

should greatly concern each of us as well that in my home State of North Carolina, much like every State where farming is a way of life, there has been a 64 percent decline in minority farmers in just over 15 years, from 6,996 in 1978 to 2,498 farms in 1992.

Black farmers are declining at three times the rate of white farmers.

There are several reasons why the number of black farmers are declining so rapidly. But the one that has been documented time and time again is the discriminatory environment present in the Department of Agriculture, the very agent established to accommodate and assist the special needs of farmers.

The plight of the black farmer in America is a plight that has been fueled by the sting of discrimination. Once land is lost, it is very, very difficult to recover. And land has been lost by black farmers and black families.

Mr. Speaker, it is difficult enough for small farmers to eke out an existence in this time of inclement weather, economic downturns, and big farm takeovers. This difficult situation should not be made more difficult by discrimination rearing its ugly head.

When the history of this century is written, it is my hope that the year 2000 will be recorded as significant in the effort to change the course and the culture of the United States Department of Agriculture and the muddled legacy that it has left for black farmers.

This resolution is a step, perhaps, well-intended in the right direction, but it is a very, very limited step.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DICKEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) for her statements. And I think those are the reasons why I have gotten involved. It has taken me a longer time to learn that than she has. But since 1993, I have been listening, I have been meeting, I have been listening, I have been talking, I have been trying to find out. Now what we have is one last plea on my part on behalf of the black farmers.

My statement of January 8 was we cannot proceed any further without my colleagues in Congress being supportive of this effort. If we vote this concurrent resolution down, we are going to be changing it from legislative remedies to political, and I beg my colleagues not to do that.

These black farmers have not, in any way, done anything to deserve this, to be considered a political football, that someone has to be of a certain party or had to be a certain type of person to be able to bring something like this. It is a legislative matter. It is brought so that we can show concurrence. That is what it is.

I plead with my colleagues to let this pass so that we can, at least, say we are in unity with the black farmers. And then we can go forward from there. If we take it away from that, from being legislative, and we make it political and say, no, sir, we are not going to do this because somebody may get credit or can blame somebody else, then the black farmers are going to get a no in the same way that they have been getting noes for years and years and years. A no is a no, no matter what we say to it.

I think it would be a real disservice to their commitment and to their sacrifice for us to say no to them again. I plead with my colleagues to vote for this resolution.

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, today the House will be considering House Concurrent Resolution 296, a resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the settlement process for discrimination claims brought by African-American farmers against the Department of Agriculture be carried out in a timely and expeditious manner.

The Secretary of Agriculture has conceded that the Department of Agriculture discriminated against certain African-American farmers in the delivery of payments from the Commodity Credit Corporation and disaster assistance programs during the period from 1981 through 1996. This discrimination has had a significant impact on the lives and economic well-being of these African-American farmers and their families.

A Federal District Court Judge ruled in April, 1999, that these African-American farmers, as a result of this discrimination, are entitled to settlement from the Department of Agriculture. However, even a year later, these claims have not been addressed by the Department of Agriculture in a timely manner. These settlements are desperately needed and much-deserved. The Court-mandated funds will help these farmers recover their losses due to this discrimination and provide them with the financial means to get back on their feet.

I rise in strong support of this resolution and I would like to thank Representative DICKEY for his efforts to ensure that these claims are dealt with fairly and expeditiously. I ask my colleagues in the House to join me in urging the Department of Agriculture to expedite the settlement process and commit the necessary resources to assist these farmers.

Mr. DICKEY. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded that their remarks are to be directed to the Chair and not in the second person to other Members of the House.

The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. DICKEY), that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 296.

The question was taken.

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DICKEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Con. Res. 296.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arkansas?

There was no objection.

SOUTHEAST FEDERAL CENTER PUBLIC-PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2000

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3069) to authorize the Administrator of General Services to provide for redevelopment of the Southeast Federal Center in the District of Columbia, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3069

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Southeast Federal Center Public-Private Development Act of 2000".

SEC. 2. SOUTHEAST FEDERAL CENTER DEFINED.

In this Act, the term "Southeast Federal Center" means the site in the southeast quadrant of the District of Columbia that is under the control and jurisdiction of the General Services Administration and extends from Issac Hull Avenue on the east to 1st Street on the west, and from M Street on the north to the Anacostia River on the south, excluding an area on the river at 1st Street owned by the District of Columbia and a building west of Issac Hull Avenue and south of Tingey Street under the control and jurisdiction of the Department of the Navy.

SEC. 3. SOUTHEAST FEDERAL CENTER DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator of General Services may enter into agreements (including leases, contracts, cooperative agreements, limited partnerships, joint ventures, trusts, and limited liability company agreements) with a private entity to provide for the acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, operation, maintenance, or use of the Southeast Federal Center, including improvements thereon, or such other activities related to the Southeast Federal Center as the Administrator considers appropriate.

(b) TERMS AND CONDITIONS.—An agreement entered into under this section—

(1) shall have as its primary purpose enhancing the value of the Southeast Federal Center to the United States;

(2) shall be negotiated pursuant to such procedures as the Administrator considers necessary to ensure the integrity of the selection process and to protect the interests of the United States;

(3) may provide a lease option to the United States, to be exercised at the discretion of the Administrator, to occupy any general purpose office space in a facility covered under the agreement;

(4) shall not require, unless specifically determined otherwise by the Administrator, Federal