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PRESS RELEASE

June 22, 2009 - 10:35am

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## SENATORS URGE SETTLEMENT IN USDA DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT BY HISPANIC FARMERS

By SENATOR ROBERT MENEDEZ

Washington, DC –U. S. Senator Menendez (D-NJ) and seven Senate colleagues are urging President Obama to settle outstanding discrimination lawsuits by Hispanic farmers who have been denied access to United States Department of Agriculture loans and programs for more than a decade (a news report on this issue is available here:

[http://www.elpasotimes.com/ci\\_12532653?source=most\\_email](http://www.elpasotimes.com/ci_12532653?source=most_email)). Earlier this year \$1.25 billion was allocated in the Fiscal Year 2010 budget to settle similar outstanding lawsuits by black farmers in the Pigford v Glickman suit, which the senators applauded. In their letter to the president, they reminded President Obama that the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 calls on the administration to resolve outstanding discrimination lawsuits against the USDA brought by Hispanic and other farmers in an expeditious and just manner.

"Indeed, we will never be able to close the entire book of discrimination within the USDA until all victims receive fair and just settlements as compensation for the losses they suffered and the USDA is reformed," wrote the senators. "To date, approximately \$2.25 billion will have been set aside to resolve USDA discrimination against black farmers, yet thousands of Hispanic farmers and ranchers, many of whom are our constituents, continue to suffer from precisely the same discrimination and have seen no recourse thus far. The USDA's corrective role in this instance has been clearly laid out, and

### Contributors



Wally Edge

**Coming Soon:**  
PolitickerNJ.com's 2009 County Chairman Report Card

The *PolitickerNJ.com* County Chairmen Report Card, a popular feature in the early years of this website, will return in August 2009 using the same ... >



Bob Torricelli

**Torricelli on making perfection the enemy of good**

It's called making perfection the enemy of the good and it's the first lesson of legislating.

Every legislative action involves ... >



Michael Patrick Carroll

**Justice Served**

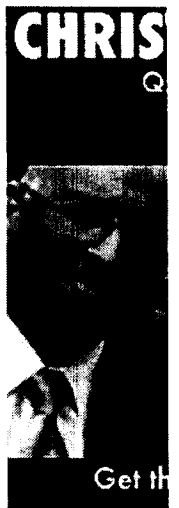
In a rebuke to Judge Sotomayor, who found neither empathy nor justice for victims of obvious racial discrimination, the SCOTUS struck another blow ... >



Jeff Michaels

**The Palin Follies**

Sad news last week - it's official that Sarah Palin resigned as Governor of Alaska, presumably to attempt to burnish her leadership credentials ... >



Hot Topic

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Christi

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there remains no legitimate reason to delay action for any of the affected groups."

Signing the letter to the president were: Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Patty Murray (D-WA), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Arlen Specter (D-PA), Tom Udall (D-NM), Mark Udall (D-CO) and Michael Bennet (D-CO).

Click here to read letter:

<http://menendez.senate.gov/pdf/06202009USDAHispanicFarmersLetter.pdf>

Text of letter below:

June 17, 2009

President Barack H. Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We applaud your recent commitment to appropriate \$1.25 billion in the Fiscal Year 2010 budget to settle outstanding discrimination lawsuits by black farmers who missed the initial filing deadline in the Pigford v. Glickman lawsuit. In your statement on Wednesday, May 6, 2009, you said that "I am pleased that we are now able to close this chapter in the agency's history" and that you "hope[d] . . . that the farmers and their families who were denied access to USDA loans and programs will be made whole and will have the chance to rebuild their lives and businesses." Indeed, we share your desire to bring this ugly chapter to a close by restoring justice and fairness to those who were discriminated against based on their race, ethnicity, or gender.

Unfortunately, the settlement of the Pigford case merely closes a single chapter of a long narrative of discrimination within the USDA. Indeed, we will never be able to close the entire book of discrimination within the USDA until all victims receive fair and just settlements as compensation for the losses they suffered and the USDA is reformed. To date, approximately \$2.25 billion will have been set aside to resolve USDA discrimination against black farmers, yet thousands of Hispanic farmers and ranchers, many of whom are our constituents, continue to suffer from precisely the same discrimination and have seen no recourse thus far. The USDA's corrective role in this instance has been clearly laid out, and there remains no legitimate reason to delay action for any of the affected groups.

Moreover, despite language in Section 14011 of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 urging the Administration to settle the outstanding discrimination suits brought by Hispanic and other farmers, as well as encouraging words from Secretary Vilsack himself, we are not aware that USDA has begun working to settle these cases. Lawyers representing Hispanic farmers and ranchers have met with members of Secretary Vilsack's staff and have offered potential solutions to resolve the pending lawsuits and reform USDA policies to ensure the agency will never discriminate again.

**Richard LaRossa**

**Christie for President?**

Does the Christie campaign think this campaign is over? >



**Alan Steinberg**

**Does Corzine Have a Viable Comeback Strategy?**

Two weeks ago, on Corruption Thursday, I wrote a PolitickerNJ.com column entitled "Corzine is Not Corrupt – But The Corruption Scandal Dooms His ... >



**Dr. Joseph Marbach**

**New Jersey's Culture of Corruption**

Whenever a politician is charged or convicted with violating the public trust, I am asked by my students, reporters and friends why this happens with ... >



**Rob Tornoe**

**Happy Fourth of July**



**Joey Novick**

**2009 NJ Powerlessness List**

You may have noticed that PolitickerNJ recently posted their own Power List for 2009. Their list identifies New Jersey's 100 most politically ... >



**Patricia Quattrocchi**

**Jerry Green: A Man for all Positions**

Chris Christie paid a visit to downtown Plainfield, here in Union County last week, he was accompanied by the District 22 GOP Assembly candidates, ... >



**Murray Sabrin**

**Coming to America 60 years ago**

On a hot, sunny Saturday 60 years ago we arrived in America. My parents decided months earlier to come to the land of opportunity from war torn ... >



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Accordingly, we urge you to work to ensure Hispanic farmers and ranchers, like black farmers with whom you have already settled, can begin to rebuild their lives and businesses. Fundamental fairness requires nothing less, and inconsistent applications of justice only serve to threaten the foundations of this great nation. The sooner we can resolve this issue once and for all, the sooner we can look forward to an agency that serves all Americans equally.

Sincerely,

ROBERT MENENDEZ  
United States Senator

BARBARA BOXER  
United States Senator

ARLEN  
SPECTER  
United States Senator

MARK UDALL  
United States Senator

PATTY MURRAY  
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MICHAEL BENNET  
States Senator

SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ can be reached via email at  
afshin\_mohamadi@menendez.senate.gov.

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**Poll**

**Who wins the race for Governor?**

Chris Christie	37%
Jon Corzine	47%
Jason Cullen	3%
Chris Daggett	5%
Ken Kaplan	0%
Joshua Leinsdorf	0%
Alvin Lindsay	0%
David Meiswinkle	1%
Greg Pason	1%
Kostas Petris	1%
Gary Steele	0%
Gary Stein	0%
Floyd Vivino	0%
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