

Assist Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Act of 2018

**Sponsored by Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Senator Tina Smith (D-MN),
and Representative Michelle Lujan Grisham (D-NM)**

Bill Summary

The Assist Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Act will create opportunities for our nation's most underserved farmers and ranchers – particularly farmers of color and military veterans – and help ensure that the 2018 Farm Bill serves all farm communities.

Supporting the Diversity of American Agriculture

Ripple effects from the recent downturn in the farm economy are being felt across Rural America, as farmers struggle to stay afloat. Military veterans and farmers of color, who are essential in ensuring both the security of our nation as well as our food supply, are especially vulnerable during this economic downswing.

Although federal resources are an important part of the farm safety net, military veterans and racial minorities have not historically participated in, or benefitted from USDA programs to the same extent as other farmers. This disparity disadvantages these farmers in both the national and global economy, and stifles the growth and prosperity of rural communities. Moreover, with several wars being waged over the past decade, an influx of returning military personnel are looking for ways to continue serving their country by transitioning into a rewarding career in farming.

The Farm Bill can help level the playing field by arming our nation's minority farmers and military veterans and with the tools they need to thrive and compete in the agricultural economy. Both of these populations are a growing sector of the U.S. farm economy and the continued success of American Agriculture depends on the success of all of our farmers.

The Assist Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Act will ensure the success of the next generation of farmers and ranchers by:

- Reauthorizing and providing renewed mandatory funding for the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (also known as the 2501 Program), which expires and runs out of funding on September 30, 2018.
- Increasing transparency and accountability to ensure the 2501 Program remains responsive and accessible to those serving our nation's most vulnerable farming communities.
- Requiring the Secretary of Agriculture to compile and publicly report data annually for each county and state in the United States on the participation by race, gender, ethnicity and veteran status in all USDA programs serving farmers or ranchers.