

# **Durbin Discusses Agriculture Priorities with Tom Vilsack**

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today met with Tom Vilsack, President-elect Joe Biden’s nominee for Secretary of Agriculture. During their Zoom call, Durbin and Vilsack discussed Illinois agriculture priorities and how the Department can assist farmers after years of uncertainty during the Trump Administration. Durbin spoke about the importance of expanding markets and trade for farmers instead of President Trump’s government aid and lost exports, ending favoritism of cotton over soybeans injured worse by irresponsible trade policy, and helping pork producers hurt by the pandemic and ethanol producers harmed by small refinery waivers issued by President Trump.

Durbin also asked Vilsack to uphold longstanding USDA policy that protects 8,000 Illinois seniors and people with disabilities at supportive living facilities (SLFs) from losing their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. For 20 years, these facilities have operated under a state law and Medicaid waiver and received USDA authorization for this purpose. But three years ago, USDA determined, despite no evidence of misuse or funds or any other irregularity, that these SLFs are ineligible for SNAP participation, jeopardizing access to food for these vulnerable Illinoisans.

“Under President Trump, farmers saw marketplace income replaced with government checks, exports to China crippled, and ethanol ignored while Big Oil benefitted. President-elect Biden has selected a tested leader in Tom Vilsack to once again lead USDA who will end uncertainty and revitalize the markets and trade relationships that were damaged by scorched-Earth trade policies. I’m glad, and I look forward to working with him,” Durbin said.