

Support Equality for Women Farmers



Co-Sponsor H.R. 4264

February 18, 2010

Dear Colleague:

We wanted to bring to your attention a recent [New York Times editorial](#) about how after more than a decade after the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reached a landmark settlement for having cheated generations of black farmers through “indifference and blatant discrimination,” many still are waiting for their claims to be settled. The editorial concludes that the nation should right this historic injustice.

Unfortunately, the indifference and blatant discrimination by USDA was not limited to black farmers. For decades, women farmers have suffered from gender discrimination at the hands of USDA in the denial of farm loans and loan servicing. In 2000, women farmers initiated legal action against the department’s redlining, but a resolution still eludes them while the discrimination continues. That is why we have introduced the *Equality for Women Farmers Act* (H.R. 4264) and we strongly urge you to cosponsor this bill.

Thousands of women farmers across the U.S. have detailed the discrimination they suffered in seeking farm loans from USDA and how such actions by the federal government put them at a disadvantage. Women often were told that the department had run out of applications or that loan funds were exhausted only to see their male counterparts receive the necessary documents and loan funds. Many women simply were told to leave the farming to men. The data is clear that women farmers consistently received far less than their fair share of farm loans from USDA, even though they were just as qualified as men who applied for loans.

Despite the large number of women farmers who have come forward, the claimants have been unable to secure class status in order for all affected women farmers’ claims to proceed in a single lawsuit. Instead, women farmers soon may be forced to bring individual suits in courts across the country making it more difficult and unlikely that they will receive justice.

Our bill, the *Equality for Women Farmers Act*, would remedy this situation by establishing a Special Master to take action on this issue and process the claims expeditiously. Furthermore, the bill would require USDA to institute reforms to address the systemic discrimination against women farmers.

This bill addresses an issue of fundamental fairness – all farmers, regardless of their gender or ethnicity, should be judged on the merit of their applications for their loans. Gender never should be the determining factor to economic security. We urge you to support this bill.

If you would like to become a co-sponsor of the *Equality for Women Farmers Act*, or need additional information, please contact Brian Ronholm (5-3661) in Rep. DeLauro's office or Casey Fromson (5-8104) in Rep. Eshoo's office.

Sincerely,

ROSA L. DeLAURO
Member of Congress

ANNA G. ESHOO
Member of Congress