



## USDA BOX - TRUMP LETTER Q&A

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**Q: Why was there a letter from President Trump in boxes of food that Food Share of Ventura County (or its partners) distributed?**

A: If a client received a USDA Farmers to Families food box, they may have found a letter from President Trump in it. The government-contracted third-party vendors who are packing these boxes were required to include it in all boxes being distributed.

**Q: What is a USDA Farmers to Families food box? How is it different than other boxes you give to clients?**

A: A USDA Farmers to Families food box is part of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) that was established in April, 2020. CFAP foods are boxed by government contracted, third-party vendors that work with local food banks to distribute the boxes. Food Share of Ventura County has been receiving pre-boxed food from CFAP since May 19, 2020, often more than 5000 boxes per week.

**Q: Did Food Share of Ventura County give approval to include the letter from President Trump in the USDA box?**

A: No, the decision to include the letter from President Trump was made by the USDA and communicated as a requirement to its government contracted third-party vendors. Food Share of Ventura County was not consulted about the decision and we are concerned that our clients may consider this an endorsement. We are a non-partisan organization and do not endorse political candidates.

**Q: Will Food Share of Ventura County be removing the letter from President Trump in the USDA boxes?**

A: No, Food Share of Ventura County will not be removing the letter from President Trump in USDA boxes due to logistics and labor constraints; trying to do so would require breaking down pallets and opening and re-taping thousands of boxes each week and delay getting food to our clients who need it immediately.

**Q: If you're not removing the letter from President Trump, what are you doing to address the situation?**

A: In lieu of removing the letter, we are working closely with all of our partners providing detailed messaging including this response:

"The companies that pack the USDA boxes, as part of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, must include the letter in all of the boxes they distribute as part of their contract with the USDA. Because of this requirement, we wanted to make it clear that Food Share of Ventura County is not a government agency and does not approve nor endorse any political candidates."



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**Q: Is it OK for Food Share of Ventura County's community partners or volunteers to remove the letter from President Trump in the USDA boxes?**

A: There are no rules that prohibit our partners or volunteers from removing the letter.

**Q: What are the concerns about President Trump's letter being given to clients?**

A: Food Share of Ventura County is not a government agency, and as a nonpartisan organization the letter from President Trump may be perceived as an implied endorsement. Food Share of Ventura County's mission is to feed people and we don't want any clients to feel deterred from accessing our resources for any reason.

**Q: I have clients who say they feel afraid to come to a distribution because they unexpectedly found literature from the government in one of their food boxes. What should I tell them?**

A: We must continue to reiterate to our clients that Food Share of Ventura County:

- Is not a government agency
- Is not asking for, tracking or reporting the immigration status of its clients
- Does not endorse any political candidates
- Is a safe place for anyone who needs food to get it

Creating a culture of inclusion, security and safety at distributions is a top priority. We are not changing any of our policies related to government reporting and anyone who needs nutritious food, regardless of status, is welcome and encouraged to come to a distribution.

**Q: Is it still safe for clients who are undocumented to still get food from Food Share of Ventura County?**

A: Yes, it is still safe for our undocumented community members to get food from Food Share of Ventura County. We are not a government agency and we are not asking for, tracking or reporting the immigration status of our clients.

**Q: Are there other printed materials included in the boxes?**

A: Yes, Food Share of Ventura County has in the past included printed materials in our own dry goods boxes such as:

- Health & safety standards for managing COVID-19 risks flyer
- Census information
- Reduced utility program information