



Congress Approves Funding for Black Farmer Discrimination Settlement Statement by Community Food Security Coalition

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CONTACT:

Kathy Mulvey, 202-543-8602

The Community Food Security Coalition applauds the move by Congress to fund the \$1.25 billion settlement awarded in the Pigford case, and looks forward to President Obama's signature on this important legislation.

CFSC has joined with the Network of Black Farm Groups and Advocates and about 90 other organizations in calling for immediate action by Congress to deliver long-overdue funding for the settlement of a federal lawsuit filed by black farmers to address years of discriminatory treatment by the USDA.

After voting to delay this legislation numerous times, the Senate passed it unanimously before the Thanksgiving recess, and the House approved the Senate version of the bill this week. The Cobell Native American Land Trust lawsuit was also attached to the bill.

President Obama has urged Congress to right the wrongs of the past for farmers who faced discrimination, including by funding the Pigford settlement. In a statement on Congressional passage of the Claims Settlement Act, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said, "I applaud those who took this historic step to ensure black farmers who faced discrimination by their government finally receive justice. And I commend those who led this fight in the U.S. Congress and I am thankful for their unwavering determination."

According to the Network of Black Farm Groups and Advocates, "The next phase will be one of implementation and to assure that those who file their claims are treated with fairness and offered relief expeditiously."

Funding for the Claims Settlement Act was provided in part by rescinding surpluses from the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, which could create future budgetary challenges in tight economic times when such programs are most needed.

For more information, see press releases by the Network of Black Farm Groups and Advocates (online at <http://www.federationsoutherncoop.com/>) and NSAC (online at <http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/>).

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The Community Food Security Coalition catalyzes food systems that are healthy, sustainable, just, and democratic by building community voice and capacity for change. The coalition's diverse membership includes more than 400 social and economic justice, anti-hunger, environmental, community development, sustainable agriculture, community gardening, and other organizations.