

Secretary of Agriculture - Tom Vilsack

Tom Vilsack serves as the Nation's 30th Secretary of the Agriculture.

As leader of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Vilsack is working hard to strengthen the American agricultural economy, build vibrant rural communities and secure a stronger future for the American middle class.



In three years at the Department, Vilsack has worked to implement President Obama's agenda to put Americans back to work and create an economy built to last. USDA has supported farmers, ranchers and growers who are enjoying record earnings, provided food assistance to 1 in 4 Americans, conserved our natural resources and helped provide a safe, sufficient and nutritious food supply for the American people.

Secretary Vilsack shares President Obama's commitment to a rural economy that continues to reward hard work and responsibility while growing a strong middle class. To help drive innovation and build thriving economies in rural communities, USDA is promoting job growth and higher incomes through expanded production of renewable energy, outdoor recreational opportunities and development of local and regional food supplies. USDA has made historic investments in rural housing, in rural infrastructure like fire and police stations, libraries and health clinics and in rural access to broadband.

As chair of the first-ever White House Rural Council, Secretary Vilsack and USDA are taking steps to strengthen services for rural businesses and entrepreneurs creating job opportunities – finding new ways to partner with other Federal agencies and the private sector to spur investment.

USDA, at the President's direction and with the Secretary's leadership, is promoting American agriculture by conducting cutting-edge research and improving markets at home and abroad. USDA also works to ensure an appropriate safety net for America's farmers and ranchers, enabling them to prosper even in tough times. Today, agriculture is a bright spot in the American economy, with record farm-sector earnings and record agricultural exports – worth \$137 billion in 2011 – that helped support more than 1 million American jobs. New trade agreements President Obama signed with Colombia, South Korea, and Panama will create even more export opportunities for American farmers and ranchers.

Vilsack knows that conserving natural resources is critical to the long-term strength of our economy. That is why USDA has enrolled a record number of private working lands in conservation programs and implemented new strategies – such as landscape-scale efforts – to restore our forests and clean our water supply. This work is creating private sector jobs protecting and rehabilitating our forests and wetlands, and providing increased opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Under Vilsack's leadership, USDA has partnered with First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move initiative to improve the health and nutrition of America's children. He helped pass the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, so USDA is combating child hunger and obesity by making the most significant improvements to school lunches in 30 years. He led a comprehensive effort to improve the safety of the American food supply, implementing changes to food safety standards to prevent illnesses by reducing the prevalence of E. coli, salmonella and campylobacter in our meat and poultry.

Secretary Vilsack has also worked to make the Department more efficient, transparent and effective. Through his Blueprint for Stronger Service, USDA will continue to maintain top-notch service for the American people despite reductions to our budget while creating more than \$150 million in efficiencies annually.

He has made civil rights a top priority, reaching historic resolutions to all major past cases of discrimination brought against USDA by minority groups, and taking definitive action to move USDA into a new era as a model employer and premier service provider.

Prior to his appointment, Vilsack served two terms as the Governor of Iowa, in the Iowa State Senate and as the mayor of Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Vilsack was born into an orphanage and adopted in 1951. After graduating Hamilton College and Albany Law School, he moved to Mt. Pleasant – his wife Christie's hometown – where he practiced law. The Vilsacks have two adult sons, a daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren.