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## **NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 23, 2026

### **AG Kaul Files Lawsuit Against Trump Administration for Holding Hostage Billions in Critical USDA Funding**

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul, along with California Attorney General Rob Bonta, Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, and Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell, led a coalition of 21 attorneys general in suing the Trump administration over new and unlawful funding conditions imposed on all U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs, grants, cooperative agreements, and similar financial awards.

USDA’s imposition of the new funding conditions places all this funding at risk, unless Wisconsin agrees to USDA’s unlawful terms.

In their [lawsuit](#), AG Kaul and the coalition assert that USDA is attempting to condition the states’ receipt of billions of dollars of federal funding on the states’ agreement to a new set of vague and unreasoned terms relating to immigration, diversity, equity, and gender identity, and which are unrelated to the purpose of USDA funding. The lawsuit asks the court to block USDA from imposing these illegal grant conditions, including to critical USDA programs such as child nutrition and school lunch programs; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC); the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP); and funding for state firefighting programs. These programs provide basic, essential services for millions of Wisconsin’s most vulnerable children, working families, senior citizens and rural communities.

The impact of USDA’s new funding conditions is massive, as USDA’s programming touches on many aspects of American life. USDA programs feed about 30 million children across the nation through the school lunch program, strengthen the American food ecosystem from farm to table, support national security through a robust and safe domestic agriculture community, fund university research to advance domestic food production, and save lives and infrastructure by funding firefighting programs.

“USDA funding helps keep kids and families fed and healthy,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “Attempting to use this critical funding to further unrelated policy goals of the Trump administration is wrong and unlawful.”

Wisconsin, like all states, receives substantial amounts of federal funding from USDA. This includes funding for SNAP, known in Wisconsin as FoodShare, which helps more than 40 million Americans buy food. In Wisconsin, about 689,000 residents – including 170,000 children and 110,000 individuals over the age of 60 – receive FoodShare benefits each month. Nearly 4,500 Wisconsin retailers accept FoodShare payments.

USDA also funds Wisconsin’s WIC program, which, in 2025, supported 141,758 Wisconsinites, including 37,906 mothers, 24,365 infants, and 79,487 children between the ages of one and five. Wisconsin received approximately \$105 million in WIC funding for the 2025 fiscal year, which included \$68,372,285 for food costs and \$37,585,776 for nutrition services and administrative costs. These funds support local WIC agencies, which in turn provide nutrition education, breastfeeding promotion and support, referrals to other health care and social services, and nutritious supplemental food to low-income pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk.

Wisconsin also receives millions of dollars under USDA’s Emergency Food Assistance Program, which provides millions of pounds of food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, to food pantries around Wisconsin each year.

Wisconsin’s USDA funding extends beyond food and nutrition programs. For example, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources relies on tens of millions of dollars in USDA funding each year to support Wisconsin’s firefighting capacity, forest health, and urban forestry initiatives. These programs are critical to fighting wildfires, enhancing private forestland, monitoring forest health, and protecting forests and trees from insects, disease, and invasive plants in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's universities also receive substantial USDA funding. UW-Madison, in particular, had almost \$68 million in expenditures from USDA in the 2024-25 fiscal year to support agricultural research, improve the productivity of Wisconsin's food system, educate food scientists of the future, help farmers develop better tools and practices, and address nutrition disparities across the state.

USDA adopted the new funding conditions on December 31, 2025. The conditions purport to require states to agree to vague and ambiguous terms relating to gender identity, diversity, equity, and immigration. AG Kaul and the attorneys general explain in their lawsuit that USDA does not fully identify or limit the policies to which states must comply, while simultaneously threatening harsh penalties for noncompliance. AG Kaul and the coalition allege the Trump Administration has therefore violated the Spending Clause by imposing coercive conditions without clear notice of what is required. The lawsuit also alleges the Trump Administration violated the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) because the arbitrary and capricious conditions are unconstitutional, contrary to law, and beyond the USDA's statutory authority.

AG Kaul and the attorneys general have asked the court to prohibit USDA from implementing and enforcing the illegal conditions.

Joining Attorneys General Kaul, Raoul, Bonta, and Campbell in filing the lawsuit are the attorneys general of Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington.