

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN
GREEN BAY DIVISION**

ADAM P. FAUST, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

TOM VILSACK, et al.,

Defendants,

Case No. 1:21-CV-00548-WCG

**THE NATIONAL BLACK FARMERS ASSOCIATION AND
THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN FARMERS’
CONDITIONAL MOTION FOR LEAVE TO INTERVENE AS DEFENDANTS**

The National Black Farmers Association (NBFA) and the Association of American Indian Farmers (AAIF) hereby file this Conditional Motion for Leave to Intervene as Defendants in this action (the “Conditional Motion”). Because, at present, NBFA and AAIF share the same ultimate objective as the Government in defending the law challenged in this action, the organizations expressly request that the Court defer consideration of this Motion until future developments in this lawsuit indicate that the organizations’ interests diverge from the Government’s. This approach balances NBFA and AAIF’s interests in timely filing their application to intervene, while also accounting for how merits arguments have yet to be developed due to the litigation’s early stage.¹

¹ See *Solid Waste Agency of N. Cook Cty. v. U.S. Army Corps of Engs.*, 101 F.3d 503, 509 (7th Cir. 1996) (“The proper way to handle such an eventuality [where the government’s representation of interest may turn inadequate at some future point] [is] to file at the outset of the case a standby or conditional application for leave to intervene and ask the district court to defer consideration of the question of adequacy . . .”).

Pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 24, this Conditional Motion is accompanied by (1) a Memorandum of Law in Support; and (2) NBFA and AAIF's Answer to Plaintiffs' First Amended Class Action Complaint.

Plaintiffs' counsel does not oppose the filing of this placeholder motion to secure timeliness but has not taken a position on any later request to intervene. Defendants' counsel does not oppose conditional intervention, and does not believe that the interests of the Government diverge with those of NBFA and AAIF.

Date: June 18, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

PUBLIC JUSTICE, P.C.

/s/ David S. Muraskin

David S. Muraskin (D.C. Bar No. 1012451)

Randolph T. Chen (D.C. Bar No. 1032644)

Jessica Culpepper (D.C. Bar No. 988976)

1620 L Street NW, Suite 630

Washington, D.C. 20036

Telephone: (202) 797-8600

Facsimile: (202) 232-7203

dmuraskin@publicjustice.net

jculpepper@publicjustice.net

rchen@publicjustice.net

*Counsel for the National Black Farmers
Association and the Association of American
Indian Farmers*

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN
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ADAM P. FAUST, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

TOM VILSACK, et al.,

Defendants,

Case No. 1:21-CV-00548-WCG

**MEMORANDUM OF LAW IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL BLACK FARMERS
ASSOCIATION AND THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN FARMERS’
CONDITIONAL MOTION FOR LEAVE TO INTERVENE AS DEFENDANTS**

The National Black Farmers Association (NBFA) and the Association of American Indian Farmers (AAIF) file this Conditional Motion to Intervene as Defendants in this action (the “Conditional Motion”). It requests that the Court defer consideration until future developments in this lawsuit indicate that the organizations’ interests diverge from the Government’s.

This approach seeks to balance requirements for intervention set out in Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 24. NBFA and AAIF have an interest in timely filing this application to intervene and defend the laws this action seeks to enjoin—which confer financial benefits on many of their members. At the same time, the conditional nature of this request recognizes the early stage of this litigation, where merits arguments and the adequacy of the Government’s defense have yet to be fully developed.

Accordingly, this Memorandum is structured as follows. First, it provides the authority for NBFA and AAIF’s filing of a Conditional Motion. Second, it provides factual background regarding NBFA and AAIF’s purpose and membership. Third, it argues why NBFA and AAIF meet the factors required for intervention that can be ascertained at this time.

AUTHORITY FOR CONDITIONAL APPLICATION FOR INTERVENTION

NBFA and AAIF file this Conditional Motion pursuant to the approach set out by the Seventh Circuit in *Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*, 101 F.3d 503 (7th Cir. 1996). In *Army Corps*, a plaintiff sued to challenge a federal agency's denial of a water permit, and a citizens' group moved to intervene to defend the agency's decision. *Id.* at 504. The Seventh Circuit denied the request because the putative-intervenor and the agency shared the interest of defending the permitting decision and thus, "adequacy of representation [was] presumed," as the government is presumed to represent the interests of the public at large. *Id.* at 508. However, the court was also "sympathetic to the aspiring intervenor's concern that at some future point in this litigation, the government's representation of their interest may turn inadequate yet it would be too late to do anything about it." *Id.* For example, the court provided a hypothetical where the Government declined to appeal an unfavorable decision—at which point its representation of the putative-intervenor's interests "could well be thought inadequate." *Id.* The court thus set out the following solution:

The proper way to handle such an eventuality is for the would-be intervenor, when as here no present inadequacy of representation can be shown, to file at the outset of the case a standby or conditional application for leave to intervene and ask the district court to defer consideration of the question of adequacy of representation until the applicant is prepared to demonstrate inadequacy.

Id. at 509 (emphasis added).

NBFA and AAIF are in a similar posture. They presently share the same objective as the Government in defending the laws challenged by this action—but it remains possible that at some future point, the Government's handling of this litigation may turn inadequate. NBFA and AAIF thus file this Conditional Motion pursuant to the approach set out in *Army Corps* and expressly request the Court defer consideration on the motion until future developments in this lawsuit demonstrate that the organizations' interests diverge from the Government's.

FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

This case challenges a section in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (the “Act”), a broad piece of legislation aimed at remedying the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic by providing \$1.9 trillion in financial relief to American individuals and industries who have been harmed by the ongoing health crisis. *See* The White House, *Am. Rescue Plan*, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/american-rescue-plan/>. The Act includes approximately \$10.4 billion in funding aimed to strengthen the agricultural and food supply chain, and includes provisions funding the purchase and distribution of agricultural commodities and providing grants to rural communities to fund programs related to healthcare and nutrition. *See What’s in the Am. Rescue Plan Act of 2021 for Ag.? Am. Farm Bureau Fed.* (Mar. 8, 2021), <https://www.fb.org/market-intel/whats-in-the-american-rescue-plan-act-of-2021-for-agriculture>.

This case takes aim at Section 1005 of the Act, which provides financial relief to “socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.” Section 1005 provides loan forgiveness, authorizing the U.S. Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) to “provide a payment in an amount up to 120 percent of the outstanding indebtedness of each socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher” on direct farm loans made by USDA and on farm loans guaranteed by USDA. Section 1005(a)(2). Plaintiffs allege that Section 1005 imposes “racial classifications” that “violate the Equal Protection guarantee in the United States Constitution.” *Am. Compl.*, Dkt. No. 7, ¶¶ 52, 57.

NBFA and AAIF are non-profit, membership-based organizations dedicated to advancing the interests of Black and Native American farmers. Exh. 1, Decl. of John Boyd, Jr. (“J. Boyd Decl.”) ¶¶ 3-4; Exh. 2, Decl. of Kara Boyd (“K. Boyd Decl.”) ¶¶ 3-4. NBFA has a national membership of over 116,000 members, comprised largely of Black farmers and ranchers and

those members direct the organization's actions by voting on agenda items and resolutions at annual meetings. J. Boyd Decl. ¶ 3. AAIF has a national membership of over 350 members, comprised largely of Native American farmers and ranchers. K. Boyd Decl. ¶ 3. AAIF's activities are directed by its members through regional representatives, who vote on their constituent members' behalf to determine the organization's agenda. *Id.* ¶ 4.

NBFA's mission is to advocate for the interests of Black farmers and ranchers—which has included improving Black farmers and ranchers' access to public and private loans, as well as education regarding civil rights and land retention. J. Boyd Decl. ¶ 4. NBFA President John Boyd, Jr. has advocated on the specific issue of debt relief for the organization's members for decades and has testified before Congress on the issue. *Id.* ¶ 5. NBFA has members who are eligible for Section 1005's loan forgiveness provisions. Exh. 3, Decl. of Shade Mitchell Lewis ("Lewis Decl.") ¶ 9; Exh. 4, Decl. of Ivan Isidore Williams ("Williams Decl.") ¶ 9.

AAIF's mission is to advocate for the interests of Native American farmers and ranchers. K. Boyd Decl. ¶ 5. AAIF advances its mission by promoting investment in Native American farmers and ranchers, as well as providing them with outreach, advocacy, and technical assistance. *Id.* AAIF President Kara Boyd has specifically advocated on the Act's debt forgiveness provisions, directly engaging with federal legislators to express the organization's support for the legislation and building support for the legislation by networking with other groups that advocate for the interests of Native American farmers. *Id.* ¶ 7. AAIF is aware that it has members who are eligible for Section 1005's loan forgiveness provisions. *See id.* ¶ 8.

Thus, this suit has the potential to undo NBFA and AAIF's dogged advocacy, leave their members in debt from which Congress intended them to be freed, and prevent them from receiving additional financial support that was designed to remedy a long history of

discrimination that has already cost NBFA and AAIF's members greatly. To protect those interests, NBFA and AAIF file this conditional motion to intervene under Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 24(a) and (b).

