

Lawyer

(Continued from Page 3) the DOJ specializes in legal matters.

"This is especially shocking at the Department of Justice, where you expect the highest caliber of legal representation, that they would have two lawyers assigned to the same case that aren't licensed," said Arianne Callender, author of the Environmental Working Group (EWG) report "Obstruction of Justice: USDA Undermines Historic Civil Rights Settlement with Black Farmers. Did they just not pay attention to the quality of lawyers being assigned to this case? Did these farmers get second class treatment? It sure seems like it."

EWG records show that Sitcov billed taxpayers for at least 1,096 hours on the Pigford case, including 389 hours during the period when he was unlicensed. The Justice Department acknowledges that O'Shea and Sitcov worked on the Pigford cases and guarantees there will be a proper investigation.

"The Department of Justice's top priority is serving the American people—we take this responsibility seriously. While we do not comment on the specifics of matters under investigation, whenever there is any allegation regarding one of our attorneys, it is fully and expeditiously investigated. If borne out, the department takes appropriate action," Charles Miller of DOJ said.

If the agency's top priority is serving people, many wonder how they could allow so many injustices against Black farmers.

"I think there needs to be public accountability. For DOJ to just say they're going to investigate doesn't require them to actually do anything. They should release proof that their attorney's are licensed and that they've taken measures to make sure this doesn't happen again," Callender said. "They should also go public and agree to give these farmers a fair chance," she adds.

In addition to requesting a full investigation by DOJ, EWG, a group that has been working closely with Black farmers to ensure justice, has also requested that Congress take action.

In a letter to Congressman Steve Chabot (R-OH), EWG writes, "...I request that you conduct a thorough investigation into the potentially illegal actions of these two DOJ employees, and that you take legislative action to ensure that the farmers affected by their actions have an op-

portunity for their cases to be reconsidered by the settlement's Monitor."

Chabot is currently leading the House Constitution Subcommittee's investigation into previous accusations of wrongdoing in the Pigford settlement.

"America has placed its confidence in the Department of Justice's ability to uphold the laws of our nation and represent executive agencies with the utmost integrity and competence. The

illegal practice of law by DOJ attorneys is a serious betrayal of this confidence. This is especially true in the context of a settlement that seeks to make whole America's Black family farmers after suffering from decades of unconscionable discrimination at the hands of the agency charged with helping all family farmers," the EWG letter reads.

The suffering that EWG refers to started in 1997 when Timothy Pigford, a Black

farmer, filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in D.C. against then-Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman. He alleged that Black farmers were denied applications for loans and subsidy programs and their discrimination complaints were ignored.

The USDA agreed to a \$20 million out-of-court settlement, but 90 percent of the 100,000 farmers who filed racial discrimination complaints were denied access to settlement funds.

According to Callender, Black farmers have experienced enough discrimination from the federal government and it's time that DOJ is held accountable for their actions.

"I hope that other people aren't being treated as badly as the people in the Pigford case. This is a matter of national importance especially when you see this pattern of negligence within DOJ," she said.

"I think farmers are worn down—especially after six

years of fighting within the context of a settlement that was supposed to be a really smooth process. They've had to fight the whole way and they're just tired of fighting. They don't have another 10 years of fighting in them."

Boyd, who has been at the forefront of fight for farmers rights, feels that now is the time for Congress to intervene. According to him, the issues of Black farmers have to become the issues of America.



It all adds up.

When it comes to conserving natural resources, nothing is more precious than water. In fact, every drop counts. That's why at Pardee Homes, we ask our homeowners to join us in adopting water-efficient measures as a way of life. In addition to low-flow faucets and showerheads, which are standard in all our new homes, we make water-efficient appliances and tankless water heaters available in select neighborhoods as part of our earth-friendly LIVINGSMART® program. We've also cultivated landscaping packages that feature beautiful, drought-tolerant plants. And we've done our research, providing water-saving tips that can help homeowners go through fewer gallons, and dollars, each month. This is all part of our commitment to build homes for the way you want to live, today and tomorrow. Now that's a math equation that's easy to understand.

Pardee's environmental commitment saves more than water:



HABITAT RESTORATION
Depleted agricultural land is being returned to native vegetation and wildlife.



ENERGY STAR® HOMES
4,500 pounds of greenhouse gases are eliminated for every new ENERGY STAR home.



ZERO ENERGY HOMES®
Homes offer a minimum of 50% energy savings over those built to federal code.



LIVING SMART PROGRAM
Pardee offers about 30 energy-related, water-saving or sustainable choices.



*Zero Energy Home is a program of the U.S. Department of Energy and is used to designate homes that incorporate energy savings capabilities of 50% or more. Actual energy savings may vary.



THE WAY YOU WANT TO LIVE

PardeeHomes.COM