

MEMBER DAY

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

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CONTENTS

	Page
Conaway, Hon. K. Michael, a Representative in Congress from Texas, opening statement	2
Peterson, Hon. Collin C., a Representative in Congress from Minnesota, opening statement	1
Prepared statement	1
MEMBERS	
Spanberger, Hon. Abigail Davis, a Representative in Congress from Virginia ..	2
Prepared statement	4
Cline, Hon. Ben, a Representative in Congress from Virginia	6
Prepared statement	8
Malinowski, Hon. Tom, a Representative in Congress from New Jersey	9
Prepared statement	10
Case, Hon. Ed, a Representative in Congress from Hawaii	11
Prepared statement	13
Norton, Hon. Eleanor Holmes, a Delegate in Congress from District of Columbia	14
Prepared statement	16
Vela, Hon. Filemon, a Representative in Congress from Texas	17
Prepared statement	18
Delgado, Hon. Antonio, a Representative in Congress from New York	18
Prepared statement	20
Fitzpatrick, Hon. Brian K., a Representative in Congress from Pennsylvania ..	21
Prepared statement	22
Van Drew, Hon. Jefferson, a Representative in Congress from New Jersey	22
Prepared statement	24
Torres Small, Hon. Xochitl, a Representative in Congress from New Mexico	25
Prepared statement	26
Westerman, Hon. Bruce, a Representative in Congress from Arkansas	27
Prepared statement	28
Finkenauer, Hon. Abby, a Representative in Congress from Iowa	29
McGovern, Hon. James P., a Representative in Congress from Massachusetts ..	30
Prepared statement	32
Submitted Material	
Reschenthaler, Hon. Guy, a Representative in Congress from Pennsylvania, submitted statement	35

MEMBER DAY

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2019

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
Washington, D.C.

The Committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:09 a.m., in Room 1300 of the Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Collin C. Peterson [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Members present: Representatives Peterson, McGovern, Vela, Adams, Spanberger, Hayes, Delgado, Cox, Craig, Van Drew, Harder, Schrier, Axne, Conaway, Thompson, Crawford, Allen, Marshall, Dunn, Johnson, and Baird.

Staff present: Kellie Adesina, Anne Simmons, Matthew S. Schertz, Patricia Straughn, Jennifer Tiller, Dana Sandman, and Jennifer Yezak.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. COLLIN C. PETERSON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM MINNESOTA

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing of the Committee on Agriculture for Member day, will come to order. This is something that is provided for in the Rules so that Members can come and tell us what they think about issues affecting agriculture, issues that they think should be brought to our attention that will help us in our work in making sure that we have thriving rural communities and continue to have the most productive food, fiber, and fuel system in the world.

As everybody knows, this Committee covers a wide range of jurisdictions in agriculture, rural development, and other issues. The House Rules say it is supposed to be limited to our jurisdiction, but as far as I am concerned, anything that folks think affects agriculture and rural America, we are happy to hear their advice. I don't know if we are going to answer questions or not.

But anyway, we appreciate the Members being here, and look forward to their issues that are impacting their constituents and suggestions that they have for us.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Peterson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. COLLIN C. PETERSON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM MINNESOTA

Thank you to all the Members who have joined us for today's Member day hearing.

Agriculture has a strong foundation in our nation's history, and the House Agriculture Committee has a proud history of working together to advance legislation needed to ensure we continue to have thriving rural communities and the most productive food, fiber, and fuel system in the world.

The jurisdiction of the Committee covers a wide range of topics related to agriculture and rural development. As Chairman, I have charged our Subcommittee Chairs and Ranking Members with giving these issues the time and attention they deserve. Jurisdiction over these issues often crosses over into other committees. I recognize the importance of working with Members outside of our Committee to find solutions to these issues.

It is no secret that farmers, ranchers, and rural communities across the country are facing serious challenges. Rural communities have barriers to health care and broadband. Commodity prices have been on a roller coaster, and input costs are continually rising. Erratic weather is destroying crops; and an unpredictable trade environment adds another level of stress.

I'm looking forward to hearing from the Members today on the issues impacting their constituents and their suggestions on how to address those issues.

The CHAIRMAN. I recognize the Ranking Member.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM TEXAS**

Mr. CONAWAY. Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate you doing this. I appreciate our Members, both on and off the Committee, taking the time to be here today, both to listen and to share their thoughts on a host of issues under the jurisdiction of this Committee.