ARGUMENT

I. Intervention As of Right.

Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 24(a)(2) provides: "On timely motion, the court must permit anyone to intervene who . . . claims an interest relating to the property or transaction that is the subject of the action, and is so situated that disposing of the action may as a practical matter impair or impede the movant's ability to protect its interest, unless existing parties adequately represent that interest." Fed. R. Civ. P. 24(a)(2).

The Seventh Circuit has elaborated that Rule 24(a)(2) intervention must be allowed where: (1) the application is timely; (2) the applicant has an interest relating to the property or transaction at issue in the litigation; (3) that interest may, as a practical matter, be impaired or impeded by disposition of the case; and (4) that the applicant's interest is not adequately represented by the parties in the lawsuit. *Driftless Area Land Conservancy v. Huebsch*, 969 F.3d 742, 746 (7th Cir. 2020). An intervenor under Rule 24(a)(2) only "must meet the requirements of Article III if the intervenor wishes to pursue relief" distinct from the existing parties. *Town of Chester, N.Y. v. Laroe Ests., Inc.*, 137 S. Ct. 1645, 1648 (2017).

A. NBFA and AAIF have Article III standing.

Under the associational standing doctrine, an organization may bring suit on behalf of its members when (1) any one of its members would have individual standing to sue, (2) the interests involved are germane to the association's purpose, and (3) neither the claim nor

requested relief are of the type that would require individual member participation. *Shakman v. Clerk of Cook Cty.*, 994 F.3d 832, 840 (7th Cir. 2021).

NBFA and AAIF's members have standing because they stand to receive financial benefits from the law that this action seeks to enjoin. *See Flying J, Inc. v. Van Hollen*, 578 F.3d 569, 572-573 (7th Cir. 2009) (gasoline retailer association had standing to intervene and defend on appeal a district court's enjoinder of a law that benefited its members). Protecting this interest has been and remains core to NBFA and AAIF's missions. J. Boyd Decl. ¶¶ 4-9; K. Boyd Decl. ¶ 5-6. And defending the constitutionality of this law also does not require the individual participation of any of NBFA and AAIF's members. *Id.*; *see also Chicago-Midwest Meat Ass'n v. City of Evanston*, 589 F.2d 278, 281 (7th Cir. 1978) (actions for declaratory and injunctive relief generally do not require participation of individual members). Therefore, NBFA and AAIF have Article III standing to participate in this action.

B. The Conditional Motion is timely.

To determine whether NBFA and AAIF's motion is timely, courts consider four factors: (1) the length of time between the proposed intervenor's learning of their interest and the motion to intervene; (2) the extent of prejudice to existing parties from allowing late intervention; (3) the extent of prejudice to the proposed intervenor if their motion is denied; and (4) unusual circumstances. *Grochocinski v. Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw, LLP*, 719 F.3d 785, 797-98 (7th Cir. 2013). Applications to intervene filed during a case's early stages and before the start of discovery are generally considered to be timely. *See, e.g., Ashford v. City of Milwaukee*, 2014 WL 11430844, at *1 (E.D. Wis. Aug. 15, 2014) (motion filed after discovery had commenced was timely because "discovery [was] still at an early stage"); *Megan G. v. Appleton Area Sch. Dist.*, 2012 WL 4839022, at *1 (E.D. Wis. Oct. 10, 2012) (motion was timely where "parties are

currently engaged in discovery, and dispositive motions are not due [for over six months]”) (Griesbach, J.).

Here, this Motion is timely under all four factors. As to the first and second factors, NBFA and AAIF promptly filed this Motion a mere seven weeks after learning of their interest in this case through reading Plaintiffs’ Complaint that was originally filed on April 29, 2021. Filing at this very early stage of the litigation where Defendant has yet to file a responsive pleading and no discovery has been conducted is also exceedingly unlikely to prejudice any party. As to the third factor, NBFA and AAIF would be severely prejudiced if denied the opportunity to intervene because the litigation seeks to undo their advocacy and remove financial benefits to their members. As to the final factor, NBFA and AAIF are unaware of any “unusual circumstances” that would counsel against intervention.

C. NBFA and AAIF have a protectable interest related to this case.

To satisfy this condition, an intervenor must show that their interest in the case is a “direct, significant legally protectable one.” *Reich v. ABC/York-Estes Corp.*, 64 F.3d 316, 322 (7th Cir. 1995). The Seventh Circuit has held that this standard is met when an intervenor seeks to defend a law to which it is a direct beneficiary. *Flying J*, 578 F.3d at 572 (gasoline retailer association had interest to intervene in order to appeal injunction that enjoined a law that benefited its members).

