



## **Biography of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack**

**Tom Vilsack was appointed by President Barack Obama as the 30th Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and sworn into office on January 21, 2009.**

As Secretary of Agriculture, Vilsack is working hard to strengthen the American agricultural economy, to revitalize rural communities, to protect and conserve our natural resources, and to provide a safe, sufficient and nutritious food supply for the American people. Because USDA's work affects every American everyday, we are proud to be the 'Every Way, Every Day' USDA.

As Agriculture Secretary, Vilsack has worked to implement President Obama's ambitious agenda to turn around the economy and put Americans back to work. In the tough economy of 2009, USDA supported struggling farmers and ranchers, provided food aid to 1 in 5 Americans, and implemented the Recovery Act to create jobs and build a foundation for future economic growth.

At USDA, Secretary Vilsack is working to ensure that America's forests and private working lands are conserved, implementing new strategies to restore our forests and clean our water supply. These efforts are already creating private sector jobs protecting and rehabilitating our forests and wetlands.

Under Vilsack's leadership, USDA is working to improve the health of America's children, targeting child hunger and obesity with efforts to encourage balanced meals, nutritious eating and increased physical activity. He has ordered a top to bottom review of USDA's food safety standards and has begun to implement policy changes to ensure the safety of the American food supply.

Secretary Vilsack shares President Obama's commitment to strengthening rural America, which is why USDA is helping create economic opportunities in America's rural communities by expanding broadband access, promoting renewable energy, increasing agricultural exports, taking advantage of ecosystem markets, capitalizing on outdoor recreation, and linking local farm production to local consumption. And USDA is revitalizing rural America by investing in critical infrastructure such as homes, fire stations, water systems and health clinics that will create jobs and improve the quality of life for rural residents.

Secretary Vilsack's USDA is promoting American agriculture production and biotechnology exports by conducting cutting edge agricultural research and maintaining an appropriate safety net for America's farmers and ranchers. Vilsack is committed to President Obama's National Export Initiative to expand American agricultural exports through travel, negotiations and improved promotion strategies. And he has worked to develop a United States Government-wide strategy to establish food security across the globe.

Secretary Vilsack has worked to make the Department more efficient, transparent and effective. He has instituted reforms at USDA that will save taxpayers more than \$50 million. And he has made civil rights a top priority, taking definitive action to improve the Department's record and to move USDA into a new era as a model employer and premier service provider.

Prior to his appointment, Vilsack served two terms as the Governor of Iowa, the first Democrat elected to that office in more than 30 years. In that role, and as a state senator and the mayor of Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, Vilsack has a remarkable record of making positive change in the lives of those he has served.

A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Vilsack was born into an orphanage and adopted in 1951. He received a bachelor's degree from Hamilton College in 1972 and earned his law degree from Albany Law School in 1975. Following school, he and his wife Christie moved to Mt. Pleasant, Iowa – her hometown – where he practiced law. The Vilsacks have two adult sons, Jess and Doug; a daughter-in-law, Kate, who's married to Jess; and one grandchild.