

Colorado has school districts and communities that are leading the Nation in piloting innovative models that put healthy eating and active living at the top of their priority list.

I am thrilled that the bill we passed today builds on and supports the work that my State is already doing, while challenging Colorado and other States to go even further, to eliminate childhood hunger, to tackle childhood obesity, to emphasize wellness, and to build a healthy foundation for all kids.

Chairman LINCOLN, Ranking Member CHAMBLISS, thank you for your leadership and diligent work on this historic bill. Passage of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act is an example of the Senate doing exactly what it should—delivering for our kids.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. LEMIEUX. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Mr. LEMIEUX. Madam President, I rise to speak this afternoon on the floor of the Senate about an issue that is very critically important to the people of this country, and that is our relationship with Latin America.

This weekend, the new President of Colombia will be sworn in—Juan Manuel Santos—and he follows a great leader in Colombia, President Uribe, who, in my mind, is the Abraham Lincoln of that country. He kept that country unified at a very difficult time, while it was wracked with what was then a civil war. Eight years ago, President Uribe brought the country back together. He was able to fight the FARC, keep the country from falling into a narcoterrorist state, and has brought stability to Colombia. They are perhaps our best friend in Latin America.

Colombia is a vibrant, beautiful country, full of good people, with a democracy that now works. This last election is a tribute to President Uribe. On behalf of my State of Florida and the Senate, I rise to congratulate President Uribe and the great work he did on behalf of Colombia, as well as to welcome in President Santos.

Our relationship with Colombia is very important. They are a key trading partner to the United States and a key trading partner to my home State of Florida. When you are walking around and perhaps seeing some fresh flowers—there are some here in this Congress—but wherever you are in this country, there is a very good chance those flowers came from Colombia. Seventy percent of the flowers we have in this country that are purchased by local florists come from Colombia, and they come through Miami on their way to your local florists.

We have a great trading relationship. That is why, in 2006, we entered into a

free trade agreement with Colombia. Unfortunately, we have not ratified that agreement. Along with the free trade agreements for Panama and South Korea, they have languished without approval. The President spoke about this in his State of the Union Address—the importance of passing these free trade agreements—yet we still don't have those agreements before us here in the Congress. For one reason or another, they have yet to be ratified.

There is a lot of talk in this Chamber about the creation of jobs, and that that should be our focus. Well, passing these free trade agreements would get Americans back to work. Right now those countries basically have free trade with us but we don't have free trade with them. Ninety percent of all Colombian products sold in the United States enter our country duty free. Yet American goods face tariffs of up to 35 percent when entering Colombia.

According to the Latin America Trade Coalition, in 2008, more than 6,000 small- and medium-sized American businesses exported to Colombia. If we were to pass the Colombia Free Trade Agreement, more than 80 percent of U.S. consumer and manufacturing products and most U.S. farm goods would immediately enter Colombia duty free.

Implementing this treaty could increase our gross domestic product by \$2.5 billion. I say to my friends in the majority, if they want to create jobs in this country—and that certainly should be what we are focused most on in this most troubling economy—let's pass these free-trade agreements. Let's do it when we get back from the break; let's do it in September. We should have already done it.

When I met with President Uribe in January of this year and talked to him about a variety of issues, he looked at me painfully and said: Why is our friend, the United States of America, not ratifying this agreement?

Our greatest friend in the region, a bright spot of democracy, a President who has fought the narcoterrorists, stabilized this country as a bulwark against Venezuela and all the threats that posed to our region, and we can't ratify this agreement? It is a shame. It is something we need to do. We need to do it as well as ratify the agreement with Panama, as well as the one with South Korea.

REMEMBERING REAR ADMIRAL LEROY COLLINS, JR.

Mr. LEMIEUX. Madam President, I rise today to give special recognition to the life and work of a great Floridian who was tragically killed in Florida unexpectedly just a few weeks ago. RADM LeRoy Collins, Jr., is the son of our former Governor, Governor LeRoy Collins. He was an admiral in the Navy. He was the head of the Veterans Affairs Division in the State of Florida where I had the opportunity to

personally work with him when I served the Governor. A native of Tallahassee, FL, he received his commission from the Naval Academy in June 1956 and began a long career in the Navy.

