

Date TK

The Honorable Pat Roberts
U.S. Senate
Chair, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
109 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1605

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senate
Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-2204

Dear Senators Roberts and Stabenow:

We, the undersigned scientists, write to oppose the nomination of Sam Clovis for Undersecretary of Agriculture for Research, Education, and Economics because of his clear lack of scientific expertise and experience, as well as statements he has made disputing the scientific consensus on climate change.

First, let us speak to Mr. Clovis' credentials. According to his [resume](#) as reported in Politico, Mr. Clovis received a doctorate of public administration from the University of Alabama and a master's in business administration from Golden Gate University. According to the Morningside College [website](#), he took a leave of absence from his position as center director of the Col. Bud Day Center for Civic Engagement and as faculty member with the Morningside College Department of Economics, Political Science and Sociology in August 2015. These are hardly the credentials for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's chief scientist. As former Secretary Dan Glickman [said](#), "Not to have someone with a scientific background in that position is going to be challenging for them."

The [statute](#) governing this appointment calls for choosing a nominee "from among distinguished scientists with specialized training or significant experience in agricultural research, education, and economics." On their face, Mr. Clovis' credentials simply do not meet those congressionally mandated criteria. Moreover, the [history](#) of appointments to this position under previous presidents, as reported by *The Washington Post*, makes it clear how lacking Mr. Clovis is in expertise and experience. Past appointees have held doctorates in fields such as comparative biochemistry, human nutrition, and biogeochemistry; they have been deans of colleges of agriculture; and they have also included a medical doctor and a plant physiologist.

Moreover, Mr. Clovis showed his disregard for science with the comments he made to [Iowa Public Radio](#) in 2014 when he was asked:

According to figures from NASA, 97% of climate scientists agree that climate-warming trends over the past century are very likely due to human activities, and most of the leading scientific organizations worldwide have issued public statements endorsing this position. Do you believe the science?

To which Mr. Clovis responded:

I am extremely skeptical. I have looked at the science and I have enough of a science background to know when I'm being boofed. And a lot of the science is junk science. It's not proven; I don't think there's any substantive information available to me that doesn't raise as many questions as it does answers. So I'm a skeptic.

Given the importance of climate change to the future of U.S. agriculture, this comment alone should disqualify Mr. Clovis.

Finally, agricultural research science is vital to the national security and the health and well-being of our country. That was made clear in the landmark report of the Research, Education, and Economics Task Force for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2004, chaired by Dr. William H. Danforth. As Dr. Danforth has [said](#), "Food is too important to the human race to be a research afterthought; it needs to be a high priority for the nation's entire scientific community."

So, too, the responsibility of being USDA's chief scientist is too important to be treated as a political afterthought.

Sincerely,

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cc: The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Titles and affiliations are for identification purposes only.