

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 5277

To establish a ranchland program to support the United States cow herd,
and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

AUGUST 6, 2026

Mr. ROUNDS (for himself and Ms. KLOBUCHAR) introduced the following bill;
which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Nu-
trition, and Forestry

A BILL

To establish a ranchland program to support the United
States cow herd, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Rebuilding America’s
5 National Cow Herd Act” or the “RANCH Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. RANCHLAND PROGRAM.**

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Agriculture (re-
8 ferred to in this section as the “Secretary”) shall carry
9 out a ranchland program under which the Secretary shall

1 enroll eligible land described in subsection (b) through
2 contracts with owners and operators.

3 (b) ELIGIBLE LAND.—An owner or operator may en-
4 roll in the program established under this section cropland
5 that—

6 (1) the Secretary determines had a cropping
7 history or was considered to be planted for not less
8 than 4 of the 6 crop years preceding the date of en-
9 actment of this Act; and

10 (2) will be restored to perennial grass and forb
11 cover and support grazing.

12 (c) CONTRACTS.—A contract under this section
13 shall—

14 (1) require the establishment on the eligible
15 land of perennial grass and forb cover appropriate to
16 the region, soil type, and intended grazing use, as
17 determined by the Secretary;

18 (2) require, not later than 2 years after enroll-
19 ment of the eligible land, a site-specific grazing man-
20 agement plan approved by the Secretary;

21 (3) be for a term of not less than 10 years and
22 not more than 15 years;

23 (4) beginning with the fourth year of the con-
24 tract, provide for the temporary suspension of the

1 base history for the land covered by the contract
2 through the end of the contract; and

3 (5) permit the activities described in subsection
4 (d).

5 (d) PERMITTED ACTIVITIES.—The activities referred
6 to in subsection (c)(5) are the following:

7 (1) Grazing in accordance with the grazing
8 management plan.

9 (2) Fire presuppression, fire-related rehabilita-
10 tion, and construction of fire breaks.

11 (3) Clipping or mowing to assist in perennial
12 grass and forb establishment.

13 (4) Emergency haying in response to a localized
14 or regional drought, flooding, wildfire, or other
15 emergency, outside the primary nesting season,
16 when—

17 (A) the county is designated as D2 (severe
18 drought) or greater according to the United
19 States Drought Monitor;

20 (B) there is at least a 40 percent loss in
21 forage production in the county; or

22 (C) the Secretary, in coordination with the
23 appropriate State technical committee estab-
24 lished under section 1261 of the Food Security
25 Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3861), determines that

1 the program can assist in the response to a nat-
2 ural disaster event without permanent damage
3 to the established cover.

4 (e) PAYMENTS.—

5 (1) ANNUAL RENTAL PAYMENTS.—The annual
6 rental rate for a payment under a contract under
7 this section shall be equal to 75 percent of the coun-
8 ty average dryland cash rental rate for cropland de-
9 termined under section 1234(d)(4)(A) of the Food
10 Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3834(d)(4)(A)).

11 (2) COST-SHARING PAYMENTS.—The Secretary
12 shall pay to an owner or operator 50 percent of the
13 cost of establishing perennial grass and forb cover
14 on eligible land enrolled under this section.

15 (3) INCENTIVE PAYMENTS.—In addition to the
16 cost sharing payment described in paragraph (2),
17 the Secretary shall make an incentive payment to—

18 (A) an owner or operator in an amount
19 equal to 50 percent of the cost of using a high-
20 quality diverse native seed mix for establish-
21 ment of cover described in paragraph (2); and

22 (B) an owner or operator that is a begin-
23 ning farmer or rancher in an amount equal to
24 50 percent of the cost share provided under
25 paragraph (2).

1 (4) LIMITATION.—The total amount of cost
2 share payments under paragraph (2) and incentive
3 payments under paragraph (3) shall not exceed 100
4 percent of the cost of establishing perennial grass
5 and forb cover on eligible land enrolled under this
6 section.

7 (f) ENROLLMENT; ACREAGE LIMITATION.—

8 (1) ENROLLMENT.—

9 (A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall ac-
10 cept applications for contracts under this sec-
11 tion on a continuous basis, using ranking peri-
12 ods that are not less frequent than annual.

13 (B) DELAY.—The Secretary may delay a
14 ranking period described in subparagraph (A)
15 if—

16 (i) the available acreage for enroll-
17 ment is less than 1,000,000 acres; or

18 (ii) commodity prices are elevated and
19 there is an expected shortage of commod-
20 ities grown on the eligible land targeted for
21 enrollment.

22 (2) ACREAGE LIMITATION.—The Secretary may
23 enroll in the program established under this section
24 not more than 20,000,000 acres.

1 (g) PRIORITIES.—In entering into contracts under
 2 this section, the Secretary shall prioritize—

3 (1) owners or operators who are beginning
 4 farmers or ranchers, as defined by the Secretary;

5 (2) owners that operate a livestock grazing op-
 6 eration or have plans to start a livestock grazing op-
 7 eration;

8 (3) owners or operators that agree to follow a
 9 conservation plan that includes provisions to support
 10 wildlife habitat or land that is part of wildlife cor-
 11 ridors;

12 (4) high-quality, diverse, native seed mixes for
 13 establishment of perennial grass and forb cover;

14 (5) highly erodible land; and

15 (6) marginal cropland.

16 (h) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall
 17 make available to owners or operators technical assistance
 18 for the duration of a contract entered into under this sec-
 19 tion.

20 (i) AUTOMATIC ENROLLMENT.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—On expiration of a contract
 22 entered into under this section, the Secretary shall
 23 automatically enroll the eligible land enrolled under
 24 the contract in a contract under section 1231(d)(2)

1 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C.
2 3831(d)(2)).

3 (2) EXEMPTIONS.—For purposes of automati-
4 cally enrolling eligible land under paragraph (1)—

5 (A) the eligible land shall not count to-
6 wards the applicable acreage limitations de-
7 scribed in section 1231(d)(2)(A) of the Food
8 Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C.
9 3831(d)(2)(A)); and

10 (B) the method of enrollment described in
11 section 1231(d)(2)(C) of that Act (16 U.S.C.
12 3831(d)(2)(C)) shall not apply.

13 (3) PRODUCER FLEXIBILITY.—An owner or op-
14 erator may opt out of the automatic enrollment
15 under paragraph (1), but the eligible land shall be
16 ineligible for reenrollment under this section.

17 (j) ENROLLMENT IN OTHER PROGRAMS.—An owner
18 or operator party to a contract entered into under this
19 section may enroll the eligible land in any program under
20 subtitle D of title XII of the Food Security Act of 1985
21 (16 U.S.C. 3831 et seq.) for any activity for which a cost
22 share or incentive payment is not provided under para-
23 graph (2) or (3) of subsection (e).

24 (k) PAYMENT LIMITATION.—The total amount of
25 payments received, directly or indirectly, by a person or

1 legal entity for a fiscal year under this section may not
2 exceed \$155,000.

3 (l) ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME LIMITATION.—Section
4 1001D(b)(2) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (7 U.S.C.
5 1308–3a(b)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the fol-
6 lowing:

7 “(F) A payment or benefit under section 2
8 of the Rebuilding America’s National Cow Herd
9 Act.”.

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