Here, NBFA and AAIF stand in a similar position to the intervenors in *Flying J* because their members are likewise the intended beneficiaries of the law that Plaintiffs seek to enjoin in this case. *E.g.*, Williams Decl. ¶ 9; Lewis Decl. ¶ 9; K. Boyd Decl. ¶ 7. NBFA and AAIF thus possess a legally protectable interest sufficient to justify intervention here.

D. This case's disposition may impair NBFA and AAIF's interests.

The Seventh Circuit has held that as to this factor, “[t]he test is whether the outcome of the suit might impair or impede the would-be intervenor’s interest.” *Army Corps*, 101 F.3d at 507. This is plainly true here. An adverse resolution of this action would prevent NBFA and AAIF’s members from receiving the financial benefits conferred by the laws challenged in this case.

E. The Government's representation may become inadequate at a future point.

Where a putative-intervenor and the Government share the same objective in defending a law, courts apply a presumption that the Government’s defense is adequate, *see Army Corps*, 101 F.3d at 508; hence, NBFA and AAIF have filed this motion to intervene on a conditional basis. However, this litigation is still at an early stage and merits arguments have yet to be fully developed. This presumption thus may well be overcome should the Government later advance arguments that demonstrate its interests diverge from NBFA and AAIF’s. For example, inadequacy of representation may be shown if the Government advances arguments that are adverse to NBFA and AAIF’s interests—such as through compromise positions that limit NBFA and AAIF’s members’ access to financial benefits conferred by the challenged statutes. Courts have also observed that when the Government declines to appeal an adverse ruling in the case, representation “could well be thought inadequate.” *See id.*

Thus, should later developments in this action indicate that NBFA and AAIF’s interests diverge from the Government, the organizations will renew this motion and establish this inadequacy of representation factor, having already established the other factors above.

II. Permissive Intervention

NFBA and AAIA also meet the requirements of permissive intervention—but in the interests of judicial economy, they are also requesting the Court defer ruling on this issue so it can be evaluated alongside any renewed motion to intervene as of right.

Rule 24(b)(1)(B) allows a court to grant permissive intervention to a party who makes a timely motion and “has a claim or defense that shares with the main action a common question of law or fact.” District courts have broad discretion on this issue and may permit intervention when the intervenor’s claim or defense has a question of law or fact in common with the existing action and intervention will not delay or prejudice the adjudication of the rights of the original parties. *Trump v. Wis. Elec. Comm’n*, 2020 WL 7230960, at *2-3 (E.D. Wis. Dec. 8, 2020).

As discussed above in Section I, permissive intervention would not prejudice the existing parties because the Conditional Motion is being filed at a very early stage of the litigation. Furthermore, there are common questions of law here because, NBFA and AAIF seek to defend the law challenged by this lawsuit. *See id.* (civil rights organization seeking to intervene in lawsuit challenging election results to defend alongside state elections agency had sufficient “defenses that share common questions of law and fact with the main action”).

For these reasons, NFBA and AAIF could ask the Court to exercise its discretion to allow for permissive intervention. However, because NBFA and AAIF may later seek to intervene as of right, they believe it is most appropriate for the Court to also defer ruling on permissive intervention until the organizations determine whether their Rule 24(a) motion will become ripe.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the NBFA and AAIF respectfully request the Court docket their Conditional Motion for Leave to Intervene as Defendants and defer consideration on the motion pending future developments in this lawsuit.

Date: June 18, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

PUBLIC JUSTICE, P.C.

/s/ David S. Muraskin

David S. Muraskin (D.C. Bar No. 1012451)

Randolph T. Chen (D.C. Bar No. 1032644)

Jessica Culpepper (D.C. Bar No. 988976)

1620 L Street NW, Suite 630

Washington, D.C. 20036

Telephone: (202) 797-8600

Facsimile: (202) 232-7203

dmuraskin@publicjustice.net

jculpepper@publicjustice.net

rchen@publicjustice.net

*Counsel for the National Black Farmers
Association and the Association of American
Indian Farmers*

EXHIBIT 1

DECLARATION OF JOHN BOYD, JR.

My name is John Boyd, Jr. I am over the age of 18 and fully competent to make this declaration.

1. I am the Founder and President of the National Black Farmers Association (NBFA). I am authorized to speak about NBFA's activities as they relate to this matter.

2. I am a fourth-generation Black farmer who has been farming for over 38 years. I currently farm soybeans, corn, wheat, and hay; I also raise approximately 100 head of beef cattle on farms covering over 1,500 acres in Mecklenburg County, Virginia. I have been farming in Mecklenburg County since 1983.

