



## Reactions mixed over new Trump farm aid proposal

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Illinois' federal delegation and others are giving mixed reactions to President Donald Trump's announcement of \$12 billion that will go to direct payments to farmers and purchasing of their products.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue announced last week that the federal government would devote \$12 billion in aid to either go directly to farmers, to buy their crops to drive up prices, or to finding other foreign importers.

Reactions from Illinois' congressional delegation were mixed.

Republican Rep. Mike Bost said the program would help farmers while giving the president more time to negotiate better trade deals, adding that, "the United States has been taken to the woodshed for years by unfair and illegal trade practices by China and others."

Democrat Cheri Bustos criticized the aid, saying farmers don't want a hand-out and characterized Trump as a boy scout wanting a merit badge for "throwing a cup of water on a fire he lit."

Republican John Shimkus praised the aid, saying he appreciates the president "fighting back against those who engage in unfair trade practices."

Sen. Dick Durbin chastised Trump's aid, saying it damages the country's reputation as reliable sellers, and that the president "has put a lot at stake for Illinois and our rural economy."

The Illinois Farm Bureau took a middle ground approach, appreciative of the aid package but not without shining a light on the damage that Trump's tariffs, and subsequent retaliations by other countries, have caused.

"We appreciate the administration's recognition of the damage these retaliatory tariffs have caused for Illinois farmers – and farmers across the nation," Richard Guebert Jr. said. "However, while we are grateful for the support from the administration, we must stress that this aid package will not make farmers whole in the face of continued trade tensions."

Groups concerned over taxpayer bailouts took Trump to task over the aid.

“The Trump administration is compounding the consequences of the trade war by proposing a \$12 billion bailout intended to soften the economic blow caused by the administration’s own tariffs,” said Tom Schatz, president for Citizens against Government Waste. “Instead of using taxpayer dollars to bail out victims of President Trump’s trade war, the administration should remove destructive tariffs and begin to engage in free and open trade, which will benefit farmers and all Americans.”

Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies with the CATO Institute, called the aid package in light of the economy-damaging trade war “ridiculous.”

“The answer here is to end this damaging trade war that the administration has entered into,” he said. “Many other industries that have been damaged by Trump’s trade actions will now be going to Washington and demanding their own round of subsidies.”

Illinois is the nation’s fifth-largest exporter by dollar value, sending \$65 billion overseas last year, making it all the more sensitive to tightening up of world trade. The Prairie State is the nation’s top producer of soybeans. The top importer is China.