated as the official depositories for the City of White Earth.

Rec Center Project

Motion by Alderman Rice to deny the project died for lack of a second. The Rec Center project scope and engineering expectations were discussed. No formal action was taken.

Garage/Facility Improvements

Motion by Alderman LaBar to call for bids for three separate projects:

1. Garage doors and increasing the height of Bay 2

2. Adding a walk-through service door

3. Cost of moving the air compressor

Seconded by Alderman Ogden. Motion carried.

Sanding Outside City Limits

Motion by Alderman LaBar to table discussion of sanding outside the City limits, seconded by Alderman Ogden. Motion carried.

Auditor's Report

Auditor Tami LaBar presented her monthly report.

Adjournment

Motion by Alderman Ogden, seconded by Alderman Dubose, to adjourn. Motion carried.

Tami LaBar, City Auditor

Greg Gunderson, Mayor

Dakota Gardener: Winter Insulation

By Carrie Knutson, Horticulturist, NDSU Extension

Winter so far has been a roller-coaster of weather, with snowy and cold conditions in early December, followed by 40-degree Fahrenheit temperatures, the loss of snow cover, a return of snow, strong winds and then a repeat of the cycle. As a gardener, I've learned to appreciate snow cover during the winter, even when it means extra shoveling, because it plays an important role in protecting our plants.

How does snow protect plants during the winter? The answer lies below ground, in the roots and soil, and in the steps that we can take to help plants survive cold conditions.

Plants with shallow root systems are more susceptible to winter injury than those with deeper roots. Much of this damage occurs during cycles of thawing and freezing, known as frost heaving. These cycles cause cracks to form in the soil, allowing cold air to penetrate and lower the soil's temperature. In some cases, roots are pushed closer to the soil surface, where they are exposed to extreme cold. Roots can be injured or killed when soil temperatures drop below ten degrees.

Snow cover acts as an excellent insulator. It traps heat, helps the soil retain moisture and limits how deeply the frost penetrates the ground. Early snow cover is especially beneficial because it helps the soil hold warmth and moisture before the coldest temperatures arrive.

Even in winter, soil temperatures are typically warmer than the air above ground. For example, according to the Grand Forks NDAWN site, the soil temperature at the

12-inch depth today is 31 degrees, while the air temperature is just 4 degrees. This difference highlights the importance of insulation from the soil and snow in protecting plant roots.

Root injury is more likely during winters with little snow cover and extended cold, particularly when soils are dry. Moist soil retains heat more effectively than dry soil. So, when snow is absent, the cold can penetrate deeper into the soil profile, increasing the risk of damage.

Gardeners can take several steps to help plants survive the winter. One of the most important things is choosing plants that are suited to the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone for our area. The USDA Hardiness Zone Map was updated in 2023, and most of North Dakota falls within zones 3b to 4b. If you enjoy experimenting with plants outside their recommended zone, be prepared to give them extra protection, and keep in mind that one especially cold winter might be their last.

Mulching around plants is another effective strategy. Mulch helps insulate the soil, keeps temperatures more consistent and conserves soil moisture. Even something as simple as moving snow around your landscape to cover exposed plants during the winter can provide added protection.

I have mulch around several of my plants, and thanks to the blizzard a couple of weeks ago, I've accumulated enough snow in my backyard to help protect them this winter. Here's hoping your gardens are well insulated, too. Happy gardening!

was proposed to set for June 9, 2026 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. The election will be held in the High School Commons. Enger moved to approve the date, time and place for June election. Nichols seconded motion. All in favor, motion carried.

Board members up for re-election are areas 2, Fritzel, and 3, Ruland.

Ruland proposed that Beth Hall oversee the election. Dean moved to approve the proposal. Nichols seconded motion. All in favor, motion carried.

Holte brought up a question as to whether the board meeting minutes being posted in the Mountrail County Promoter needs to be on the ballot. Mary Kilen will check on that.

Resignation: Cheryl Demafles has submitted her resignation for May 22, 2026. Holte proposed to start advertising to fill the position of Language Arts. Enger moved to approve the proposal. Nichols seconded motion. All in favor, motion carried.

Superintendent Report:

* Weather related delays and cancellations.

* School enrollment is down from 781 to 776.

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