

From: BERTHA TORRES [<mailto:Bert9436@msn.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2004 9:37 AM

To: CIG

Subject: Thank you! Secretary is sending a message regarding women minorities and is setting aside funding!

Dear Cig:

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

I have noted Secretary Veneman is setting aside 10% for women minorities and Indian tribes on the appropriations for conservation. BRAVO!

Several recommendations:

1. We are being lumped in with Indian tribes. We encourage funding for tribes, however, tribes already have a set aside and should continue to have a set aside.
2. The 10% set aside includes all minorities. Blacks already have set aside funds and we strongly encourage a set aside in this funding for blacks as well.
3. Hispanic/Latina women do not have a set aside and we encourage language specify "women/Hispanic/Latinas" and a percentage be set aside for this group.
4. We encourage a specific dollar amount for Hispanic/Latina women farmers and ranchers/
5. And, we encourage a specific dollar amount be set aside for women farmers who grow food for human consumption and a set aside for women farmers who grow feed for livestock.

And, most important, we will strongly encourage the Secretary "insist" vis-à-vis policy directive and legislative language that funds not used from the set aside will remain at USDA for only one purpose: "utilization by women farmers". Allowing "unused set aside funds" to revert to other programs at USDA actually sets a "higher bar" for minorities and "provides" an incentive to other USDA departments to set stringent standards for approving grant applications for minorities.

In essence establishing a set aside can be reviewed as unproductive when you allow other groups to access unused funds. If the intent of the Secretary is to prioritize funding for women minorities then please allow the funds to stay in that "kitty" until they are used by women. The agencies then will take action to appropriate the funds as intended. Congress is a great incentive when asked "why funds have not been expended in a certain area".

Thank you.

Bertha Torres