



United States Department of Agriculture
Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

Alternative Dispute Resolution Policy Statement

As Secretary, I have made it my priority to ensure the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a comprehensive Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program and a workplace where personnel and program recipients are treated with dignity and respect.

Our policy at USDA is to prevent conflicts whenever possible, and when conflicts do occur, to make every effort to reach the earliest possible resolution, and we must ensure that this standard is maintained throughout the Department. This standard is applicable to all personnel and program recipients in every ADR action taken at USDA. I expect all of our managers, supervisors, employees, and customers to demonstrate respect for, and adherence to, USDA and all agency ADR policies.

We continue to make strides to resolve complaints and workplace disputes expeditiously, with a goal of maintaining an environment that fosters communication, trust, and respect among USDA, its customers, and employees.

Our ADR program is dedicated to providing parties in conflict with the opportunity to come together in a non-adversarial manner to explore possible solutions to resolve concerns. A comprehensive ADR program reduces costs and processing time while promoting good will, increasing customer satisfaction, and enhancing employee morale.

I call upon all USDA agencies and their Civil Rights Offices to continue improving our ADR program in a transparent and ethical manner, and, by doing so, increasing customer satisfaction and employee morale at USDA. I am also counting on all USDA employees and supervisors to maximize the use of ADR, in accordance with appropriate procedures, to attempt to resolve conflict and to foster a workplace that is fair and free from discrimination, intimidation, and reprisal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary