

U.S. Reps. Tiffany, Owens: Announce bill to ensure equal protection in agriculture department programs, activities

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WASHINGTON, DC – Rep. Tom Tiffany (WI-07) and Rep. Burgess Owens (UT-04) announced plans to introduce the Agriculture Civil Rights and Equality Act (ACRE Act), which would prohibit officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) from discriminating or providing preferential treatment to any person on the basis of race, color, national origin or sex. The legislation will be formally introduced Thursday.

The prohibitions would apply to USDA hiring, contracting, and programming, including programs administered by states, territories and universities using USDA funds.

The bill comes just weeks after President Biden signed a massive, partisan \$1.9 trillion spending package into law that includes a [\\$5 billion agriculture debt relief program](#) earmarked exclusively for non-white farmers.

“It’s one thing to gear relief programs to farmers who have fallen on hard times and are struggling to make ends meet,” said Tiffany. “But it is fundamentally unfair for the government to treat farmers differently based on immutable characteristics.”

“Farmers from all walks of life face tremendous challenges, especially as their industry navigates a post-pandemic economy. I’m deeply concerned that Congress feels emboldened to perpetuate a modern-day form of racial segregation rather than provide relief to those who need it most,” said Owens. “My grandfather, a

respected farmer in the 1950s and '60s Black middle class, would be mortified by any policy that seeks to discriminate based on race. Racism was and will always be wrong.”

“To extend assistance to some farmers but not others based on race undermines the constitution’s guarantee of equal protection for all Americans,” Tiffany concluded. “If we are serious about ending discrimination in the agriculture sector, the first step is for the government to stop doing the discriminating.”