POSITION DESCRIPTION

# assistant secretary of agriculture for civil rights, department of agriculture

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Senate Committee | Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry |
| Agency Mission | To provide leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition and related issues, based on public policy, the best available science and effective management. To provide economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to preserve our nation's natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds and healthy private working lands. |
| Position Overview | The assistant secretary for civil rights assists the secretary in providing leadership, coordination and direction for the civil rights programs of the Department of Agriculture (USDA), including matters related to program delivery, compliance and equal employment opportunity. |
| Compensation | Level IV $158,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | The Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights oversaw a budget of $21 million in fiscal year 2021. As of 2019, the most recent year for which data are available, the OASCR oversaw roughly 130 employees. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Assists the secretary in providing leadership, coordination and direction for USDA's civil rights programs, including matters related to program delivery, compliance and equal employment opportunity. * Ensures compliance with applicable federal civil rights laws such as Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. * Provides leadership and direction for the fair and equitable treatment of all USDA customers and employees while ensuring the delivery of quality programs and enforcement of civil rights. * Ensures compliance with applicable laws, regulations and policies for USDA customers and employees regardless of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and expression), religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital or familial status, political beliefs, parental status, protected genetic information, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public-assistance program.[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Understanding of process and procedures of Equal Opportunity Employment (critical). * Understanding of the civil rights landscape. |
| Competencies | * Sensitivity and discretion. * Ability to work in a matrixed department with 18 silos. * Cultural competencies and sensitivities. * Ability to work under high pressure and high stress environment. |
| **PAST APPOINTEES** | |
| Joe Leonard Jr. (2009 to 2017) – Executive Director, Congressional Black Caucus; Executive Director, Black Leadership Forum; Washington, D.C. Bureau Chief, Rainbow/PUSH Coalition[[3]](#endnote-3) | |
| Margo M. McKay (2006 to 2009) – Associate General Counsel, Fannie Mae; Chief Policymaker and Compliance Officer, Fannie Mae; Administrative Judge, Merit Systems Protection Board, District of Colombia[[4]](#endnote-4) | |
| Vernon Bernard Parker (2003 to 2006) – Special Assistant to the President, The White House; General Counsel, Office of Personnel Management; Counselor to the Director, Office of Personnel Management[[5]](#endnote-5) | |

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Public Law 116-260, December 27, 2020), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials through January 1, 2022. The compensation information is based on guidance from the Office of Personnel Management and can be accessed [here](https://www.chcoc.gov/content/continued-pay-freeze-certain-senior-political-officials-4#:~:text=Section%20748%20of%20division%20E,on%20December%2031%2C%202020%2C%20by). If you are selected for this position, please consult the agency’s HR representative for further guidance on compensation.  [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. OPM [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=bio\_leonard.xml [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.ourcampaigns.com/CandidateDetail.html?CandidateID=165998 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. https://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=bios\_parker.xml [↑](#endnote-ref-5)