

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-VA-3), voted today in favor of H.R. 4783, a bill to provide \$1.15 billion to fund the final settlement of decades of widespread and rampant discrimination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The bill passed 256 to 152.

In 1999, a federal judge approved a settlement agreement in a class action lawsuit (*Pigford v. Glickman*) filed by Black farmers alleging that the USDA discriminated against them in their applications for loans and other assistance. The judge ruled in the settlement that if claimants farmed between 1981 and 1996, and had filed a complaint of discrimination by July 1, 1997 and could prove the claim, they were eligible for monetary compensation.

However, thousands of farmers failed to file a complaint by the July, 1997 cutoff date. Claims filed after the cutoff date were denied and received no opportunity to be judged on their merit. Congress authorized a cause of action for the late filing farmers, allowing them to have a “determination on the merits” of their discrimination claims.

On February 18 of this year, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced that USDA had reached a settlement with the *Pigford II* claimants, conditional on the appropriation of \$1.15 billion.

“Had it not been for the insistency and consistency of John H. Boyd, President of the National Black Farmers Association, urging the branches of the U.S. government to right this injustice, none of it may have occurred. This bill voted on today will provide a final settlement for the Black farmers’ lawsuit. This settlement is long overdue.” said Rep. Scott.

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