

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives
Land Assistance Fund
www.federation.coop



Public Relations and Fundraising Office
2769 Church Street
East Point, GA 30344

RALPH PAIGE
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

Telephone
[404] 765-0991

Facsimile
[404] 765-9178

E-mail
fsc@mindspring.com

Board of Directors

President
Woodrow Keown
ARKANSAS

Vice-President
Edward Cline
TEXAS

Treasurer
Carrie Fulghum
ALABAMA

Secretary
Shirley Blakely
MISSISSIPPI

Chaplain
G.L. Twitty
AT LARGE

Mattie Mack
KENTUCKY

Helen Fields
SOUTH CAROLINA

Raymond Olds
FLORIDA

Satina James
GEORGIA

Daniel Bustamante
TEXAS

Norwood Davis
AT LARGE

Rural Training and
Research Center
P. O. Box 95
Epes, AL 35460
205.652.9676

TO: John Sebert, Executive Director
Uniform Law Commission

FROM: Edward Pennick, Director Land Assistance Fund,
Federation of Southern Cooperatives

RE: Uniform Partition of Heir Project Act

DATE: January 26, 2011

Mr. Sebert,

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives Land Assistance Fund is a 44 year old non-profit organization that provides support and assistance to predominately African-American farmers and landowners throughout the southeast. One of our primary focuses is land based economic development as a tool for building sustainable rural communities. One of the major road blocks to this effort is problems associated with heir property, especially state heir property laws that continue to help erode the African-American land base. These laws have become anti - family land retention because they make it almost impossible for poor or uninformed families to hold onto their land no matter how many heirs want to. There is too much discretion exercised by judges in partition cases and once a sale is ordered it is our experience that very few families are financially able to bid. The Federation estimates that over forty percent of African-American owned land is heir property, the majority of which will be lost through partition sales.

We believe that the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act, which gives families the opportunity to keep their land and thus be in a position to use that land in a way that will help lift them and their communities out of poverty, is past due, and essential to the survival of rural communities especially in the Black Belt Region where most African American owned land is located.

I hope that you will support this as not just another tool to reverse the alarming trend of African American land loss, but to also help all poor families hold on to their land or at least secure the best price should they be forced to sell.

Thank You.