

# White House: President Biden announces key regional appointments for USDA and SBA

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WASHINGTON – Today, President Joe Biden announced his intent to appoint the following individuals to serve in key regional roles at the United States Department of Agriculture and the Small Business Administration:

- Thaddeus Fairley, State Executive Director, Farm Service Agency, Mississippi
- Eugene Schriefer, State Executive Director, Farm Service Agency, Wisconsin
- Charlene Fernandez, State Director, Rural Development, Arizona
- Julie Lassa, State Director, Rural Development, Wisconsin
- Marlene Cintron, Region 2 Administrator, Small Business Administration
- John Fleming, Region 3 Administrator, Small Business Administration
- Michael Fong, Region 10 Administrator, Small Business Administration

These regional appointees will be critical to the President's efforts to rebuild communities most impacted by the pandemic, the economic recovery, and climate change. They bring deep expertise in their issue areas as well as critical relationships with federal, state, tribal, and local leaders. And, consistent with the President's commitment to building an administration that looks like America, these regional appointees represent the diversity of American and the communities they serve.

## **UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA)**

The USDA's Farm Service Agency implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster, and farm marketing programs in each U.S. State. Its mission is to equitably serve all farmers, ranchers, and agricultural partners through the delivery of effective, efficient agricultural programs for all Americans. State Executive Directors oversee this work,

ensuring the needs of local constituents are met and that USDA resources are distributed equitably and fairly.

USDA's Rural Development mission area is committed to helping improve the economy and quality of life in rural America. State Directors lead offices that offer grants, loans, and loan guarantees to help create jobs and support economic development and essential services.

**Thaddeus Fairley, State Executive Director, Farm Service Agency, Mississippi**

Thaddeus Fairley Sr. is a non-profit professional from Sunflower, MS, presently residing in Indianola. He currently serves as a Field Representative for Congressman Bennie G. Thompson, current chair of the Committee on Homeland Security. During his time with the Congressman, he has served as an expert on broadband initiatives and constituent services, including issues from farmers. Prior to joining the Congressman's office, Fairley worked in the banking industry for over seven years, building relationships between the financial institutions and communities and teaching financial literacy. He is a graduate of Mississippi Valley State University and Louisiana State University at Shreveport. He and his wife, Felicia, have two sons Thad Jr. (5) and Joshua (3).

**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.

**Charlene Fernandez, State Director, Rural Development, Arizona**

Charlene Fernandez has spent her career in public service. She worked for Congressman Ed Pastor for twelve years and later for Congressman Raúl Grijalva. In both roles she ran the Yuma County office, assisting constituents and making government work for rural Arizonans. She also served in the Administration of

Governor Janet Napolitano as a liaison to the business community for the Arizona Department of Environment Quality to ensure the air and water remained safe.

In 2014, Fernandez was elected to the Arizona House of Representatives and currently represents Southwestern Arizona, home of many of Arizona's farmers and producers of 90% of the country's lettuce production. As House Minority Leader, she was integral to the Drought Contingency Plan agreement in 2019, bringing states, tribal nations, farmers, and other stakeholders together to ensure a sustainable water supply for Arizona. Fernandez prioritized food security as a former member of the Arizona Department of Agriculture's Food & Agriculture Policy Advisory Committee.

### **Julie Lassa, State Director, Rural Development, Wisconsin**

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 Lassa grew up on her parents' small dairy farm in northern Portage County. Julie and her husband, John Moe, live in DeForest, Wisconsin with their three daughters.

### **SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA)**

The 10 SBA Regional Offices, led by Regional Administrators, oversee the SBA's 68 district offices and ensure the goals and objectives of the Agency are met by each district office and field operations staff. The district offices are the point of delivery for most SBA programs and services, providing quality service to the local small business community. They work with SBA resource partners and intermediaries to accomplish the SBA mission of assisting America's small businesses.

### **Marlene Cintron, SBA Region 2 Administrator**

Marlene Cintron is currently the President of the Bronx Overall Economic

Development Corporation (BOEDC). Born and raised in The Bronx, she has worked for Congressman Robert Garcia, Mayor David N. Dinkins, Governor Pedro Rosello of Puerto Rico, and New York State Senator Ruben Diaz, Sr. In 2010 Marlene was named President of the BOEDC and The Business Initiative Corporation of New York, where she utilizes her government relations and financial acumen to support current and prospective Bronx businesses. Ms. Cintron received her bachelor's degree from SUNY College at Old Westbury, her Master's in Education Administration from Fordham University and her Juris Doctorate from the Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, DC.

**John Fleming, SBA Region 3 Administrator**

John F. Fleming is currently the District Director of the U.S. Small Business Administration's Delaware District Office. In that role, Mr. Fleming is responsible for the delivery and management of the Agency's programs throughout the State of Delaware. Mr. Fleming started his SBA career in 1992 and has served in various positions including Deputy District Director, Chief Credit Officer, and Public Information Officer. Mr. Fleming graduated in 1992 from Widener University in Chester, Pennsylvania, with a degree in Business Administration. Prior to attending college, he served in the United States Marine Corps as a non-commissioned officer.

**Michael Fong, SBA Region 10 Administrator**

Mike Fong is currently the Chief Recovery and Resilience Officer for Snohomish County, Washington. He is leading efforts to prioritize the region's \$160M allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for recovery from the pandemic. Previously, Fong served as Senior Deputy Mayor for the City of Seattle where he led and coordinated crisis response efforts for COVID-19 resulting in the nation's lowest metropolitan area rates of cases, deaths, and hospitalizations and the first major city in America to reach 70% of residents fully vaccinated. Fong is the first Chinese American to serve in the role of Deputy Mayor for the City of Seattle.