

Adams Introduces Justice for Black Farmers Act in US House



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WASHINGTON, D.C. – This week, **Congresswoman Alma S. Adams, Ph.D. (NC-12)**, Vice Chair of the House's Committee on Agriculture, introduced the ***Justice for Black Farmers Act of 2021***, a comprehensive bill to address the sordid history of discrimination in federal agricultural policy, in the United States House of Representatives. The ***Justice for Black Farmers Act*** will reform the U.S. Department of Agriculture, provide debt relief and create a land grant program to encourage a new generation of Black farmers.

"I'm proud to be joined by my colleagues and numerous organizations in support of the ***Justice for Black Farmers Act of 2021***, which would enact policies to end discrimination within the USDA, protect the 50,000 remaining Black farmers from losing their land, provide land grants to create a new generation of Black farmers and restore the land base that has been lost." **said Vice Chair Alma Adams.** "Additionally, the Justice For Black Farmers Act of 2021 provides substantial resources for 1890 Land-Grant Institutions to help Black farmers get up and running and includes funding for all HBCUs to expand their agriculture research and courses of study. This is critically urgent legislation that corrects a grave injustice and encourages and empowers the next generation of Black farmers."

"I am pleased to join the effort to bring long sought justice to America's Black farmers by co-leading the Justice for Black Farmers Act," **said Congressional Black Caucus Chairwoman Joyce Beatty.** "In the United States, due to a long history of discrimination, it is estimated that there are less than 50,000 remaining Black farmers. This bill will end discrimination within USDA, Protect Remaining Black Farmers from Land Loss, Restore the Land Base Lost by Black Farmers, and forgive the USDA debt of Black farmers who filed claims in the Pigford litigation; and help mitigate the harms done to Black farmers, which at one point in our history numbered more than a 1 million, including 95 pre-Civil War farming settlements in Ohio, according to historian Anna-Lisa Cox. I find the timing of this legislation especially compelling since its being introduced during Black History month during the 50th Anniversary of the Congressional Black Caucus. I will continue to fight for Black farmers, while paying homage to their rich legacy, utilizing Our Power, and Our Message."

Original cosponsors in the House include **Representatives Joyce Beatty (OH-03), Danny Davis (IL-07), Alcee Hastings (FL-20), Jahana Hayes (CT-05), Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX-30), Al Lawson (FL-05), Donald Payne, Jr. (NJ-10), Stacey Plaskett (VI-AL), Ayanna Pressley (MA-07), Bobby Rush (IL-01), and Terri Sewell (AL-07). Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Tina Smith (D-MN), Reverend Raphael Warnock (D-GA), and Patrick Leahy (D-VT)** previously introduced the legislation in the United States Senate.

"Overtly discriminatory and unjust federal policy has robbed Black families in the United States of the ability to build and pass on intergenerational wealth," **said Senator Cory Booker.** "When it comes to farming and agriculture, we know that there is a direct connection between discriminatory policies within the USDA and the enormous land loss we have seen among Black farmers over the past century. The Justice for Black Farmers Act will address and correct USDA discrimination and take bold steps to forgive debt and restore the land that has been lost in order to empower a new generation of Black farmers to succeed and thrive."

Over 100 organizations have voiced their support for the legislation. [A full list of organizations supporting the legislation is available here.](#)

Specifically, the ***Justice for Black Farmers Act*** will:

- **End Discrimination within USDA:** Creates an independent civil rights oversight board to review appeals of civil rights complaints filed against USDA, investigate reports of discrimination within USDA, and provide oversight of Farm Service Agency County Committees. The Act also creates an Equity Commission and reforms the USDA Office of Civil Rights, including by placing a moratorium on foreclosures during the pendency of civil rights complaints.
- **Protect Remaining Black Farmers from Land Loss:** Increases funding for the Heirs' Property Relending Program at USDA to provide Black Farmers pro bono assistance, succession planning, and support for development of farmer cooperatives. The Act also creates and funds a new bank to provide financing and grants to Black farmer and rancher cooperative financial institutions, and forgives USDA debt of Black farmers who filed claims in the Pigford litigation.
- **Restore the Land Base Lost by Black Farmers:** Creates a new Equitable Land Access Service within USDA to acquire farmland and provide land grants of up to 160 acres to existing and aspiring Black farmers. To help ensure their success, these new Black farmers will be provided access to USDA operating loans and mortgages on favorable terms.
- **Create a Farm Conservation Corps:** Creates a program for young adults from socially disadvantaged communities to be provided the skills to pursue careers in farming and ranching. Participants will be paid by USDA to serve as on-farm apprentices at no cost to socially disadvantaged, beginning, and organic farmers and ranchers with annual gross farm income of less than \$250,000. Black participants who gain experience through this program will have priority for land grants.
- **Empower HBCUs and Advocates for Black farmers:** Provides resources to 1890s and nonprofits who serve Black farmers to offer pro bono assistance in identifying land for USDA to purchase and provide as land grants; help to new Black farmers in getting up and running; technical training; and other assistance including succession planning and legal assistance. The Act also provides new funding to HBCUs to expand their agriculture research and courses of study.
- **Assist All Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers:** Increases funding for USDA technical assistance and for programs such as the Conservation Stewardship Program and Rural Energy for America Program, and gives priority for these programs, as well as increased access to capital, to all socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.
- **Enact System Reforms to Help All Farmers and Ranchers:** In order for new and existing Black farmers to have a real chance to succeed and thrive, the Justice for Black Farmers Act substantially reforms and strengthens the Packers and Stockyards Act to stop abusive practices by big multinational meatpacking companies and protect all family farmers and ranchers.

Congresswoman Alma Adams represents North Carolina's 12th Congressional District (Charlotte) and serves as Vice Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture. Additionally, she serves on the House Financial Services Committee and the House Education & Labor Committee, where she serves as Chair of the Workforce Protections Subcommittee. In 2015, she founded the Adams Hunger Initiative to address food insecurity across Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the 12th Congressional District.

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