

WFU: President backs choices for FSA, rural development directors

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CHIPPEWA FALLS — Yesterday the White House announced the appointment of several regional roles at the United States Department of Agriculture, including two pivotal positions in Wisconsin. Julie Lassa has been named State Director of Rural Development and Eugene Schriefer the State Executive Director for the Farm Service Agency.

Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden issued the following response:

“Over the past decade, Gene has made significant contributions to the fabric of our agricultural community here in Wisconsin through his work with UW-Extension, grazing networks, and youth. His insights and connections across the state will prove invaluable at the Farm Service Agency.

With her upbringing on a dairy farm in central Wisconsin and a background in civic engagement and economic development, particularly promoting small business and local food, Julie brings a great deal of experience to the table. I’m hopeful she can channel her experiences into revitalizing our communities and building a more resilient rural economy moving forward.

Farmers Union members have been particularly interested in seeing investment in critical infrastructure like meat processing, transportation, local food systems, and rural broadband. We hope to see these new leaders work with pandemic recovery funds and federal opportunities to move forward issues that will legitimately help rural Main Street and family farms.”

In a [statement](#) yesterday afternoon, the White House expressed that these roles will be critical to efforts to rebuild communities most impacted by the pandemic and climate change.

Eugene Schriefer, State Executive Director, Farm Service Agency, Wisconsin

Gene Schriefer is a Senior Outreach Specialist with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension, and has worked as an Agriculture Educator in Iowa County since 2009. He engages with farmers on sustainability, soil health, regenerative agriculture, regional food systems, and climate change. Prior to his current Extension role, Gene was a regional grazing specialist with Southwest Badger Resource Conservation and Development, working with producers in nine counties. He has also served as an Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent in Rusk and Columbia Counties. Gene earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Purdue University in Agriculture Education and Farm Management. He, his wife and son raise lamb and grass-fed beef from a farm outside of Dodgeville, Wisconsin.

Julie Lassa, State Director, Rural Development, Wisconsin

Julie Lassa grew up on her parents' small dairy farm in northern Portage County. A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, she served as a Town of Dewey Supervisor and Executive Director for the Plover Area Business Association before she represented a portion of central Wisconsin in the state legislature for eighteen years. Julie served in both the State Assembly and Senate as well as on the Board of Directors for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation where she focused on enhancing private-sector job creation and promoting small business. Julie authored the Green to Gold Fund to assist small and mid-sized businesses in improving their energy efficiency and creating new green energy products and services. She also wrote the laws establishing the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin and Farm to School programs which have expanded market opportunities for agricultural producers and provided consumers and school kids with healthy, fresh foods. Earlier in her career, she worked for a Wisconsin-based property and casualty insurance company. Julie and her husband, John Moe, live in DeForest, Wisconsin with their three daughters.