We are witnessing difficult conditions in farm and ranch country. I am grateful we have a new farm bill in place and a President who constantly stands up for the very Americans who provide our food and fiber.

Yesterday's announcements regarding an agreement on USMCA is welcomed, despite its being long overdue. I appreciate the hard work of both President Trump and Ambassador Lighthizer, and look forward to the agreement's swift passage.

Thank you for doing this today, and I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. I welcome our colleagues. We have a couple of them here at the table.

Before we recognize Ms. Spanberger, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Chief Counsel on the Democratic side, Kellie Adesina, for her service. Friday is her last day with the Committee. She has been with us for 10 years, and she is moving on to bigger and better things.

She has done a great job for us, and we will miss her. But we wish her all the best in her future endeavors.

So, with that, we will recognize the gentlelady from Virginia, Ms. Spanberger, for 5 minutes, I guess.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ABIGAIL DAVIS SPANBERGER, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM VIRGINIA**

Ms. SPANBERGER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and to my fellow colleagues. I appreciate the opportunity to address fellow Members of the House Agriculture Committee. I am proud to represent the people of central Virginia in the U.S. House of Representatives. Our district is home to more than 3,000 farms, and 96 percent of those farms are family farms. Across our rural communities, crop and livestock production remains a mainstay of our way of life, and it binds families together across generations. These producers are an extremely important part of our region's economy, and their dedication is evident each and every day. As the saying goes, "They work in acres, not hours."

Since coming to the House of Representatives, I have listened firsthand to the concerns of our rural neighbors who work, “in acres”. I have heard clearly about the need to focus on revitalizing our rural infrastructure, and I have heard loud and clear the need to advance long-awaited reforms.

As Members of Congress, and of this Committee, we have an opportunity to heed these calls and enact policies that can create an environment for farmers and rural communities to succeed. Today, I would like to use this opportunity to talk about how reliable broadband, trade, labor, and technical assistance complement one another to enable farmers and rural communities to reach their potential.

During my conversations with constituents, whether over a cup of coffee or on my farm tours, I have continued to hear a similar refrain: The lack of high-speed broadband internet is not being addressed swiftly enough. Limited broadband access inhibits the ability of our farms and businesses to stay competitive in an increasingly-connected economy.

While we have made improvements over the past few decades in boosting high-speed internet access across rural America, we haven’t adequately addressed the need for new and expanded broadband infrastructure, including in portions of central Virginia. At the present moment, roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ of my district’s farms still do not have reliable access to the internet.

Today, I’d like to thank many of my colleagues on this Committee for joining efforts I led this year to increase funding for the USDA’s ReConnect Program. From South Dakota to South Carolina, we have demonstrated that there is indeed a strong, bipartisan, and cross-country consensus on the top priority of boosting rural broadband access.

And why is that? Well, fundamentally, we all recognize that the issue of broadband connectivity is an issue of equal opportunity. Increased access to internet means students can complete their homework assignments, farmers can take full advantage of precision ag tools, and seniors can access telehealth services.

Essentially, by making sure our rural schools and businesses are on the same playing field as urban and suburban areas, high-speed internet serves as a great equalizer and helps strengthen our communities across rural America.

And while we are discussing the need to work together on issues that can keep our farms competitive, there are few areas where farmers, cattlemen, poultry producers, and agribusinesses agree on more than on the issue of trade.

At a time of heightened market volatility and fluctuating farm income levels, our ag producers need unwavering market access when it comes to trade with our partners in Canada and Mexico. Canada and Mexico are two of Virginia’s largest trading partners, and throughout my first year in office, I have heard farmers describe the need to protect these critical relationships. We need to advance a USMCA that can protect these relationships, expand access to North American markets, and actively advance economic interests of U.S. businesses and workers. And I am glad that we will finally be getting this done.

As House negotiators, the Administration, and U.S. Trade Representative Lighthizer work out the very final stages, I hope all Members of Congress will understand that American agriculture is closely watching this situation. Our constituents are closely watching this situation, and the work that we are about to undertake.

