

# NEWS

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## Statement

by  
**Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickmanon**  
**Civil Rights Action Team**

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"Today I am announcing the appointment of Pearlie S. Reed, associate chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, to head a civil rights action team to do a thorough audit of USDA civil rights issues inside and outside the department.

"Mr. Reed, a 28-year USDA career employee, has long been recognized both within and outside the department for his strong leadership, clear vision, and keen understanding of how to integrate and implement massive change. Those skills will be critical in putting together a team and an agenda to tackle civil rights issues dealing with both our employees and our customers.

"I have asked for a final set of recommendations no later than mid-February. The team will consist of representatives of each of USDA's mission areas, and I have told my senior staff that I hold them personally responsible for cooperating fully with this effort. The action team will take a close look at how things are working at all organizational levels and recommend ways to solve existing problems.

"Today at USDA, civil rights compliance has shifted into overdrive. There is nothing more important than assuring that we treat all people with dignity and civility. I am devoted to solving this department's civil rights problems--both inside and outside. The buck stops here but I have made it clear that every employee in this department--from me on down to every county level--is responsible for civil rights enforcement.

"We have made progress in this area. But these are complex problems without simple solutions. We're doing a lot right and this is the time to expand and replicate what works and identify and eliminate what doesn't.

"Earlier this week I announced several other steps as part of an intensified effort to more effectively help socially disadvantaged and minority farmers. I directed each USDA agency and state office that serves farmers to establish an outreach office that reports directly to the administrator or state director. I laid out a plan for a national dialogue to address civil rights concerns and program delivery. And I asked the Office of the Inspector General to investigate complaints of discrimination in farm loans.

"We have a real opportunity to make positive change in the area of civil rights enforcement--to ensure that USDA is a diverse, civil department to both its employees and its customers. I am committed to bringing about that change."

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