His first tour was aboard the amphibious transport USS *Calvert*, followed by the Submarine Officer's Basic Course in Groton, CT, and he later served abroad the U.S. submarine *Chivo*.

Through hard work, dedication and sacrifice, LeRoy earned the rank of rear admiral.

Admiral Collins served as an analyst for naval intelligence in Washington, DC, and as a ballistic missile weapons officer aboard the nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine USS James Madison. After a brief tour working missile test operations at the Naval Ordnance Training Unit, in Cape Canaveral, he transferred to the Navy Reserve in 1966.

While a naval reservist, Admiral Collins served as commanding officer of the coastal minesweeper USS Thrush and later as commander of various Navy Reserve submarine units. During his time, he was the Navy's liaison to the Florida National Guard and also commanding officer of the Navy liaison unit at U.S. Readiness Command, headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, FL.

The admiral served as Commander, Naval Reserve Readiness Command, Region 8 and later as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Reserve) for Logistics, Pentagon, until his retirement from the Navy Reserve as a two-star rear admiral in October, 1990.

Admiral Collins also had a career in business. He spent time with the Florida Power & Light Company and IBM. He was the founding president of Financial Transaction Systems, Inc., and president of Telecredit Service Center, Inc. In addition, he served as president of Dynamic Realty of Tampa, Inc., was chairman of Gateway Holdings, Inc., and served as president of the Armed Forces Financial Network.

He was a great Floridian. The Collins family is perhaps Florida's first family. Governor Collins is perhaps our greatest Governor. Admiral Collins upheld the tradition of his family that traces its roots all the way back to the founding of Florida. The property upon which our Governor's Mansion sits was given by the Collins family. Their home, The Grove, sits right next door.

Admiral Collins was in many ways everything you would expect of a great Floridian. He was genteel, he was kind, he was smart. Public service mattered to him.

On behalf of the people of Florida, on behalf of the Senate, I extend our condolences to his wife Jane and their family on the passing of a truly great Floridian. He and they are in our thoughts and prayers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

PIGFORD SETTLEMENT

Mrs. HAGAN. Madam President, I rise to associate myself with the remarks of the chair of the Agriculture Committee, Senator LINCOLN, as well as Senators GRASSLEY and LANDRIEU, concerning the importance of providing funding to pay the still pending claims of the Black farmers who were discriminated against by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This case has North Carolina roots. Timothy Pigford, a Black farmer, was the focal point for this class action lawsuit. He grew up in Columbus County and had a farm in Bladen County, NC. He was first denied a Federal loan to buy a farm in 1976.

Mr. Pigford and others filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia against the U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Pigford v. Glickman*, alleging that the USDA maintained a pattern and practice of discrimination against Black farmers.

In 1999, the government settled the *Pigford v. Glickman* case, finding that thousands of African-American farmers were in fact discriminated against when applying for benefits that would help their farms.

Under the terms of the settlement, eligible farmers initially were required to submit completed claims packages by October 12, 1999. This deadline was subsequently extended by the court to September 15, 2000. Approximately 61,000 petitions were filed after the original October 1999 deadline but before the September 2000 late filing deadline. Of these 61,000 petitions, only around 2,500 were permitted to proceed to a determination on the merits. Over 25,000 additional petitions were filed after the September 2000 late filing deadline and before the May 2008 enactment of the 2008 farm bill.

It is quite clear that inadequate notice was provided to those who had viable claims of discrimination against the USDA. Because of this inadequate notice, many farmers were denied participation in the Pigford claims resolution process as late filers.

The 2008 farm bill provided \$100 million to pay the outstanding claims of the so-called late filers. However, the amount of money that was set aside in the farm bill for the settlement is totally inadequate to satisfy the damages that more than 4,000 African-American farmers in North Carolina, and a total of 75,000 nationwide, could be eligible to receive.

Last February, Agricultural Secretary Tom Vilsack reached a settlement agreement with the farmers who filed claims after the deadline set by the court who were originally denied a determination of their Pigford claims. This settlement agreement provides, once and for all, sufficient awards for farmers who were the victims of discrimination at the hands of their own government, the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The Federal Government has failed to live up to its obligations to our Black farmers, including more than 4,000 in my State of North Carolina.