I would also like to use this time to discuss the need for additional reforms to our immigration system, which directly impacts our country's producers. We will vote on the Farm Workforce Modernization Act on the floor of the House of Representatives. This legislation, which I helped introduce with a bipartisan group of colleagues, would provide necessary changes to our immigration system and the H-2A program as we look to stabilize our farm workforce. Right now, my district ranks first in the Commonwealth for annual greenhouse sales, and clearly, horticulture is a key component of our district's rural community and economy, and I have made a point to personally visit with our greenhouse operators and hear directly about the challenges that they face. Among their concerns continues to be the need for labor certainty. Greenhouses, like dairy farms, need year-round labor, not just extra hands during planting and harvest months. The Farm Workforce Modernization Act would enact a major reform. It would create a new, year-round guestworker program, and these changes are enthusiastically supported by my district's greenhouses and dairy producers. The bill is the result of bipartisan, months-long negotiations with a broad range of parties and stakeholders. It is an example of how working across the aisle, in good faith, can lead to actual reforms of our nation's broken immigration system, and can help address the labor needs of U.S. businesses without undercutting American workers.

I thank you all for your time. I thank you for your attention to what is most important across our rural communities. And as a representative of central Virginia of many, many farmers and producers, it is so important that we as Members of this Committee continue to advocate for the needs of rural America, the needs of our farmers and producers, and the needs of our economies in these communities.

Thank you very much, and I yield back, Mr. Chairman.
[The prepared statement of Ms. Spanberger follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ABIGAIL DAVIS SPANBERGER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM VIRGINIA

Revitalization & Reform: Building a Long-Term Future for the Rural Economy

Good morning, and thank you for providing me with the opportunity to address my fellow Members of the House Agriculture Committee.

I am proud to represent the people of Central Virginia in the U.S. House. Our district is home to more than **3,000 farms**—and **96 percent** of those farms are *family* farms. Across our rural communities, crop and livestock production remains a mainstay of our way of life—and it binds families together across generations. These producers are an extremely important part of our region's economy, and their dedication is evident each and every day—as the saying goes, "*They work in acres, not hours.*"

Since coming to the House of Representatives, I've listened firsthand to the concerns of our rural neighbors who work in acres.

I've heard clearly about the need to focus on revitalizing our rural infrastructure—and I've heard loud and clear the need to advance long-awaited reforms. As

Members of Congress and of this Committee, we have an opportunity to heed these calls and enact policies that can create an environment for farmers and rural communities to succeed. Today, I would like to use this opportunity to talk about how reliable broadband, trade, labor, and technical assistance complement one another to enable farmers and rural communities to reach their potential.

During my conversations—whether over a cup of coffee or on my 2 day Farm Tour, I've continued to hear a similar refrain: The lack of high-speed broadband internet is not being addressed swiftly enough. Limited broadband access inhibits the ability of our farms and businesses to stay competitive in an increasingly-connected economy.

While we've made improvements over the past few decades in boosting high-speed internet access across rural America, we haven't adequately addressed the need for new and expanded broadband *infrastructure*—including in portions of Central Virginia. At the present moment, roughly 1/4 of my district's farms *still* do not have reliable access to the internet.

Today, I'd like to thank many of my colleagues on this Committee for joining efforts I've led this year to increase funding for the USDA's Reconnect Program.

From South Dakota to South Carolina, we've demonstrated that there is indeed a strong, bipartisan, and cross-country consensus on the top priority of boosting rural broadband access.

And why is that? Well, fundamentally, we all recognize that the issue of broadband connectivity is an issue of equal opportunity.

Increased access to the internet means students can complete their homework assignments, farmers can take full advantage of precision ag tools, and seniors can access telehealth services.

Essentially, by making sure our rural schools and businesses are on the same playing field as urban and suburban areas, high-speed internet serves as a great equalizer.

And while we're discussing the need to work together on issues that can keep our farms competitive, there are few areas where farmers, cattlemen, poultry producers, and agribusinesses agree more than on the issue of trade.

At a time of heightened market volatility and fluctuating farm income levels, our ag producers need unwavering market access when it comes to trade with our partners in Canada and Mexico.

Canada and Mexico are two of Virginia's largest trading partners, and throughout my first year in office, I've heard farmers describe the need to protect these critical trading relationships.

We need to advance a USMCA that can protect these relationships, *expand* access to North American markets, and actively advance the economic interests of U.S. businesses and workers. As I've said before, *we need to get this done.*

Just last week, I joined five of my colleagues in a bipartisan meeting with Vice President Pence to discuss the status of USMCA negotiations.

As House negotiators, the Administration, and U.S. Trade Representative Lighthizer work out the final stages of this agreement, I hope all Members of the Committee will understand that American agriculture is closely watching this situation—and that includes family farms and producers in my district. They understand the need for reforms to NAFTA, and they've been patiently waiting.

