## POSITION DESCRIPTION

# Assistant secretary for congressional relations, department of agriculture

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| **OVERVIEW** |
| Senate Committee | Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry |
| Agency Mission | To provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition and related issues based on public policy, the best available science and effective management. To provide economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to preserve our nation's natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds and healthy private working lands. |
| Position Overview | The assistant secretary for congressional relations at USDA provides leadership responsibility for coordination of all congressional matters in the department and intergovernmental affairs including state and local government relations. |
| Compensation | Level IV $158,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary of Agriculture  |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| Management Scope | In fiscal 2020, USDA had $118,701 million in outlays and 91,178 total employment. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Provides leadership responsibility for coordination of all congressional matters in the department and intergovernmental affairs including state and local government relations.
* Serves as the department's liaison with members of Congress and their staffs.
* Works closely with members and staffs of various House and Senate Committees including the House Agriculture Committee and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry to communicate USDA's legislative agenda and budget proposals.
* Through the Office of External and Intergovernmental Affairs (EIA), serves as the liaison to elected and appointed officials of state, county, local and tribal governments and as a liaison to USDA stakeholders.
* Acts as the department representative for federal executive board matters.
* Serves as the official with the principal responsibility for the implementation of Executive Order 13175, including consultation and collaboration with tribal officials and coordinate the department's programs involving assistance to American Indians and Alaska Natives. Executive Order 13175 reaffirms the Federal government's commitment to tribal sovereignty, self-determination and self-government. Its purpose is to ensure that all executive departments and agencies consult with Indian tribes and respect tribal sovereignty as they develop policy on issues that impact Indian communities.
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| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** |
| Requirements | * Has a true and timely understanding of how Congress works.
* Possesses strong congressional relationships.
* Understands politics as well as policy.
* Understands the authorization process.
* Has a record of working with both Republicans and Democrats.
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| Competencies | * Strong leadership skills.
* Strong communication skills.
* Ability to work as a team.
* Ability to work under high pressure.
* Ability to work across party lines.
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| **PAST APPOINTEES** |

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| Ken Barbic (2018 to 2021): Senior Director for Federal Government Affairs with Western Growers; Deputy Assistant USTR for Congressional Affairs, Legislative Assistant to House Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee |
| Todd Batta (2014 to 2017): Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture; Special Assistant in the Congressional Relations office at USDA; Legislative Assistant to U.S. Senator Herb Kohl |
| Brian T. Baenig (2011 to 2013): Deputy Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs at the USDA; Deputy Staff Director for the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry; Senior Policy Advisor for Senator Patrick Leahy |

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260, December 27 ,2020), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials through January 1, 2022. The compensation information is based on guidance from the Office of Personnel Management and can be accessed [here](https://www.chcoc.gov/content/continued-pay-freeze-certain-senior-political-officials-4#:~:text=Section%20748%20of%20division%20E,on%20December%2031%2C%202020%2C%20by). If you are selected for this position, please consult the agency’s HR representative for further guidance on compensation.

# Endnotes

This position description was created with the help of Russell Reynolds Associates, a global executive search firm. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)