3. NBFA is a non-profit, membership-based organization that represents the interests of Black farmers and ranchers. NBFA has over 116,000 members nationwide in 46 states, consisting largely of Black farmers and ranchers. NBFA members vote on the organization's agenda items and resolutions in annual meetings.

4. A core part of NBFA's mission is promoting education and advocacy regarding civil rights, land retention, access to public and private loans, education and agricultural training, and rural economic development for Black and other small farmers and ranchers.

5. As part of NBFA's mission and in my capacity as NBFA President, I have for decades advocated for legislation that provides loan forgiveness to Black farmers and ranchers. For example, on July 19, 2019, I testified before Congress on behalf of NBFA, where I described the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) history of racial discrimination and called on Congress to "set aside \$5 Billion to help address the needs of black and other small scale farmers."¹

¹ Testimony of J. Boyd (Appendix at 77, 79), U.S. House Hr'g re: *Promoting Econ. Growth: Exploring the Impact of Recent Trade Policies on the U.S. Econ.* (June 19, 2019), <https://www.congress.gov/116/chrhg/CHRG-116hhr39451/CHRG-116hhr39451.pdf>

6. NBFA has focused on the issue of loan forgiveness because it remedies how USDA has long discriminated against Black farmers and ranchers in the agency's lending practices. To provide just one example, USDA frequently imposed on Black farmers and ranchers various forms of supervised loan provisions that were rarely imposed on their white counterparts. These provisions restrict how the loan can be spent—for instance, by requiring certain purchases to be approved by a loan officer or limiting the suppliers from whom farm equipment and supplies could be purchased.

7. These provisions cause significant harm because they lead to frequent delays in the farmers' access to equipment and supplies. Agriculture is a time-sensitive industry—the planting season is narrow, and even minor delays can negatively impact a farmer's crop yields.

8. USDA's history of discrimination has disproportionately affected Black farmers and ranchers. Due in major part to discriminatory practices such as these, Black farmers and ranchers have faced distinct obstacles to paying off debts held by USDA. Accordingly, NBFA has made loan forgiveness a priority issue in its advocacy efforts.

9. I have personal experience with USDA's history of discrimination. When I first sought USDA loans to start my own farming business in the 1980s, I was myself subjected to a supervisory loan provision that required me to buy certain supplies from a specific supplier. I also experienced direct racial discrimination, where USDA representatives referred to me using racial slurs. In addition, at the time, Black farmers in my area seeking to apply for USDA loans could only obtain appointments with USDA representatives on a single day of the week, whereas white farmers were not subject to such restrictions.

10. NBFA's participation in this lawsuit is a key part of its mission to advocate for and defend programs that provide financial assistance and support to Black farmers and ranchers.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on: June 8, 2021



JOHN BOYD, JR.
Founder & President
National Black Farmers Association

EXHIBIT 2

DECLARATION OF KARA BOYD

My name is Kara Boyd. I am over the age of 18 and fully competent to make this declaration.

1. I am the Founder and President of AAIF. I am authorized to speak about AAIF's activities relating to this matter.

2. I am a farmer and an enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. I co-manage 1,500 acres of a family farm that includes farmland in the towns of Boynton, Baskerville, and Bracey in southern Virginia. On these farms, I grow crops such as hemp and vegetables; I also raise swine, poultry, and goats.

3. AAIF is non-profit, membership-based organization that represents the interests of Native American farmers. AAIF has over 350 members nationwide, comprised mostly of Native American farmers and ranchers.

4. AAIF invites its members to vote on the organization's agenda items and resolutions in annual meetings. AAIF members are represented by regional representatives at these meetings, who vote on their constituent members' behalf.

5. AAIF's mission is focused on providing outreach, advocacy, and technical assistance to Native American farmers and ranchers. AAIF also seeks to promote investment in support of Native American farmers and ranchers.

6. AAIF's participation in this lawsuit is an integral part of its mission to advocate for and defend programs that provide financial assistance and support to Native American farmers and ranchers.

7. In my capacity as President of AAIF, I advocated to federal legislators in early 2021 in support of legislation that would provide loan forgiveness to Native American farmers

and ranchers. I also built support for this legislation by networking with other groups that advocate for the interests of Native American farmers.

8. I am aware that AAIF has members that are eligible for financial benefits under Sections 1005 and 1006 of the American Rescue Plan Act and that they would be injured should this lawsuit enjoin those laws.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed on: June 8, 2021



KARA BOYD
Founder & President
Association of American Indian Farmers

EXHIBIT 3

DECLARATION OF IVAN ISIDORE WILLIAMS

My name is Ivan Isidore Williams. I am over the age of 18 and fully competent to make this declaration.

1. I am an African-American farmer who is a member of the National Black Farmers Association (NBFA). I want the NBFA to represent my interests in this lawsuit.

2. I live in Beulaville, NC, where I was also born and raised. Beulaville is rural town of approximately 1,296 people in the southeastern part of North Carolina.

3. I operate a farm of over 65 acres in Beulaville, where I grow soybeans and corn. I own some of my land, and also lease a portion of my land. I am a third-generation farmer who has operated this farm for over 40 years. I am 60 years old.

4. In addition to farming, I typically work a second job to supplement my income. For example, I have worked at a textile plant performing manufacturing work and I have also worked as a meter reader at a utility company. I presently work a manufacturing job at a fiber optic plant.

5. Around the year 2000, I took out USDA loans in the amount of approximately \$40,000. I used the loans for operating expenses and purchasing farm equipment.

6. As of January 1, 2021, the outstanding balance on my loan was approximately \$12,000.

7. Generally, I have timely made my payments on my loan. However, I have also missed payments or been late on payments due to a variety of factors that affected my farming business, including drought, floods, or other difficulties harvesting my crop. When I have been late on my payments, I have received letters from USDA warning about potential foreclosure on my property.

8. I believe I have experienced racial discrimination from USDA representatives. For example, in the past, I have attempted to take out additional USDA loans to operate my farm and upgrade my equipment. However, USDA representatives discouraged me from applying for additional loans by telling me I would be ineligible because I already had existing USDA loans. To my knowledge, white farmers in my area have routinely been able to take out additional USDA loans even though they similarly have existing USDA loan balances.

9. I believe I am eligible for loan forgiveness under Section 1005 of the American Rescue Plan Act because I am a socially disadvantaged farmer who has an outstanding balance on a loan with USDA.

10. In fact, last month, I received a letter from USDA regarding the issue of loan forgiveness. I then followed up regarding the issue with my local USDA representative, and he informed me that my outstanding balance would be forgiven. When I found out that my loan was going to be forgiven, I looked forward to repurposing money that I would have used to make my annual loan payment toward other important life expenses, such as the mortgage payment on my residential home.

11. If Section 1005 is enjoined, I would therefore suffer injury.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Date: 06-08-2021

By: 
IVAN ISIDORE WILLIAMS

EXHIBIT 4

DECLARATION OF SHADE MARSHALL LEWIS

My name is Shade Marshall Lewis. I am over the age of 18 and fully competent to make this declaration.

1. I am an African-American rancher who is a member of the National Black Farmers Association (NBFA). I want the NBFA to represent my interests in this lawsuit.

2. I live in La Grange, MO, a rural town of 958 people in northeast Missouri. I was born and raised in La Grange.

3. I own and operate a cattle farm in La Grange, where I raise between 100-200 heads of cattle on over 100 acres of land. I have operated my cattle farm since 2014.

4. In addition to my job as a rancher, I also work a second job conducting maintenance on power transmission lines. I work a second job for financial stability, as the cattle farming business can be unpredictable and vary significantly from year-to-year.

5. I am 30 years old and a first-generation rancher. Prior to starting my own cattle farm, I spent years building up my ranching experience, as well as the credit necessary to purchase property for a cattle farm. I believe everyone deserves a fair chance at farming, especially beginning farmers.

6. In 2014, I was able to take out a USDA loan for \$300,000. I used this loan to buy the property for my cattle farm.

7. As of January 1, 2021, the outstanding balance on my loan was approximately \$197,000.

8. My loan has an annual payment term and I have made many payments. However, due to fluctuations in the cattle farming business from year-to-year, I have also missed annual

payments on my loan. As a result of being late on my loan payments, I have received warnings from USDA threatening foreclosure on my property.

9. I believe I am eligible for loan forgiveness under Section 1005 of the American Rescue Plan Act because I am a socially disadvantaged rancher who has an outstanding balance on a direct farm loan with USDA.

10. After learning about the passage of Section 1005, I factored the law's debt forgiveness provision into my business plans. For example, I explored how receiving this loan forgiveness would enable me to pay down other loans I have taken out to purchase livestock.

11. Thus, if Section 1005 is enjoined, I would suffer injury.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed in La Grange, MO.

6/8/2021

Date: _____

DocuSigned by:

6E7CD79EC5F3463...
By: _____
SHADE MARSHALL LEWIS

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN
GREEN BAY DIVISION**

ADAM P. FAUST, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

TOM VILSACK, et al.,

Defendants,

Case No. 1:21-CV-00548-WCG

**[PROPOSED] ANSWER TO PLAINTIFFS' COMPLAINT BY [PROPOSED]
DEFENDANT-INTERVENORS THE NATIONAL BLACK FARMERS ASSOCIATION
AND THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN FARMERS**

Proposed Defendant-Intervenors the National Black Farmers Association (NBFA) and the Association of American Indian Farmers (AAIF) answer the Plaintiff's Amended Complaint, Dkt. No. 7 ("the Complaint"), as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. Paragraph 1 of the Complaint cites to Supreme Court caselaw; NBFA and AAIF aver that these authorities speak for themselves. The remainder of Paragraph 1 states legal conclusions to which no response is required.

2. Paragraph 2 of the Complaint states legal conclusions and factual opinions to which no response is required.

3. Paragraph 3 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the remaining allegations contained in Paragraph 3.

4. Paragraph 4 of the Complaint states legal conclusions and factual opinions to which no response is required.

5. Paragraph 5 of the Complaint cites to Supreme Court caselaw and references the Constitution; NBFA and AAIF aver that these authorities speak for themselves. The remainder of Paragraph 5 states legal conclusions to which no response is required.

6. Paragraph 6 of the Complaint cites to Supreme Court caselaw; NBFA and AAIF aver that these authorities speak for themselves. The remainder of Paragraph 6 states legal conclusions and factual opinions to which no response is required.

7. Paragraph 7 of the Complaint states legal conclusions and factual opinions to which no response is required.

THE PARTIES

8. Paragraph 8 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 8.

9. Paragraph 9 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 9.

10. Paragraph 10 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 10.

11. Paragraph 11 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 11.

12. Paragraph 12 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 12.

13. Paragraph 13 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 13.

14. Paragraph 14 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 14.

15. Paragraph 15 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 15.

16. Paragraph 16 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 16.

17. Paragraph 17 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 17.

18. NBFA and AAIF admit that Mr. Vilsack is the Secretary of Agriculture responsible for leading the USDA, which includes the FSA, and that he is sued in his official capacity. The remainder of Paragraph 18 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required.

19. NBFA and AAIF admit that Mr. Ducheneaux is the Administrator of FSA responsible for overseeing certain loan programs, and that he is sued in his official capacity. The remainder of Paragraph 19 of the Complaint state a legal conclusion to which no response is required.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

20. Paragraph 20 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required.

21. Paragraph 21 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required.

22. Paragraph 22 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required.

STATEMENT OF CLAIM

23. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 23 of the Complaint.

24. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 24 of the Complaint.

25. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 25 of the Complaint.

26. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 26 of the Complaint.

27. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 27 of the Complaint.

28. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 28 of the Complaint.

29. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 29 of the Complaint.

30. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 30 of the Complaint.

31. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 31 of the Complaint.

32. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in Paragraph 32 of the Complaint.

33. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 33 of the Complaint.

34. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 34 of the Complaint.

35. NBFA and AAIF both admit and deny the allegations in Paragraph 35 of the Complaint. NBFA and AAIF deny that “Black/African American, American Indian or Alaskan native, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian American or Pacific Islander” is an exclusive list in Mr. Ducheneaux’s blog post. NBFA and AAIF admit the remaining allegations in Paragraph 35 of the Complaint.

36. NBFA and AAIF admit that Mr. Ducheneaux blog states that gender is not a criteria in and of itself, but of course women are included in these categories. The remainder of Paragraph 36 of the Complaint states factual opinions and legal conclusions to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF aver that the blog speaks for itself.

37. NBFA and AAIF deny that USDA’s website contains the quote in Paragraph 37 of the Complaint; the website currently reads as follows: “Eligible borrowers include those who are one or more of the following: Black/African American, American Indian, Alaskan native, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, or Pacific Islander.” NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 37. NBFA and AAIF aver that USDA’s website speaks for itself.

38. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 38 of the Complaint.

39. NBFA and AAIF deny that USDA’s website contains the quote in Paragraph 39 of the Complaint; the website has been updated as of May 21, 2021. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 39. NBFA and AAIF aver that USDA’s website speaks for itself.

40. NBFA and AAIF deny that USDA’s website contains the quotes in Paragraph 40 of the Complaint; the website has been updated as of May 21, 2021. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the

remainder of Paragraph 40. The remainder of Paragraph 40 of the Complaint states factual opinions and legal conclusions to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF aver that USDA's website speaks for itself.

41. NBFA and AAIF admit the quoted language appears on form AD-2047 and that USDA has stated it will employ the form in administering Section 1005, but deny the characterizations of the form and any suggestion USDA must use the form to administer Section 1005. NBFA and AAIF aver the document speaks for itself.

42. NBFA and AAIF admit that form AD-2047 contains the language quoted in Paragraph 42 of the Complaint. The remainder of Paragraph 42 states a legal conclusion to which no response is required.

43. Paragraph 43 of the Complaint states factual opinions and legal conclusions to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 43.

44. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in Paragraph 44 of the Complaint.

45. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in Paragraph 45 of the Complaint. The remainder of Paragraph 45 states a legal conclusion to which no response is required.

46. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in Paragraph 46 of the Complaint.

47. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in Paragraph 47 of the Complaint. The remainder of Paragraph 47 states a legal conclusion to which no response is required.

48. Paragraph 48 of the Complaint states factual opinions and legal conclusions to which no response is required.

**CAUSE OF ACTION
EQUAL PROTECTION VIOLATION**

49. NBFA and AAIF incorporates, as if set forth in full, all the statements, denials, and averments set forth in the preceding paragraphs.

50. Paragraph 50 of the Complaint cites to Supreme Court caselaw; NBFA and AAIF aver that these authorities speak for themselves. The remainder of Paragraph 50 states legal conclusions to which no response is required.

51. Paragraph 51 of the Complaint cites to Supreme Court caselaw; NBFA and AAIF aver that these authorities speak for themselves. The remainder of Paragraph 15 states legal conclusions to which no response is required.

52. NBFA and AAIF deny that loan forgiveness is limited to the listed groups. The remainder of Paragraph 52 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required.

53. NBFA and AAIF admit the allegations in Paragraph 53 of the Complaint.

54. Paragraph 54 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 54.

55. Paragraph 55 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 55.

56. Paragraph 56 of the Complaint states factual opinions and legal conclusions to which no response is required. NBFA and AAIF lack sufficient knowledge or information to form a belief as to the truth of the allegations contained in the remainder of Paragraph 56.

57. Paragraph 57 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required.

58. Paragraph 58 of the Complaint states a legal conclusion to which no response is required.

RELIEF REQUESTED

A. Paragraph A of the Complaint's requests for relief is a request for relief to which no response is required. To the extent a response is required, NBFA and AAIF deny that the Plaintiffs are entitled to the requested relief, or any relief whatsoever.

B. Paragraph B of the Complaint's requests for relief is a request for relief to which no response is required. To the extent a response is required, NBFA and AAIF deny that the Plaintiffs are entitled to the requested relief, or any relief whatsoever.

C. Paragraph C of the Complaint's requests for relief is a request for relief to which no response is required. To the extent a response is required, NBFA and AAIF deny that the Plaintiffs are entitled to the requested relief, or any relief whatsoever.

D. Paragraph D of the Complaint's requests for relief is a request for relief to which no response is required. To the extent a response is required, NBFA and AAIF deny that the Plaintiffs are entitled to the requested relief, or any relief whatsoever.

E. Paragraph E of the Complaint's requests for relief is a request for relief to which no response is required. To the extent a response is required, NBFA and AAIF deny that the Plaintiffs are entitled to the requested relief, or any relief whatsoever.

AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES

NBFA and AAIF hereby assert the following affirmative defenses to the causes of action made by Plaintiffs in the Complaint, subject to their right to amend and assert other affirmative defenses as may become available during discovery in this action.

FIRST AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE: LACK OF STANDING

This Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction over Plaintiffs' claims because Plaintiffs cannot show the injury necessary to establish standing in federal court.

SECOND AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE: LACK OF RIPENESS

This Court lacks subject matter jurisdiction over Plaintiffs' claims because they are not ripe for review.

THIRD AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE: FAILURE TO EXHAUST

Plaintiffs' claims are barred because Plaintiffs have failed to exhaust administrative remedies.

FOURTH AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSE: FAILURE TO STATE A CAUSE OF ACTION

Plaintiffs' claims, as set forth in the Complaint, fail to state facts sufficient to constitute a cause of action against Defendant.

WHEREFORE, NBFA and AAIF respectfully request that the Court: (1) dismiss the Complaint with prejudice; (2) enter judgment in favor of NBFA and AAIF; and (3) grant such further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Dated: June 18, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

PUBLIC JUSTICE, P.C.

/s/ David S. Muraskin

David S. Muraskin (D.C. Bar No. 1012451)

Randolph T. Chen (D.C. Bar No. 1032644)

Jessica Culpepper (D.C. Bar No. 988976)

1620 L Street NW, Suite 630

Washington, D.C. 20036

Telephone: (202) 797-8600

Facsimile: (202) 232-7203

dmuraskin@publicjustice.net

jculpepper@publicjustice.net

rchen@publicjustice.net

*Counsel for the National Black Farmers
Association and the Association of American
Indian Farmers*