

## Secretary of Agriculture - Tom Vilsack



Tom Vilsack serves as the Nation's 30th Secretary of 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 create new markets for the tremendous innovation of rural America. In more than six 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 America's farmers, ranchers and growers who are driving the rural economy forward, provided food assistance to millions of Americans, carried out record conservation efforts, made record investments in our rural communities and helped provide a safe, sufficient and nutritious food supply for the American people.

The Obama Administration and USDA have made historic investments in America's rural communities, helping create ladders of opportunity for rural people and building thriving rural economies for the long term. 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 by finding new ways to make the connection between the demand for investment in rural areas and the financial community.

USDA is promoting American agriculture by conducting cutting-edge research and expanding markets at home and abroad. The years 2009-2014 represent the strongest six years in history for agricultural trade, and new trade agreements President Obama signed with Columbia, South Korea and Panama will create even more export opportunities for American farmers and ranchers. Here at home, USDA has helped increase the number of farmers markets by 180 percent since 2006, and made more than 500 investments in local food infrastructure - including food hubs, local processing facilities and distribution networks - to help connect farmers and consumers and create jobs all along the supply chain for local food.

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, which supports 6.1 million direct jobs across the country.

Under Vilsack's leadership, USDA has partnered with First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* initiative to improve the health of America's children. He helped pass and implement the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, enabling USDA to help combat child hunger and obesity by making the most significant improvements to school meals in 30 years. He has 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.

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 in New York, he moved to Mt. Pleasant, his wife Christie's hometown, where he practiced law. The Vilsacks have two adult sons and two daughters-in-law - Doug, married to Janet; and Jess, married to Kate. They also have four grandchildren.