

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 16

BY SENATORS THOMPSON, RISER AND WALSWORTH

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to study ways to address the decline in numbers of minority and small farmers in Louisiana and throughout the Southeast region.

WHEREAS, farming as a family-owned and independent business has been an important part of the social and economic development of the United States; and

WHEREAS, New Deal farm programs that institutionalized commodity price supports, provided a setback to the efforts of many minority and small farmers to obtain land because the supports concentrated land ownership and decreased opportunities for would-be farmers; and

WHEREAS, for most of the twentieth century, many black farmers sought to protect their independence and ownership of land by diversifying away from cotton and relying instead on sales of fruits and vegetables; and

WHEREAS, minority farm ownership has declined from fourteen percent in 1920 to less than one percent today; and

WHEREAS, the most recent United States census of agriculture in 2002 showed that the number of black farmers in Louisiana was only one thousand eight hundred fifty-six with the total number of farms at twenty-seven thousand four hundred thirteen; and

WHEREAS, the USDA must conduct a study to gain a more complete understanding of the historic processes and unique challenges that have faced minority and small farmers as they have tried to establish operating independence; and

WHEREAS, the study must develop more effective strategies and partnerships in addressing the sharp decline in numbers of minority and small farmers in Louisiana and throughout the Southeast region; and

WHEREAS, the study must also develop strategies to ameliorate the bias against black and white small independent farmers which is perpetuated by owners of large farms and large cooperatives; and

WHEREAS, the study must address implementation and levels of funding for loan programs, underfunded research and extension at 1890 land grant institutions, ineffective outreach programs, poor support of community-based organizations, and lack of crop insurance for small produce farmers; and

WHEREAS, another major challenge is to increase the profitability of farming to attract a new generation of young minority farmers; and

WHEREAS, the study must further develop innovative youth programs to encourage the next generation of farmers to participate in both farming and marketing activities; and

WHEREAS, some suggested avenues for progress to assist minority and small farmers include greater use of formal cooperative methods and procedures, establishing value-added businesses, market development, and further development of organic farming in Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, the study must also address the possibility of scholarships awarded by organizations, such as the Louisiana Board of Regents, which would assist students to study at both Southern University AgCenter and Louisiana State University AgCenter; and

WHEREAS, the USDAs efforts to study this issue must be coordinated with a wide range of universities, including the Southern University AgCenter and Louisiana State University AgCenter, Southern University Law Center and Louisiana State University Law Center, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and citizen-centered grassroots organizations; and

WHEREAS, the study must recognize how cultural and social institutions must be considered in the development of economic solutions to the challenges facing minority and small farmers.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the United States Department of Agriculture to study ways to address the decline in numbers of minority and small farmers in Louisiana and throughout the Southeast region.

**SR NO. 16**

**ENROLLED**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture and the Louisiana state director for the department.

---

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE