

Written by Grassley Press
Friday, 24 June 2011 12:18

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Prepared Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Senate Agriculture Committee

**Farm Bill Accountability: The Importance of Measuring Performance,
While Eliminating Duplication and Waste**

Thursday, June 23, 2011

Madam Chairwoman, the focus of today's hearing is timely as we consider what policies to set in the next farm bill. We have to make sure farm bill programs are being implemented the way we intended.

And if they are not being properly administered, then we need to fix the problems. I want to thank the undersecretaries and assistant secretary for coming today. I am eager to hear their testimony on a variety of issues.

I know many farmers are probably eager to hear the department's comments regarding crop insurance. Most farmers tell me crop insurance is crucial to their operations.

But as we know, the crop insurance program has had a reduction in funds. So it's more important than ever that we hear what the department is doing to minimize waste, fraud, and abuse in the crop insurance program. We have to make sure those dollars go to those who really need it.

Grassley asks Asst. Secretary for Civil Rights about handling of discrimination cases at USDA

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I am also eager to hear from the department about what they are doing to ensure individuals applying for farm program payments are truly actively engaged in farming.

I am also particularly pleased Assistant Secretary Leonard is here today. Thank you Madam Chairwoman for requesting his presence on today's panel. As you know Madam Chairwoman, I made a request back in March for a full committee hearing on the activities of the Department of Agriculture's Office of Civil Rights.

I will note I also made the same request to the past two chairs of the Agriculture Committee as well.

While I'm glad Mr. Leonard is here today, I still believe the civil rights and discrimination issues facing the department are a big enough concern that this committee needs to take up the issue in a separate hearing.

I do hope you will consider conducting a separate hearing on civil rights and discrimination issues at the Department of Agriculture in the near future.

As for today's hearing Mr. Leonard, I hope you will shed some light on how the department is handling some of the problems that have plagued it over the years.

Specifically, I would like you to speak on what the department is doing to address complaints made by employees. I continue to hear from Agriculture Department employees that they have to wait a long time to have their complaints heard and processed.

I have also received reports about retaliatory behavior by managers after complaints are made. What is being done to address these concerns?

I am not passing judgment on the validity of any employee's particular claim. My concern is that their claims be considered in a timely and appropriate manner, because that is what they deserve.

I hope the department will provide us with some idea of how it is making sure that happens.

Thank you Madam Chairwoman.

Grassley asks Asst. Secretary for Civil Rights about handling of discrimination cases at USDA

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