



March 22, 2017

U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry
328A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Members of the Senate Agriculture Committee,

On behalf of the Western Values Project, I write to you in opposition to Sonny Perdue's nomination to serve as the next Secretary of Agriculture. At the Western Values Project, we work to further the national conversation around public land use and conservation.

The Department of Agriculture manages nearly 200 million acres of public lands. As part of our group's vetting of Mr. Perdue's qualifications to oversee those lands, we found his record of conflicts of interest, ethical lapses and questionable business dealings disqualifying.

Simply put, someone who used the power of public office to sign a tax law that uniquely benefited him, oversee a public real estate deal that doubled the price of one of his private land holdings, and violated ethics laws on numerous occasions is not qualified to lead an agency that manages vital national resources, let alone one with more than 100,000 employees and a \$139 billion annual budget.

We have attached our 28-page research dossier on Mr. Perdue's troubling record for your review and the public record.

In addition to reviewing the dossier, we urge you to vigorously question Mr. Perdue on his past ethical lapses and his qualifications for the position. Below please find questions that need to be answered before any vote is taken on Mr. Perdue's nomination.

As Governor, Sonny Perdue blocked the acquisition of new public land — a move that more than double the value of adjacent property he owned. Will he commit to ensuring that the 192 million acres of land under USDA's control are not managed in a way that benefits him, the Trump Organization and Trump associates?

During his time as Governor, Sonny Perdue appointed a timber industry executive to run the state's forests and replaced a parks program with one that increased timber harvest. Will he ensure uses other than logging can happen on National Forest lands?

Sonny Perdue ran for governor as an ethics reformer, but once in office he failed to honor his own ethics pledges. Indeed, 13 ethics complaints were filed against Perdue and the state ethics commission twice found that he had violated state ethics laws. Given his past record, how can he be taken at his word running an agency with more than 100,000 employees and a \$139 billion annual budget?

I thank you all for your commitment to public service and our nation's natural resources.

Sincerely,

Chris Saeger
Executive Director
Western Values Project