

National Bulletin: 230

Subject: EOP – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Civil Rights Policy for Fiscal Year (FY) 2011

**Purpose.** To notify all NRCS employees of the Civil Rights Policy Statement for FY 2011.

**Expiration Date.** September 30, 2012.

**Background.** Each year the Chief of NRCS releases a new civil rights policy statement for the agency. The following is the Civil Rights Policy Statement for FY 2011.

**Explanation.** As Chief of NRCS, I believe it is important for us as a Federal agency to periodically renew and emphasize our dedication and support to equal opportunity for our employees, applicants for employment, and customers. The agency's employees are its greatest asset for enabling people to be good stewards of the Nation's soil, water, and related natural resources on non-Federal lands – in other words, in "Helping People Help the Land." Moreover, I firmly believe that to fulfill our mission and provide service throughout the Nation, NRCS employees and the public we serve must always be treated in a fair, non-discriminatory, and equitable manner.

It is NRCS policy to treat all customers and employees equitably regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or familial status, parental status, and protected genetic information, and that employees and customers must be free from reprisal or harassment in the pursuit of fairness and equal employment opportunity.

Prohibited discrimination is a violation of Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and will not be tolerated. Complainants, representatives, and witnesses involved in complaints of discrimination will be unimpeded and free from restraint, coercion, or retaliation in the exercise of eliminating discrimination in the workplace.

Secretary Vilsack called for a cultural transformation at the Department of Agriculture wherein we are held accountable for enforcing a policy of zero tolerance for discrimination. All NRCS employees are expected to model equal opportunity compliance. Managers and supervisors must demonstrate an elevated regard for equal opportunity by supporting civil rights, equal employment opportunity, and diversity. Because accountability is key when it comes to realizing the goals of cultural transformation expressed by Secretary Vilsack, NRCS will ensure appropriate corrective or disciplinary action is taken against violators who engage in discriminatory behavior. In addition, managers' and supervisors' performance evaluations and ratings will consider their success in implementing and enforcing equal opportunity standards.

NRCS has not only a national but also an international presence. The international character of our organization and customers underscores the importance of being able to work with a wide variety of cultures. Similarly, a commitment to diversity and inclusion is critical to maintaining a multicultural workforce. It is our differences that mirror the rich diversity of society, making us a model employer capable of bringing out the best talents and skills in a diverse workforce. The agency is steadfast in our commitment to a professional work environment that respects differences and embraces diversity of employees and customers alike.

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The Civil Rights Division will continue to provide guidance and ensure the agency's compliance with the laws and principles of equality for employment and programs. Only with each employee's cooperation and commitment to this Civil Rights policy, can NRCS achieve and maintain a diverse workforce with an abundance of opportunities for every employee to reach his or her full potential and achieve our critical mission of providing assistance and service to conserve our Nation's natural resources.

I trust that you will take this responsibility seriously and do your part to renew and champion our commitment to equal opportunity.

**Contact.** If you have questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints of discrimination, contact the Civil Rights Division at (301) 504-2181.

Dave White  
Chief