I'd also like to use this time to discuss the need for additional reforms to our immigration system, which directly affects our country's producers.

Today, we will vote on the *Farm Workforce Modernization Act* on the floor of the House. This legislation, which I helped introduce with a bipartisan group of my colleagues, would provide necessary changes to our immigration system and the H-2A program as we look to stabilize our farm workforce.

Right now, my district ranks first in the Commonwealth for annual greenhouse sales.

Clearly, horticulture is a key component of our district's rural economy, and I've made a point to personally visit with our greenhouse operators and hear directly about the challenges they face.

Among their concerns continues to be the need for labor certainty.

Greenhouses—much like dairy farms—need year-round labor, not just extra hands during planting and harvest months.

The *Farm Workforce Modernization Act* would enact a major reform—it would create a new, year-round guest worker program. These changes are enthusiastically supported by my district’s greenhouses and dairy producers.

This bill is the result of bipartisan, months-long negotiations with a broad range of parties.

It’s an example of how working *across the aisle—in good faith*—can lead to actual reforms of our nation’s broken immigration system and can help address the labor needs of U.S. businesses without undercutting American workers.

In my role as the Chair of the Conservation and Forestry Subcommittee and as I visit with central Virginian producers, I have also seen the important role that technical assistance plays in terms of improving farmers’ profitability and resilience.

Whether the guidance comes from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, conservation districts, extensions, peer farmers, or others, this engagement is invaluable and is a key reason as to why American agriculture excels and innovates at every turn.

Agriculture remains Virginia’s number one sector, and with improved infrastructure and much-needed reforms and technical assistance, we can plant the seeds to ensure its long-term success in that position.

By making investments in rural infrastructure and providing technical assistance to farmers, our rural areas can support family farms, recruit new workers, and innovate for the future.

And by protecting the existing workforce and expanding existing trade relationships, we can give farm workers and businesses the certainty they need.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady.

I would like to warn the folks that I am going to recognize people as they come in, and so Mr. Malinowski and Mr. Case, you kind of came in together. I think he was ahead of you in coming in the door. We next recognize the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Cline, for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF HON. BEN CLINE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM VIRGINIA

Mr. CLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Conaway, Members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today as the Agriculture Committee continues its work to ensure the success of rural America and our nation’s farmers.

Agriculture is by far the largest industry in the district that I represent in Virginia, the 6th Congressional District, represented by my former predecessor, former Agriculture Committee Chairman, Bob Goodlatte. In 2017, my district produced nearly \$1.5 billion worth of agricultural goods which accounted for 37 percent of Virginia’s agriculture sales alone. Any change in Federal policy impacting agriculture has a direct and dramatic effect on the families and businesses that I represent.

Since being elected to Congress last year, I have made it a priority to work on behalf of the many farmers and agribusinesses in the district. Earlier this fall, I had the honor of hosting the distinguished Ranking Member on a farm tour in the district. I was able to show him firsthand the vibrant agricultural economy we have in Virginia and meet the hardworking men and women who get up every day to put food on our tables.

As the Committee continues to oversee the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill, I know you will work to see that the Department of Agriculture continues to implement this landmark legislation as Congress intended. A provision important to my constituents in the

poultry industry is the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program, which will help provide the tools and resources needed to prevent and respond to outbreaks of disease. It is paramount that the Committee continues to advance policies that ensure the stability and safety of our nation's food supply.

Furthermore, I encourage the Committee to advance legislation and promote policies that reduce the many regulatory burdens our farmers face so that they can continue to run their businesses without unnecessary red tape interfering in their operations. With the recent repeal of the 2015 *Waters of the U.S.* rule, farmers are finally seeing relief from overreaching regulations forced upon them by Washington, and as legislators, we should be cognizant of yielding future authority to Federal agencies.

I have also heard from many of my constituents about the critical importance of reliable and affordable high-speed internet. The agriculture industry is heavily reliant on cutting-edge technology, and we must continue to invest in our infrastructure to ensure that rural America is able to thrive.

Additionally, with the legalization of hemp production in the farm bill, farmers in Virginia have started to grow and explore the market potential of this new commodity. Virginia's fertile farmland is ideal for hemp cultivation. In 2019, nearly 1,000 farmers registered with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to grow more than 8,500 acres of hemp. I encourage this Committee to continue its work to ensure farmers have every opportunity to take advantage of this new crop and have access to crop insurance. It is vital that USDA implement a Federal Yield-Based Industrial Hemp Crop Insurance Program.

