

Pride Month June 2022

A Message from Secretary Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Bronaugh

Dear USDA Employees,

At USDA we strive to build a workplace that welcomes and embraces all employees and encourages them to be their whole, authentic selves. We do this with a deep commitment to honoring our diverse experiences, perspectives, and contributions as we advance the goals of our nation.

It is in that spirit that we invite you to join us in celebrating our 20th annual LGBTQI+ Pride Month for USDA. This year's Pride Month theme "A Bounty of Pride," celebrates our diversity and experiences. LGBTQI+ Pride Month will kick off on June 1st with a flag raising ceremony at USDA headquarters at 8:20 a.m. EST. We encourage you to join us in this and other [activities](#) throughout the month.

USDA is committed to LGBTQI+ equality and fostering a workplace environment in which everyone is included, respected, and empowered to fulfill their potential.

Recently, a Departmental workgroup worked closely with our equity team and convened to address [Executive Order 13988 on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation](#). USDA has and will continue to promote inclusivity, acceptance and accessibility for all employees and customers. For example over the past year, you may have seen our [social media](#) and all employee addresses for Transgender Day of Visibility and Pride Month, or watched the Queer Producer USDA Instagram "takeover;" you might have participated in one or more of the fifty "Pronouns in the Workplace" training sessions with Equality USDA, the LGBTQI+ Employee Resource Group; you might have joined one of the two sessions of "Working Effectively with LGBTQI+ Customers and Coworkers" for NIFA Employees, and NIFA Grantees; or you might have joined the Fireside chat with Deputy Secretary Bronaugh and Equality USDA. It does not end there and our commitment is really in action - other initiatives include:

- Creating a Gender Expansive guidance workgroup formed to develop a Departmental Regulation (DR) for transitioning employees, including for transgender, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary individuals;
- Producing guidance for the use of Gender Inclusive language in all agencies' internal and external communications;
- Developing guidance and streamlining processes to eliminate barriers and expedite IT systems updates to reflect correct gender identity for transitioning employees;
- Developing guidelines for collection and utilization of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) data in employment and USDA programs to ensure a diverse workforce; and
- Holding LGBTQI+ External Stakeholder listening sessions with Deputy Secretary Bronaugh.

Under the leadership of the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is working to ensure USDA's programs are open, accessible and help promote food and nutrition security, regardless of protected category demographics. On May 5th the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) [announced](#) that it will interpret the prohibition on discrimination based on sex, to include discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. This action is in line with EO13988 and is consistent with the Supreme Court's [decision](#) in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, in which the Court held that the prohibition on sex discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 extends to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

We are making significant strides and we know there is so much more work to be done. We will continue to engage with the LGBTQI+ communities and other underserved communities to pursue our vision of a People's Department that is effective, efficient, transparent, and customer friendly. We will be intentional about inclusion of a diverse gender perspective in our approach. You will hear more about our progress in the coming weeks. We look forward to celebrating with you.

Sincerely,

Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack
Deputy Secretary Jewel Bronaugh

Scheduled Events

Note: the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Employee Experience and the Office of the Secretary will continue to work with agencies and office to coordinate and lift up these and other planned activities.

On **June 1st, from 8:20 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. EST**, put on your Pride gear or most colorful outfit, and plan to join Secretary Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Bronaugh to kick off LGBTQI+ Pride Month by raising the Pride Flag at the Whitten Building. Secretary Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Bronaugh will open activities with remarks highlighting actions USDA is taking to promote inclusion for LGBTQI+ employees to further our efforts toward Making USDA a Best Place to Work and improving fair access to our programs and services.

On **June 8th at 1 p.m.**, we will celebrate Pride month with our USDA Pride Observance hosted by OASCR, FPAC, NIFA, and Equality USDA. The program will feature a keynote and guest speakers, remarks from myself, and topics such as Hunger in the Trans Gender Community, featuring The Okra Project, The Williams Institute, and the Giver Network an ERG from the Forest Service. Watch [OneUSDA intranet](#) and your Agency internal communications for participation details.

On **June 16, 2022**, there will be a LGBTQI+ film screening of "Freeheld." Freeheld is a 2015 American drama film directed by Peter Sollett and written by Ron Nyswaner. It is based on the 2007 documentary short film of the same name about police officer Laurel Hester's fight against the Ocean County, New Jersey Board of Chosen Freeholders to allow her pension benefits to be transferred to her domestic partner after being diagnosed with terminal cancer (**Register via [Swank Virtual Portal](#)**).

On **June 21, 2022, at 1 p.m. EST**, USDA in conjunction with Equality USDA, will host a LGBTQI+ Farmer's roundtable discussion. This [virtual event](#) will feature four LGBTQI+ farmers in conversation, speaking about their operation and experience, followed by a facilitated conversation amongst the panelists, with time for audience questions. Urban agriculture and its importance to LGBTQI+ communities will be explored. See the attached flyer with information on how to join.



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