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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BEFORE THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

In re:	)	
	)	Docket No. **16-0165**
Robert Williams	)	
	)	**Dismissal** (With Prejudice)
Petitioner	)	
	AND	
In re:	)	
	)	Docket No. **16-0166**
Annie L. Williams	)	
	)	**Dismissal** (With Prejudice)
Petitioner	)	

Appearances:

Mr. Corey Lea, representative for Petitioners Mr. Robert Williams and Ms. Annie L. Williams, and

Mr. Juan Carlos Alarcon, Esq. with the Office of the General Counsel, Civil Rights Litigation Division, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington D.C.

1. The Petition of Robert Williams and Annie L. Williams, to request a formal hearing on the merits to be heard at the Federal Courthouse in Abilene, Texas, was filed August 25, 2016.

2. The Agency Response, a copy of which is attached, was filed September 15, 2016.

3. I conclude that Administrative Law Judges have no authority to grant the relief requested, as stated in the Agency Response.

4. The case regarding Petitioners Robert Williams and Annie L. Williams is DISMISSED (With Prejudice).

Copies of this Dismissal (With Prejudice) order shall be served by the Hearing Clerk

upon each of the parties.

Done at Washington, D.C.
this 23rd day of September 2016

[redacted]

Jill S. Clifton
Administrative Law Judge

Hearing Clerk's Office
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Stop 9203 South Building Room 1031
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250-9203
202-720-4443
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
BEFORE THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

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ROBERT WILLIAMS, ANNIE L. WILLIAMS
Petitioners

Docket Nos. 16-0165; 16-0166

Agency Response

On or around August 25, 2016, Petitioners Robert and Annie Williams ("Petitioners") filed a Request for a Formal Hearing with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Administrative Law Judges ("OALJ"). On August 26, 2016, OALJ issued a notice to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights ("Agency") requesting a response within 20 days. The Agency timely files this response.

Petitioners request a hearing to be held at a federal courthouse pursuant to 7 C.F.R. part 15f ("Section 741").[1] *See* Petitioner's Request.

Petitioners failed to identify valid legal authority and jurisdiction for this action

Under 7 C.F.R. § 1.131, there are nearly fifty statutes which expressly afford an individual a hearing before an Administrative Law Judge. None of them apply to Petitioner's request. *See* 7 C.F.R. § 1.131. As no action may be brought unless authorized, jurisdiction cannot be assumed absent express statutory or regulatory grant. *See Reid v. United States*, 211 U.S. 529, 538 (1909); *Munro v. Unites States*, 303 U.S. 36, 41 (1938); *United States v. Sherwood*, 312 U.S. 584, 290 (1941); *United States v. Testan*, 424 U.S. 392, 399 (1976); and *Hercules, Inc. v. United States*, 516 U.S. 417, 422 (1996). Petitioners have not identified a statutory jurisdictional basis which would entitle her to a hearing before the OALJ.

[1] Petitioner also refers to breach of contract and the FSA Handbook. None of the aforementioned has any relevance whatsoever to OALJ's jurisdiction to hear these allegations of discrimination.

Petitioners' citations of "Section 741" and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act ("ECOA") do not establish a statutory jurisdictional basis for this request. *See* 7 C.F.R. § 15(f) ("Section 741"). 7 C.F.R. Part 15f applies to complaints of discrimination filed with USDA prior to July 1, 1997, alleging discriminatory acts from 1981 to 1997. The period for filing a Section 741 complaint request under the authorized waiver of the ECOA Statute of Limitations expired on October 21, 2000. 7 C.F.R Part 15f ("you have until October 21, 2000 to file your Section 741 complaint"). USDA no longer has authority under the terms of the statutory waiver to accept Section 741 complaint requests, unless such a complaint has already been docketed under part 15f by USDA or a request was filed with USDA prior to October 21, 2000. 7 C.F.R § 15f.5 is clear that Section 741 complaint requests filed under part 15f are no longer accepted by USDA. *See generally* 68 Fed. Reg. 7411 (February 14, 2003).

Furthermore, the actions that the instant request asserts were discriminatory were already the subject of a decision by the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in which the Court dismissed Petitioners' complaint with prejudice on November 15, 2009. *See* docket entry No. 239, *Robert Williams and Laverne Williams v. Vilsack, et al.* (D.D.C., No. 03-2245). Thus, even if there were jurisdiction to hear the petition, the doctrine of *res judicata* would preclude it.

As Petitioners failed to assert cognizable jurisdiction for OALJ to hear this action, the request should be dismissed with prejudice.

Date: September 15, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

[redacted]

J. CARLOS ALARCON, Esq.
Agency Representative
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the General Counsel
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BEFORE THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

ROBERT WILLIAMS, ANNIE L. WILLIAMS
Petitioners

Docket Nos. 16-0165; 16-0166

AGENCY'S NOTICE OF APPEARANCE

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that Juan Carlos Alarcon, United States Department of Agriculture, Office of the General Counsel, Civil Rights Employment and Labor Litigation Division, hereby enters his appearance as counsel of record for the Agency in the above-captioned matter. The Clerk and all parties are requested to address all papers served on the Agency as follows:

Juan Carlos Alarcon
United States Department of Agriculture
Office of General Counsel, Civil Rights Employment and Labor Litigation Division
Room 3312-S
Washington, DC 20250
202-690-2163
Juan.alarcon@ogc.usda.gov

Date: September 15, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

[redacted]

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