

NETWORK OF BLACK FARM GROUPS AND ADVOCATES

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate

Dear Madam Speaker and Mr. Majority Leader:

On February 12, 2010 President Obama sent to Congress an emergency proposal to amend the fiscal year 2010 budget to appropriate funding to settle claims for prior discrimination brought by Black farmers against the Department of Agriculture. The President's submission included both the necessary legislative language and the OMB analysis of the proposal recommending that the President submit it to Congress.

This proposal was included with two other FY2010 supplemental appropriation proposals.

The proposal needs immediate action. In fact, Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack has stated that the deadline funding for the historic settlement of these claims, on which the proposal is based, is March 31. As you know, this settlement and the need for the funding are well documented and the legislation is in its final form. All Congress needs to do is schedule it for a floor debate and vote on it.

Please keep in mind that the deadline has a human face to it. Most of the late filers in the lawsuit against the USDA, for whom the settlement is to assist, are now older, many have retired and some are deceased. These Black farmers or their families have been waiting for close to ten years for a settlement of their case. Justice for these farmers simply cannot be delayed any longer.

Therefore, this letter is to urge you to do everything in your power to pass this emergency legislation by March 31.

cc:

President Barack Obama

Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack

Representative James Clyburn (D-SC), House Majority Whip

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Representative David Obey (D-WI), Chair, House Appropriations Committee

Senator Daniel K. Inouye (D-HI), Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS), Ranking Minority Member, Senate Appropriations Committee

Representative Charles J. Lewis (R-CA), Ranking Minority Member, House Appropriations Committee

Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), Chair, Senate Agriculture Committee

Senator Saxby Chamblis (R-GA), Ranking Minority Member, Senate Agriculture Committee

Representative Collin Peterson (D-MN), Chair, House Agriculture Committee

Representative Frank D. Lucas (R-OK), Ranking Minority Member, House Agriculture Committee

Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA), Chair, Congressional Black Caucus

Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Senate Agriculture Committee

Representative Artur Davis (D-AL)

Representative Sanford Bishop (D-GA)

Representative G. K. Butterfield (D-NC)

Representative Bennie Thompson (D-MS)

NETWORK OF BLACK FARM ORGANIZATIONS AND ADVOCATES

Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation - Calvin King (870-734-1140)

Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association - Gary Grant (252-826-3017)

Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund - Ralph Paige (404-765-0991)

Land Loss Prevention Project - Savi Horne (800-672-5839)

Mississippi Family Farmer's Association - Eddie Carthan (662-458-0983)

Rural Advancement Fund - Georgia Good (803 378 9450)

United Farmers USA – Hezakeiah Gibson (803 410 2055)