Earlier this year, I worked alongside my colleagues to ensure Virginia's inclusion in an upcoming hemp crop insurance pilot program. Congress must ensure all of America's farmers are able to protect their investments with a level of certainty just like any other commodity grown in our great nation.

Furthermore, as the Committee continues its oversight of USDA's implementation of the U.S. Domestic Hemp Production Program, we must ensure that the policies put in place are workable for farmers and do not add obstacles to the production of this new crop. USDA's interim final rule creates a process for testing hemp; however, there are valid concerns that the proposed requirements, along with the limited number of DEA registered testing facilities, could present challenges, and as a result, farmers may be delayed in getting their product to market on time. Congress should also encourage USDA to implement a rule that takes into account the realities farmers will face if they have several fields maturing at different times by increasing the allowed 15 day turn-around time currently planned for sampling.

Finally, it is important that Congress continues to look at ways to advance and increase domestic and international market access for beef, timber, poultry, dairy, and other commodities so that our farmers and ranchers are financially stable for generations to come. Now that we are on the brink of voting on the USMCA, I encourage all Members to support this important agreement. USMCA has been one of the top priorities for the agriculture industry in Virginia. U.S. agriculture exports are expected to increase by over \$2

billion annually as a result of this agreement, and expanding market access for producers in my district is critical to the long-term success of the family farms I represent.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be with you today, and I look forward to working with this Committee as it works to ensure the success of our nation's farmers and address the needs of rural Americans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cline follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BEN CLINE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM VIRGINIA

Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway, thank you for the opportunity to testify today as the Agriculture Committee continues its work to ensure the success of rural America and our nation's farmers. Agriculture is by far the largest industry in the district that I represent in Virginia. In 2017, my district produced nearly \$1.5 billion worth of agricultural goods which accounted for 37 percent of Virginia's agriculture sales alone. Any change in Federal policy impacting agriculture has a direct and dramatic effect on the families and businesses that I represent.

Since being elected to Congress I have made it a priority to work on behalf of the many farmers and agribusinesses that I represent. Earlier this fall, I had the honor of hosting the distinguished Ranking Member on a farm tour in my district. I was able to show him firsthand the vibrant agricultural economy we have in Virginia and meet the hardworking men and women who get up every day to put food on our tables.

As the Committee continues to oversee the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill, I know you will work to see that the Department of Agriculture continues to implement this landmark legislation as Congress intended. A provision important to my constituents in the poultry industry is the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program, which will help provide the tools and resources needed to prevent and respond to outbreaks of disease. It is paramount that the Committee continues to advance policies that ensure the stability and safety of our nation's food supply.

Furthermore, I encourage the Committee to advance legislation that reduces the many regulatory burdens our farmers face so that they can continue to operate their businesses without unnecessary red tape interfering in their operations. It is also important that Congress continues to look at ways to advance and increase domestic and international market access for beef, timber, poultry, dairy and other commodities so that our farmers and ranchers are financially stable for generations to come.

I have also heard from many of my constituents about the critical importance of reliable and affordable high-speed internet. The agriculture industry is heavily reliant on cutting edge technology and we must continue to invest in our infrastructure to ensure that rural America is able to thrive.

Finally, with the legalization of hemp production in the farm bill, farmers in Virginia have started to grow and explore the market potential of this new commodity. Virginia's fertile farmland is ideal for hemp cultivation. In 2019, nearly 1,000 farmers registered with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to grow more than 8,500 acres of hemp. I encourage this Committee to continue its work to ensure farmers have every opportunity to take advantage of this new crop and have access to crop insurance. It is vital that USDA implement a Federal Yield-Based Industrial Hemp Crop Insurance Program. Earlier this year, I worked alongside my colleagues to ensure Virginia's inclusion in an upcoming hemp crop insurance pilot program. Congress must ensure all of America's farmers are able to protect their investments with a level of certainty just like any other commodity grown in our great nation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today, and I look forward to working with this Committee as it works to ensure the success of our nation's farmers and address the needs of rural Americans.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman for his input, and we now recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Malinowski, for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TOM MALINOWSKI, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM NEW JERSEY**

Mr. MALINOWSKI. Thank you, Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway, thanks for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of my constituents in New Jersey's 7th District.

