

## ASA, CSSA, SSSA 2024 Spring Policy Update

### A Look Back

#### Federal research funding

The last several months have seen a rush of funding activity, especially in the U.S. House of Representatives. The fiscal year (FY) 2024 process wrapped in March and the House quickly pivoted to kick off the funding process for FY2025. For FY2025, the House Appropriations Committee was operating under new leadership, with Congressman Tom Cole (R, OK-04) taking the helm. One of Cole's first actions was to release [topline funding numbers](#) for each of the twelve spending bills and set an aggressive Committee [schedule](#) that would move all twelve bills through the Appropriations Committee before the August recess. Overall spending would adhere to the caps set in place by last summer's debt ceiling deal, but certain programs – Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security – would see funding increases, while nondefense programs would be cut by 6% overall with some programs being cut by as much as 11%. ASA, CSSA, and SSSA joined over 1,100 organizations opposing the cuts to nondefense programs in a [letter](#) sent to the House and Senate leaders.

Fortunately, the House [Agriculture Appropriations bill](#), which funds USDA research programs, would be cut by just 1% and funding for USDA research was largely held flat. The National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy-Office of Science both received modest 2% funding increases in their respective House bills. Given the tight budget conditions these increases are appreciated, but fall far short of the ambitious funding goals set in the [CHIPS + Science Act](#). Within the House Interior bill however, funding for the EPA Science & Technology program would be cut by over 30%. ASA, CSSA, and SSSA submitted individual and community [letters](#) in support of a wide range of federal research programs. See the chart below for the full funding breakdown.

Agency - Program	FY24 Final	FY25 House	% change
USDA - ARS	\$1.845 billion	\$1.821 billion	-1%
USDA - NIFA	\$1.679 billion	\$1.674 billion	0%
USDA - AFRI	\$445 million	\$443 million	0%
USDA - SARE	\$48 million	\$45 million	-6%
USDA - Hatch	\$265 million	\$265 million	0%
USDA - Smith-Lever	\$325 million	\$325 million	0%
USDA – Equipment grants	\$5 million	\$5 million	0%
USDA - Research Facilities	\$1 million	\$0	-100%
USDA - AgARDA	\$500,000	\$1 million	100%
National Science Foundation	\$9.060 billion	\$9.258 billion	2%
DoE - Office of Science	\$8.240 billion	\$8.390 billion	2%
ARPA-E	\$460 million	\$450 million	-2%
USGS (total discretionary)	\$1.455 billion	\$1.370 billion	-6%
EPA - S&T	\$758 million	\$523 million	-31%
USFS - Forest and Rangeland Research	\$300 million	\$300 million	0%

## Farm Bill

After a slow start in 2024, momentum on the farm bill picked up again in early spring. The House Agriculture Committee [released](#) its farm bill in early May and [approved](#) the bill out of Committee after a marathon thirteen hour markup session on May 23. All 29 Republicans were joined by four Democrats to vote in favor of the *Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024*. While there were many bipartisan proposals included in the bill, Democrats objected to the three funding mechanisms within the bill: restrictions to the Secretary’s use of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funding, restrictions on future updates to the Thrifty Food Plan which sets funding levels for nutrition assistance, and changes to the *Inflation Reduction Act* conservation funding.

The Senate also made advances on the farm bill with both [Democrats](#) and [Republicans](#) releasing dueling farm bill frameworks that outlined the priorities and funding each side of the aisle would like to see in the bill. Unfortunately, these outlines did little to spur negotiations between the Committee leaders and the process is currently at a standstill. See the chart below for a comparison of the three proposals.

