

## **Yvette Herrell**

### **Nominee for U.S. Department of Agriculture Assistant Secretary, Office of Congressional Relations**

Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, and Members of the Committee—thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I’m also grateful to the committee staff and everyone who worked diligently on the paperwork, interviews, and meetings in preparation for this hearing.

I am honored by President Trump’s nomination to serve as Assistant Secretary for the Office of Congressional Relations at USDA. If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee to communicate policy ideas, solutions, and resolutions not only to Members and staff on Capitol Hill, but also to USDA leadership, stakeholders, and the constituencies we all serve.

Preparing for this process has allowed me to reflect on my own path. I grew up in rural New Mexico, active in 4-H and FFA, raising livestock and working on our small family ranch. Those experiences grounded me in the realities of agriculture, and I developed a profound understanding of how and where our food sources come from. I have a deep appreciation for our farming and ranching entities as well as the natural resource industries that shoulder the risks while at the same time provide the stewardship necessary to keep our lands productive for future generations.

I have long believed that agriculture should be a place where policy rises above partisanship. Good ideas deserve a fair hearing regardless of which party proposes them. If confirmed, my goal is to bridge gaps, earn trust on both sides of the aisle, and ensure information flows quickly, accurately, and consistently.

Throughout my career—whether serving New Mexicans in the State Legislature, operating small businesses, or representing New Mexico’s Second District in Congress—relationships have been the constant. I’ve worked at USAA as a policy service specialist; owned and operated Holiday Kennels and Alamo Earthwork & Paving, as a licensed associate real estate broker; served eight years in the New Mexico House; and later in the U.S. House. In each role, listening first then following through built the partnerships that make problem-solving possible. At almost every point in my career the relationships I cultivated proved paramount to my success and the successes of those around me.

Public service also means being there when people are hurting. I have volunteered across the country with Habitat for Humanity and Hands of Grace, including after Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana and during tornado season in Nebraska—helping families clean up, rebuild, and find their footing. Those experiences taught me to work shoulder-to-shoulder with people from every background and to keep compassion at the center of every decision.

Constituent service is where promises become performance. In Congress, my office handled more than 2,800 constituent requests with a 98% resolution rate—because timely, accurate

communication isn't a courtesy; it's our duty. If confirmed, my first priorities at USDA will be to strengthen the Office of Congressional Relations' responsiveness, modernize our communication and IT workflows where needed, and give every Member and staffer a clear, fast lane to the information and assistance they need. Beyond responsiveness, I am committed to enhancing transparency and accountability by establishing predictable response timelines, clear points of contact, and consistent performance metrics to ensure that no request is overlooked.

I also want to acknowledge Senator Ben Ray Luján—my fellow New Mexican and a colleague I appreciated working with in the House and across our state. Senator, thank you for your partnership on issues that matter to New Mexico's farmers, ranchers, Pueblos, Tribes, and rural communities. I look forward to continuing that collaboration from this new role, should I be confirmed.

I've heard a common concern in my meetings with Members and staff: timely, reliable information must be the norm, not the exception. If confirmed, I will implement clear service standards for congressional inquiries; expand proactive briefings on emerging issues—from disaster declarations to market disruptions; and coordinate rapid-response updates during severe weather, drought, or fire events.

Several of you have also raised the broader challenge of public understanding. Agriculture is foundational to our economy, national security, and way of life—but too often misunderstood. I was grateful for a thoughtful conversation with Senator Justice about the need for better outreach and clear, accessible messaging. I commit to working with Senator Justice and Members of this Committee to elevate practical, bipartisan narratives that reflect the daily realities of producers and rural communities.

Finally, I want to reiterate my commitment to ethical conduct, transparency, and fidelity to congressional intent. The Office of Congressional Relations should be the most trusted front door into USDA for every Member and staffer—Democrat, Republican, and Independent alike. My pledge is simple: listen carefully, respond quickly, and work relentlessly until the job is done.

Thank you, Chairman Boozman, Ranking Member Klobuchar, Members and staff, for your time and consideration. If confirmed, I will be honored to partner with you to serve America's farmers, ranchers, foresters, and rural families with the urgency and respect they deserve.