



BIOGRAPHY

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY



Ray Starling
Chief of Staff
USDA – Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C.

Ray A. Starling is the Chief of Staff to Secretary Perdue at the USDA, a \$140 billion agency with 100,000 employees. In this role, Ray directs policy priorities and strategic initiatives for Secretary Perdue and acts as a point of contact for stakeholders throughout agriculture and rural communities.

Ray grew up on a Century Family Farm in southeastern North Carolina. He credits that experience as having more to do with his career path than any other influence or opportunity. His parents continue to farm, as does his eldest brother.

Ray was a National FFA Officer and is a former 4-H member. He received a B.S. in Agricultural Education from North Carolina State University in May of 1999, graduating magna cum laude. He graduated with honors from the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Law in 2002. After clerking for a NC Supreme Court Justice, he worked for several years in private practice before becoming the General Counsel for the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

He subsequently served as General Counsel and Senior Agricultural Policy Advisor to the North Carolina Speaker of the House, Mr. Thom Tillis. Upon Mr. Tillis' election to the United States Senate in 2014, Ray moved to Washington to continue serving as his General Counsel and Senior Policy Advisor. In late 2015, Mr. Tillis tapped Ray to become his Chief of Staff.

Immediately prior to joining Secretary Perdue's team, Ray served as a Special Assistant to the President for agriculture and agricultural trade. Serving at the National Economic Council provided him with a broad platform from which he could advocate for America's farmers and agribusiness owners.

Ray has taught agricultural and food law courses at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Law and at Campbell University School of Law. Active in the American Agricultural Law Association for many years, Ray has taught and organized numerous courses at the annual meeting, served on the conference planning committee, and received the 2012 American Agricultural Law Leadership Award.

Ray has received numerous awards and honors, including being named a "50 To Watch in Business" in the Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina area. He was voted as a "rising star" by his fellow members of the bar, was a 2011 Marshall Memorial Fellow, and received the 2011 Honor Award from the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA). He was recognized by NC State's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as its Outstanding Young Alumnus in 2010.

Ray lives in McLean, Virginia with his wife, Tina, and their eight-year-old daughter Victoria.