There are upwards of 10,000 farm operations in New Jersey. We are among the nation's leading producers of blueberries, cranberries, peaches, squash, cucumbers, peppers, and more. We have a particularly dynamic and vibrant agricultural sector in the 7th District. Our farms sold more than \$130 million worth of products in 2017 alone, and according to the Organic Trade Organization, we have more organic operations in the 7th District than in any other in New Jersey. We are truly lucky to have the farmers' markets, the vineyards, the family farms that we do. They define the character of much of my district and I am proud to represent them in Washington.

In my almost 1 year in this job, I have had the opportunity to visit a number of these farmers and growers to hear directly from them. I want to give a shout-out to a few, to Alstede Farms and the Stony Hill Farm Market in Chester, New Jersey; Ashley's Farms in Flanders; Snowbird Farms in Long Valley; Clucas Farms in Califon; The Beneduce Vineyard in Snyder; Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown; the Copper Creek Landscape and Nursery in Frenchtown, New Jersey. Every one of these farms is different and their priorities can vary, but there were a few recurring themes that I heard on my visits to every farm in my district.

First and foremost, on labor, as you know, there is considerable frustration with the H-2A program as it is currently administered. Too few workers and an overly cumbersome application process are making it harder for our farmers to access the experienced labor that they need. And I have to say, talking to farmers in my district, you really get the sense of the disconnect between the debate on immigration that we have in Washington and the reality that our constituents experience. If we are going to be realistic, we have a choice here. We can go on as we have with an unstated but very real policy in which we, as Americans, as consumers, as producers, pay people to come to this country, including to work on farms, and then take their kids at the border if they try. Or we can do what Republicans and Democrats tried to do with near success a few years ago and to try to craft legislation that is going to enforce our immigration laws, but to treat people here like human beings. I am happy to see that the bipartisan Farm Workforce Modernization Act does that. It hews to that principle and addresses a lot of the challenges that I have heard from farmers in my district, and I very much look forward to voting for it later today.

Next on trade, our farmers don't want last-minute bailout checks from the government. They want to sell the products they have devoted their lives to growing. This Administration's habit of starting trade wars without the allies we need to win them, or a strategy for winning them, is putting many of America's farmers at risk, including the soybean growers in my district who have seen the China market dry up as a result of the President's "shoot first, aim later" approach.

Finally, on climate, unpredictable and extreme weather events pose grave risks to farmers' livelihoods. Last year was particularly wet in northern New Jersey, which led to significant crop loss and other challenges for farmers and growers. We need bold action to confront climate change for a whole host of reasons. Protecting our farmers' harvests is one of them.

I want to close briefly by highlighting the important farmland preservation work happening throughout my district, including in Hunterdon County, New Jersey, where more than 400 farms have been preserved since 1985. More than in any other county in my state. These farms provide fresh produce to local communities; they are tourist attractions; they are an integral part of the history and identity of this beautiful part of the state that I am privileged to represent. Preservation prevents these farms from being lost forever, and ensures they can continue to contribute to our economy. Hunterdon County is leading the way in our state when it comes to farmland preservation.

I look forward to working with Members of this Committee to ensure that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the county's Federal partner in these preservation efforts, is well funded into the future.

Once again, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify, for all of your efforts to help our farmers. I look forward to working with you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Malinowski follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. TOM MALINOWSKI, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
FROM NEW JERSEY

Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of my constituents in New Jersey's 7th district.

There are upwards of 10,000 farm operations in New Jersey and 750,000 acres of productive farmland. We are among the nation's leading producers of blueberries, cranberries, peaches, squash, cucumbers, peppers, and more.

We have a particularly dynamic and vibrant agricultural sector in the 7th district—our farms sold more than \$130 million worth of products in 2017 alone. And according to the Organic Trade Association, we have more organic operations in the 7th district than any other Congressional district in the state.

We're truly lucky to have the farmers' markets, vineyards, and family farms that we do—they are central to the character of our district and I'm proud to represent them here in Washington.

In August, I had the chance to visit with a number of these farmers and growers—to hear directly from them about their successes, their challenges, and about how we in Washington can be most helpful.

I was able to visit:

- Alstede Farms and the Stony Hill Farm Market in Chester;
- Ashley's Farms in Flanders;
- Snowbird Farms in Long Valley;
- Clucas Farms in Califon;
- The Beneduce Vineyard and Snyder Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown; and
- The Copper Creek Landscape and Nursery in Frenchtown.

Every farm is different and priorities can vary, but there were a few recurring themes I heard during my various visits.

