

GIPSA



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Office of the
Assistant Secretary
for Civil Rights

1400 Independence
Avenue SW

Washington, DC
20250

TO: Agency Heads

FROM: Joe Leonard, Jr., Ph.D. *Joe Leonard, Jr.* JUN 16 2016
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

SUBJECT: Civil Rights Policy Statement and New Alternative Dispute Resolution
Policy Statement

The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Policy Statement and the Civil Rights Policy Statement were signed on June 6, 2016, and June 8, 2016, respectively, by the Secretary of Agriculture. Both policies reinforce the Secretary's commitment to ensure nondiscrimination in United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) employment and program activities.

The annual Civil Rights Policy Statement reaffirms the Secretary's zero tolerance for discrimination in USDA's programs and activities. The new ADR Policy Statement affirms the Secretary's commitment to prevent conflicts whenever possible and to make every effort to reach an early resolution when a conflict does occur.

USDA Agencies and Staff Offices are required to display the current Civil Rights Policy Statement and the new ADR Policy Statement in strategic areas so that all applicants, employees, customers and stakeholders are able to view these policies.

I expect all Civil Rights Directors, managers and employees to model appropriate behavior and ensure that their respective agencies adhere to the policies. Your commitment and dedication in achieving the Secretary's vision for civil rights at USDA is greatly appreciated.

Attachments

cc: Agency Civil Rights Directors
Staff Office Directors



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

Alternative Dispute Resolution Policy Statement

As Secretary, I have made it my priority to ensure the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a comprehensive Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program and a workplace where personnel and program recipients are treated with dignity and respect.

Our policy at USDA is to prevent conflicts whenever possible, and when conflicts do occur, to make every effort to reach the earliest possible resolution, and we must ensure that this standard is maintained throughout the Department. This standard is applicable to all personnel and program recipients in every ADR action taken at USDA. I expect all of our managers, supervisors, employees, and customers to demonstrate respect for, and adherence to, USDA and all agency ADR policies.

We continue to make strides to resolve complaints and workplace disputes expeditiously, with a goal of maintaining an environment that fosters communication, trust, and respect among USDA, its customers, and employees.

Our ADR program is dedicated to providing parties in conflict with the opportunity to come together in a non-adversarial manner to explore possible solutions to resolve concerns. A comprehensive ADR program reduces costs and processing time while promoting good will, increasing customer satisfaction, and enhancing employee morale.

I call upon all USDA agencies and their Civil Rights Offices to continue improving our ADR program in a transparent and ethical manner, and, by doing so, increasing customer satisfaction and employee morale at USDA. I am also counting on all USDA employees and supervisors to maximize the use of ADR, in accordance with appropriate procedures, to attempt to resolve conflict and to foster a workplace that is fair and free from discrimination, intimidation, and reprisal.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas J. Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

JUN. 6 2016



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

Civil Rights Policy Statement

As Secretary, I have made it my priority to ensure the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a comprehensive civil rights program, one which not only makes us a model employer, but also a premier service provider to our millions of customers. We continue to make strides toward moving USDA in this direction. Each Agency has made considerable efforts to ensure language services, such as translation, materials, and interpretation, are available for our Limited English Proficient customers. New anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy statements address sexual and non-sexual harassment, both of which require timely responses to claims of harassment in the workplace. These accomplishments among others demonstrate our commitment to progress. But, we will not stop here; all USDA employees must constantly endeavor to improve civil rights.

Our policy at USDA is zero tolerance for any form of discrimination, and we must ensure that this standard is maintained throughout the Department. This standard is applicable to every employee and manager and to every action taken at USDA. I expect all employees to demonstrate respect for, and adherence to, USDA civil rights, equal employment opportunity, and diversity policies. Our cultural transformation programs are dedicated to increasing recognition and acceptance of cultural differences and to creating a workplace where all employees and customers are treated with dignity and respect. All senior leaders, managers, and supervisors must model appropriate behavior and lead by example.

I will continue to hold all managers, supervisors, and other employees accountable for ensuring that all USDA applicants, customers, constituents, and stakeholders are treated fairly, with integrity, and provided equal access to all opportunities, programs, and services available through "The People's Department." Accordingly, I am counting on USDA employees to dedicate themselves to developing and cultivating relationships with small and disadvantaged businesses and community-based organizations, particularly those owned and operated by, or which provide services to, minorities, women, veterans, and people with disabilities in order to foster a collaborative environment.

We strive to eliminate under-representation in the workforce by recruiting and employing a diverse workforce that is rich in talent, ideas, background, and experience. Let us continue to improve civil rights in a transparent and ethical manner, and, by doing so, we will turn the challenges of the past into opportunities for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack", written over a faint, larger version of the signature.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

JUN 8 2016