	House	Senate Democrat framework	Senate Republican framework
<b>Funding</b>	\$50 billion in CCC cost savings	\$5 billion in funding from outside the Farm Bill	\$8 billion in CCC cost savings
<b>Farm Safety Net</b>	References prices increased by 10-20%	References prices increased by 5% (average)	References prices increased by 15% (average)
<b>Nutrition Assistance</b>	Restricts how future nutrition assistance is calculated	No changes to nutrition assistance calculations	Restricts how future nutrition assistance is calculated
<b>IRA Conservation Funding</b>	Keeps IRA funding in conservation and removes climate guardrails	Keeps IRA funding in conservation and maintains climate guardrails	Possibly moves IRA funding out of conservation and removes climate guardrails
<b>FFAR</b>	\$0	\$200 million	Funding for FFAR, exact amount unknown
<b>AgARDA</b>	Reauthorizes, small changes	Reauthorizes, increases to \$100 million, climate emphasis	unknown
<b>Research Facilities</b>	\$2.5 billion	\$100 million	\$1 billion
<b>TSP Improvements</b>	Included	Included	Included

## Supreme Court Ruling

On June 28, in a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court [upended](#) a judicial doctrine that has protected many federal regulations from legal challenges for more than 40 years. The decision overturned what was known as “*Chevron* deference” which required courts to defer to reasonable agency interpretations of ambiguous statutes that an agency administers. The *Chevron* deference has given federal agencies wide powers to interpret laws and decide the best ways to apply them. Rolling back this doctrine will make it harder for any president to act on a vast array of policy areas, including environmental protection, public health, workplace safety, and consumer protections. Additionally, agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) may face challenges in enforcing regulations without clear legislative mandates. AAAS released a statement asserting that the Supreme Court’s decision “will thrust federal agencies’ decision-making into uncharted waters and fundamentally change the way scientific information is used in federal policymaking.” See the full statement [here](#).

### **Growing Climate Solutions Act**

On May 28, USDA [announced](#) the next step in implementing the *Growing Climate Solutions Act* (GCSA). The purpose of GCSA was to provide greater transparency and technical assistance for participation in voluntary carbon markets by establishing a Greenhouse Gas Technical Assistance Provider and Third-Party Verifier Program at USDA. USDA requested stakeholder input to develop a list of “widely accepted voluntary carbon credit protocols” and qualified technical assistance providers and third-party verifiers who would work with producers to generate credible carbon credits. [ASA, CSSA, and SSSA submitted comments](#) on the protocols and emphasized the role of certifying entities like the CCA program as a way to ensure that technical service providers have the needed expertise.

## **A Look Ahead**

### **Federal Research Funding**

The Senate is well behind the House in its appropriations work, just kicking off the FY2025 funding process when they return after the July 4<sup>th</sup> recess. The Senate Agriculture Appropriations bill will be one of the [first bills](#) moving on July 11. Despite appropriations work in both the House and Senate, Congress will almost assuredly need a stopgap funding measure at least through the November 5 election to maintain current funding after the start of the next fiscal year on October 1. Results of the election will have a major impact on whether Congress will complete appropriations work in the lame duck Congress or punt until early in the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress.

### **Farm Bill**

Agriculture Committee Chairman, GT Thompson (R, PA-14), remains committed to moving the farm bill for a House vote in September, however a jam-packed Congressional calendar and a single-digit Republican majority make the future of the farm bill uncertain at best. If an agreement on the farm bill doesn’t materialize, Congress will need to pass an extension before the end of the calendar year. One of the biggest challenges with passing a farm bill extension will be how to deal with the 21 “orphan programs” that do not have permanent standing in the farm bill. Last year, Congress provided one year’s worth of funding for the orphan program which included \$38 million for the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR).

### **2024 Election**

With the earliest ever Presidential debate taking place on June 27, the 2024 election will likely be top of mind until November 5. The Republican National Convention is July 15-18 in Milwaukee, WI while the Democratic National Convention takes place a few weeks later in Chicago, IL on August 19-22. Both chambers of Congress will be in session for a few weeks in July and then most of September, but Members will spend a lot of the next few months back home campaigning in their districts and states. With Members at home, considering reaching out to offer a field, lab, or site visit to show Members the kind of work ASA, CSSA, and SSSA members are engaged in.

### **Call for Volunteers**

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA are seeking volunteers to serve on various committees. If you have an interest in helping shape the policy agenda for the Societies, considering volunteering to serve on one of the three Science Policy Committees. Learn more and volunteer [here](#).