

Attorneys for Women Farmers Question Government's Proposed Settlement of Gender Discrimination Suit

Arent Fox attorneys express appreciation, but question adequacy of proposed resolution

WASHINGTON, DC – FEBRUARY 25, 2011 – Women farmers, including those who are plaintiffs in the pending gender discrimination lawsuit filed in 2000 against the US Department of Agriculture for its administration of farm loan programs, *Love v. Vilsack*, and their counsel, **Arent Fox LLP**, appreciate the Obama administration's recognition of USDA's systematic discrimination against women farmers dating back many decades, and the attempt to finally address that discrimination. However, there are some serious concerns about the claim resolution program announced today by the US Department of Justice.

Rosemary Love, a named plaintiff in the *Love v. Vilsack* case, said "Through our lawyers we have been engaged for a year and a half in settlement discussions with the government in an effort to resolve our clients' claims of discrimination. The government's announcement today is a positive step forward, but the proposed program is fraught with problems. We are hopeful that we can work together to address the issues of concern to ensure proper resolution redress of the claims of women farmers who have suffered for decades."

Women farmers and their advocates point out that the announced program treats women farmers far less favorably than government settlements for African-American and Native American farmers who have also suffered decades of discrimination. Women are being offered substantially less money, and being subjected to a more onerous process and more burdensome evidentiary requirements than claimants from other minority groups, for no good reason.

This is particularly troublesome given that women farmers make up a substantially larger portion of farmers nationwide. "More than 300,000 current principal farm operators are women," said Arent Fox attorney **Kristine Dunne**. "They along with women who have farmed, or attempted to do so, over the past several decades anxiously await a demonstration by this Administration that the government is committed to providing full redress for women farmers, who have suffered, in the aggregate, greater injury due to USDA's discrimination than any other group of minority farmers."

In addition, the attorneys note that the government may be rushing to put the women's claims program into effect when it has yet to have third party entities in place to staff the call centers that will be responding to women farmers' questions about the claims process. In doing so, this process could be compromised from its very inception. "Having waited so long for justice, the women farmers deserve to have their claims heard in a fair and equitable process. While the Administration has heard some of our concerns, there is work yet to be done to accomplish this," Ms. Dunne said.

For further information:

Kristine Dunne at 202.857.6385 or dunne.kristine@arentfox.com or visit our website at: www.womenfarmers.com.

###

About Arent Fox:

Arent Fox LLP (www.arentfox.com), with offices in Washington, DC, New York and Los Angeles is a recognized leader in areas including complex litigation, intellectual property, real estate, telecommunications, health care, automotive, sports, white collar, international trade, and bankruptcy. With more than 350 lawyers nationwide, Arent Fox has extensive experience in corporate securities, financial restructuring, government relations, labor and employment, finance, tax, corporate compliance, and the global business market. The firm represents Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, trade associations, foreign governments and other entities.