



Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

June 8, 2022

USDA Civil Rights Policy Statement

At USDA, we are recommitting ourselves to the values of equity, inclusion, and equal opportunity for each other and those we serve. As Secretary, I will work with our dedicated team to intentionally build and advance a culture of belonging which empowers a diverse mix of people across USDA. It is USDA's mission to actively advance racial justice and equity for one another by rooting out systemic racism and strengthening civil rights programs while building trust within and outside the Department. This commitment is reflected in USDA's Strategic Plan 2022-2026, USDA's Equity Action Plan, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights' draft FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

As a Department, our core values of respect and dignity, equity and inclusion, trust and integrity, service and results, and science leadership serve as guiding principles, defining appropriate behaviors, expectations for all employees, and directing decision making throughout all levels of the organization.

No employee, former employee, or applicant for employment at the Department will be denied equal opportunity because of race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, retaliation, or any other non-merit-based factor. This not only is the law; it is an essential component of the Department's mission and our responsibility to the public we serve.

All employees have the freedom to compete on a fair and level playing field with equal opportunity for available employment and advancement opportunities. Equal employment opportunity covers all personnel/employment programs, management practices, and decisions, including recruitment/hiring, merit promotion, transfer, reassignments, training and career development, benefits, and separation. These civil rights principles are more than employees' rights by law—they are core values at the USDA.

USDA strives to become a leader in EEO and a model employer. All USDA applicants and employees have the right not only to be free from harassment and discrimination but also to raise an allegation of harassment or discrimination and not fear reprisal. I will not tolerate any form of workplace harassment. Agencies are required to respond to, address, and correct any harassing conduct before it becomes severe or pervasive, and USDA will continue to quickly process complaints of harassment, discrimination, and reprisal and provide robust EEO training to all employees.

I will hold all employees and managers accountable for doing their part to ensure all USDA applicants, customers, constituents, and stakeholders are provided equal access to all opportunities, programs, and services available through USDA. Accordingly, all senior leaders, managers, and supervisors must act in a manner that is deserving of the public's trust and with the utmost integrity in everything we do as public servants, leading always by example, treating everyone with dignity and respect, and promoting an ethical, equitable, and inclusive culture. All must comply with EEO principles as we perform the Department's mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Thomas J. Vilsack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Thomas" and last name "Vilsack" clearly legible.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary