



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Forum to examine role of public policy in combating rural poverty

Oak Brook, IL April 14, 2016: Poverty, and specifically childhood poverty, is spreading in intensity across the United States and disproportionately so in rural regions. Individuals, families and communities bear the costs of poverty in educational performance, underused human capacity, health costs, addictions, criminal activities and weakening community infrastructure.

On Monday, April 18, the Farm Foundation® Forum will examine the costs of poverty in rural America, and the role of public policy in the fight against poverty. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack will open the Forum. He will be joined in the discussion by Bill Bynum, CEO of Hope Enterprise Corporation/Hope Credit Union (HOPE) of Jackson, MS, and Jason Henderson, Director of Extension at Purdue University.

The Forum will be 9 to 11 a.m. EDT in the Holeman Lounge of the National Press Club, 519 14th St. NW, Washington, D.C. A free, live audiocast is also available.

“Rural poverty is a complex, multi-dimensional problem for which there are no simple answers. Decades of change in the structure of rural economies, accompanied by demographic changes, have raised the economic prospects in some areas while others have been left behind. Rural poverty, which is so at odds with our sometimes idyllic vision of small town and rural life, makes us uncomfortable and tempts us to ignore the issue. That is not the answer,” says Farm Foundation President Neil Conklin. “With this Forum, Farm Foundation seeks to bring many voices into a constructive conversation of how we attack the cancer that is poverty in rural America.”

Conklin adds, “Since its founding in 1933, Farm Foundation has focused on economic and public policy issues critical to the future of agriculture and rural America. This Forum continues that tradition, examining the strengths and weaknesses of public policies in combating poverty in rural America.”

In addition to his leadership of USDA’s rural development work, Secretary Vilsack chairs the White House Rural Council, which works to improve the effectiveness of federal programs serving rural America, engage stakeholders to address issues in rural communities and promote private-sector partnerships.

Bynum has been CEO of HOPE since 1994. HOPE is a regional community development financial institution and policy center that works to provide financial services to underserved communities across Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. HOPE has generated more than \$2 billion in financing that has benefited more than 650,000 Mid-South residents and influenced community development policies and practices nationwide. Bynum currently chairs the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Consumer Advisory Board. Bynum has advised Presidents Clinton, Bush and Obama on community development, small business and financial service matters, including serving 10 years as Chairman of the U.S. Treasury Department's Community Development Advisory Board.

Henderson, who is also Assistant Vice President for Engagement at Purdue, leads a university-wide initiative designed to connect Purdue expertise and resources to statewide needs and form effective partnerships to grow the state economy and improve the quality of life for Indiana's residents. Prior to joining Purdue, Henderson was Vice President and Omaha Branch Executive at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, with responsibility for tracking agricultural and rural economies.

After brief comments by the Forum panelists, the floor will be opened for questions and discussion.

There is no charge to participate in the April 18 Forum, but registration is requested. Register [HERE](#) if you plan to attend the Forum in person at the National Press Club. Register [HERE](#) to participate in the live audiocast. Audiocasting is made possible by a grant from Farm Credit.

After the event, an audio file is posted to the [Farm Foundation website](#) for those unable to be part of the live event.

Who should participate in the Forum: People with an interest in agricultural, food and rural policy, including members of Congress, congressional staff, executive branch officials, industry representatives, NGO representatives, academics and members of the media.

The Forum: Farm Foundation, NFP organizes these public forums to engage all stakeholders in informed dialogue on food, agricultural and rural policies. Participants examine current policies, explore and analyze alternative policy options, and give voice to new proposals.

Audio from the session will be posted on the Farm Foundation [website](#). Presentations and audio files from past Forum sessions are also available at the website.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

[Mary Thompson](#), Vice President of Communication
630-601-4152