Today the Senate has the opportunity to live up to its obligations and right this wrong. I believe it is imperative that we address this inequity for Black farmers across the country, including those in North Carolina, and I hope we are able to reach an agreement to resolve this issue today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, even though he has left the floor, I would like to thank the distinguished Senator from Wyoming for permitting me to proceed. I want to comment on what the distinguished Senator from North Carolina spoke on because that is my topic as well. We hope to be able to bring up this issue on the Senate floor and get some justice for the Black farmers.

I come to the floor today to speak about justice and the Department of Agriculture. Let me go back a few years.

Though civil rights legislation in the 1960s was supposed to have outlawed racial discrimination, at least on the Federal level, a 1982 report issued by the Civil Rights Commission stated that the USDA was "a catalyst in the decline of the black farmer."

That year, African-American farmers received only 1 percent of all farm ownership loans, only 2.5 percent of all farm-operating loans, and only 1 percent of all soil and water conservation loans. That year, too, the Reagan administration closed the USDA's Civil Rights Office—the very arm that investigated discrimination complaints.

Adding insult to injury, when African-American and other minority farmers filed complaints, the USDA did little to address them. In 1983, President Reagan pushed through budget cuts that eliminated the USDA Office of Civil Rights—and officials admitted they "simply threw discrimination complaints in the trash without ever responding to or investigating them" until 1996, when President Clinton ordered the office re-opened.

Even when there were legal findings of discrimination at USDA, they often went unpaid—and those that did get paid, the money often came too late, since the farm had already been foreclosed.

In 1984 and 1985, the USDA lent \$1.3 billion to farmers nationwide to buy land. Of the almost 16,000 farmers who received those funds, only 209 were Black. By 1992, in North Carolina, the number of Black farms had fallen to 2,498, a 64 percent drop since 1978.

In Illinois, there are many similar stories. As a child growing up on the family farm in west central Illinois, Lloyd Johnson remembers cropland extending for miles around, all of it owned by African-Americans like him-

self. "For a stretch of four miles, it was black-owned land," the 66-year-old farmer recalls. "Now there's mighty few."

Today, Johnson's farm in Alton, IL, is one of just 59 run by African Americans across the State, down from 123 in 1997, according to revised figures from a 2002 census. As farming has become a big business, it has become one of the least diverse businesses around.

It was not always. In 1920, Illinois had 892 Black farmers, and African Americans owned 14 percent of the Nation's farmland. Now they hold less than 1 percent. The same pressure to consolidate that has reduced the ranks of farmers for the past century is making any turnaround unlikely, demographers say. The number of Black farmers in Illinois, currently less than one in 1,000, appears destined to eventually hit zero. Probably there will be none very shortly.

In 1990, The Minority Farmers Rights Act, created to address the injustices noted at USDA, and passed in this body by former Senator Wyche Fowler of Georgia, who sat on the Agriculture Committee, authorized \$10 million a year in technical assistance to minority farmers.

The new program was only able to garner \$2 to \$3 million a year under President Reagan, and was in danger of being de-funded altogether. As working capital and technical assistance was systematically denied to Black farmers across America, most rural African-American farmers did not have access to essential legal assistance and fell prey to land speculators and unscrupulous lawyers.

In 1994, the Land Loss Prevention Project filed a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit on behalf of Black farmers, turning key information over to Congress to investigate discriminatory practices by the USDA. Again, USDA released a report analyzing data from 1990 to 1995, and found that "minorities received less than their fair share of USDA money for crop payments, disaster payments, and loans."

In 1997, a USDA Civil Rights Team found the agency's system for handling civil rights complaints was still in shambles: the agency disorganized, the process for handling complaints about program benefits "a failure," and the process for handling employment discrimination claims was "untimely and unresponsive."

A follow-up report by the GAO in 1999 found that 44 percent of program discrimination cases, and 64 percent of employment discrimination cases, had been backlogged for over a year.

It was against this backdrop in 1997, that a group of Black farmers led by Tim Pigford of North Carolina filed a class action lawsuit against the USDA. In all, 22,000 farmers were granted access to the lawsuit, and in 1999, the government admitted wrongdoing and agreed to a \$2.3 billion settlement—the largest civil rights settlement in history.