- First and foremost, **on labor**, as you know, there is considerable frustration with the H-2A program as it's currently administered. Too few workers and an overly cumbersome application process are making it harder for our farmers to access the experienced labor they need. I'm pleased to see that the bipartisan Farm Workforce Modernization Act addresses several of the challenges identi-

fied by both farm and labor interests, and I look forward to voting in favor of this legislation later today.

- Next, **on trade**, our farmers don't want last-minute bailout checks from the government to stay afloat. They want to sell the products they've devoted their lives to growing. This Administration's habit of starting unilateral trade wars is putting America's farmers at risk, including the soybean growers in my district who have seen the China market dry up as a result of the President's 'shoot first, aim later' approach to negotiations. We need to expand market access for our farmers—the best in the world—not cut it off.
- And finally, **on climate**, unpredictable and extreme weather events pose grave risks to farmers' livelihoods. Last year was particularly wet in northern New Jersey, which led to significant crop loss and other challenges for farmers and growers. We need bold action to confront climate change for a whole host of reasons—protecting our farmers' harvests is one of them.

I want to close by highlighting the important **farmland preservation work** happening throughout my district, including in Hunterdon County, where more than 400 farms have been preserved since 1985—more than in any other county in the state.

These farms provide fresh produce to local communities; they are popular tourist attractions for the region; and they are an integral part of the history and identity of this beautiful part of the state that I am privileged to represent.

Preservation prevents these farms from being lost forever—replaced by new development—and ensures that they can continue to contribute to the rural economy as they have for generations.

Hunterdon County is leading the way in the state when it comes to farmland preservation, and I commend them for their efforts. I look forward to working with Members of this Committee to ensure that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the county's Federal partner in their preservation efforts, is well-funded into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify today and for all of your efforts to empower America's farmers to succeed. And thank you to the farmers and growers in my district who have shown themselves to be remarkably resilient amid challenging circumstances.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. Thank you very much for your statement and input.

I now recognize the gentleman from Hawaii who used to be a Member of this Committee when he was here in a former service, and we welcome you back, Mr. Case.

STATEMENT OF HON. ED CASE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM HAWAII

Mr. CASE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee.

Yes, as a proud former Member of the House Agriculture Committee from 2003 to 2006, I appreciate your allowing me to share my thoughts on issues important to our agricultural community, both nationally and in my home State of Hawaii.

It was just as true then as it is today that American agriculture doesn't much care about partisanship and is, in fact, a unifier across our nation. As you may remember from my prior service, one of the key agricultural issues facing my home State of Hawaii is invasive species and diseases. Invasives are a major issue throughout our country, but especially in Hawaii and other isolated areas where, because of our unique ecosystems, natural resources and agricultural crops, they have devastating effects requiring extraordinary prevention and mitigation actions.

Hawaii is the most isolated island chain and one of the most ecologically diverse places in our world. Plants and animals that found their way to Hawaii evolved to thrive in this isolated ecosystem. In

fact, a 2014 survey identified fully 9,975 endemic species in Hawaii. These unique circumstances have also given rise to one of our nation's most diverse and productive agricultural communities. With ecosystems ranging from desert to tropical and with a year-round growing cycle, our crops have ranged throughout our history from the highest quality sugar and pineapple and cattle to tropical specialty crops like fruit and cut flowers in the highest demand worldwide.

Yet, it is exactly because these crops, like our natural resources, have adapted to Hawaii's uniqueness that they are the most susceptible to devastation from external species against which they have no natural defenses. I sought to crack down on a lax regime to prevent and curb invasives with my introduction in 2005 of H.R. 3468, the Hawaii Invasive Species Act, modeled after New Zealand and other isolated jurisdictions with then, like now, the most stringent invasive species prevention regimes in the world.

Since then, the consequences to Hawaii of insufficient invasive species prevention have worsened materially. For example, 195 new invasive species have been introduced to Hawaii since then. This accelerating negative effect on our environment and loss of biodiversity is, of course, a major concern from not just a natural resources perspective but agricultural. In fact, invasive species have drastically impacted agriculture in Hawaii, threatening some of the island's most valuable crops in the state's third-largest industry.

As just a few examples, the coffee berry borer, which was discovered in Kona in 2010, now infects all of the coffee growing islands in Hawaii except Kaua'i. Hawaii's third most valuable crop, the macadamia nut, is under threat from the macadamia felted coccid, which substantially reduces macadamia nut tree yields. Increased research, eradication and quarantine dollars are needed to mitigate these invasive pests and prevent other pests and diseases like the coffee tree rust from entering the state.

