

CHAIRMAN GLENN “GT” THOMPSON
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
FEBRUARY 28, 2023

Good afternoon, Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting Ranking Member Scott and me to share the Committee on Agriculture’s bipartisan, proposed budget for the 118th Congress. As Chairman, I commit to ensuring the Committee maintains its storied history as an effective and financially responsible body.

The approaching expiration of the Farm Bill—legislation impacting the nation’s entire agriculture value chain and communities across the country rural and urban alike—requires our shared prioritization.

As many of you know, Farm Bills require a tremendous effort every five years. Ongoing impacts related to supply chains, the crisis in Ukraine, and fluctuations in commodity prices and input costs further complicate our work. From Member, staff, and stakeholder education to policy development, our immediate agenda impacts every Member of this chamber. This task and backdrop is our chief motivation in requesting additional resources.

Personnel is imperative to our preparation and execution of hearings, listening sessions, roundtables, program audits and accounting, legislative drafting, and economic modeling and forecasting. We also need resources for extensive travel, including at least six bipartisan farm bill listening sessions across the country, among other activities outside of D.C.

Additionally, there are multiple reauthorizations and legislative priorities outside of the Farm Bill that require dedicated staff. Not to mention a heightened workload due to pandemic related packages and their outstanding implementation. Each intensify the Committee’s mandate to protect and serve rural America and consumers across the globe. And each require extensive travel outside of Washington, D.C. to hear from the individuals impacted by every decision we make, from farm to nutrition, research to rural development.

As shared in the Committee’s questionnaire, we are seeking a 10 percent increase for staff salaries and related activities. These additional resources will allow both the Majority and Minority to attract, maintain, and reward staff, something of extreme importance to both of us. The institutional knowledge of the Committee and its Members relies heavily on the expertise, education, and diversity of the staff serving it.

Unfortunately, Committee budgets have yet to recover from decreases between 2012 and 2016, and they also have not kept pace with outsized inflation, both of which continue to plague our ability to attract and retain highly specialized employees.

Frankly, we are not able to compete with the Executive Branch or the private sector and struggle to retain staff.

We certainly have a lofty agenda ahead and will work tirelessly to enact that agenda with tenacity and fiscal responsibility. We appreciate your consideration of this request, and I am happy to answer any questions.