I especially want to thank this Committee for including the Macadamia Tree Health Initiative in last year's farm bill and for your continued support for the Coffee Plant Health Initiative and tropical and subtropical agricultural research. These critical initiatives provide research and extension grants and research support to crops that are vital to Hawaii's agriculture. I will soon introduce an updated and strengthened version of my Hawaii Invasive Species Prevention Act. I would deeply appreciate this Committee's careful consideration of my proposal, given the unique challenges we face in preventing and controlling invasives and the severe negative consequences to Hawaii from failing to do so.

In addition to invasive species, I want to urge the Committee to continue its great work on specialty crops, sustainability programs, conservation programs and rural housing. When I previously served on the Agriculture Committee, most of Hawaii's unique crops were not covered by crop insurance, but through efforts by me and my then, and later, colleagues and the sustained support of this Committee, crop insurance now covers more than 130 crops. USDA conservation programs have been an essential component in helping local Hawaii products become more sustainable. USDA rural development programs have helped address Hawaii's housing

crisis in our farming communities. These programs have proven themselves in Hawaii as they have elsewhere throughout our country.

In closing, thank you very much for your leadership in helping our nation's agricultural producers, and for your consideration of my Hawaii's unique invasive species and agricultural and rural development needs. *Mahalo*.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Case follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ED CASE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM
HAWAII

Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Conaway, and Members of the Agriculture Committee:

As a former Member of the House Committee on Agriculture from 2003 through 2006, I appreciate your allowing me to share my thoughts on issues important to our agricultural community both nationally and in my home state of Hawai'i. It was just as true then as it is today that American agriculture doesn't much care about partisanship and in fact is a unifier across our nation.

As you may remember from my prior service, one of the key agricultural issues facing my home state of Hawai'i is invasive species and diseases. Invasives are a major issue throughout our country, but especially in Hawai'i and other isolated areas where, because of our unique ecosystems, natural resources and agricultural crops, they have devastating effect requiring extraordinary prevention and mitigation actions.

Hawai'i is the most isolated island chain and one of the most ecologically diverse places in our world. Hawai'i is 2,282 miles from the continental United States, 2,952 miles from Japan and 4,772 miles from Washington, D.C. Plants and animals that found their way to Hawai'i evolved to thrive in this isolated ecosystem. A 2014 survey identified 9,975 endemic species in Hawai'i. These species include the Hawaiian scarlet honeycreeper, the 'Iwi; the flowering evergreen, the 'ohi'a lehua; and the state bird of Hawai'i, the nēnē.

Hawai'i's unique circumstances also have given rise to one of our nation's most diverse and productive agricultural communities. With ecosystems ranging from desert to tropical and with a year-round growing cycle, our crops have ranged throughout our history from the highest quality sugar and pineapple and cattle to tropical specialty crops like fruit and cut flowers in the highest demand worldwide.

Yet, it is exactly because these crops like our natural resources have adapted to Hawai'i's uniqueness that they are the most susceptible to devastation from external species against which they have no natural defenses. I sought to crack down on a lax regime to prevent and curb invasives with my introduction in 2005 of H.R. 3468, the Hawai'i Invasive Species Prevention Act, modeled after New Zealand and other isolated jurisdictions with then like now the most stringent invasive species prevention regimes in the world.

Since then, the consequences to Hawai'i of insufficient invasive species prevention have worsened materially. For example, 195 new invasive species have been introduced to Hawai'i. These have only added to Hawaii's unfortunately warranted description as the extinction capital of the world. Although we will never know the true number of species that have gone extinct in Hawai'i, in the last 200 years, 28 bird, 72 snail, 74 insect and 97 plant species have gone extinct, and of the 1,274 listed endangered species of animals and plants, 502 are from Hawaii. The state has nearly 40% of the nation's endangered species. Additionally, another 15 are listed as threatened in Hawai'i.

This accelerating negative effect on our environment and loss of biodiversity is of course a major concern from not just a natural resources perspective but agricultural. In fact, invasive species have drastically impacted agriculture in Hawai'i, threatening some of the island's most valuable crops in the state's third-largest industry.

As just a few examples, the coffee berry borer, which was discovered in Kona in 2010, now infects all of the coffee growing islands in Hawai'i except Kauai. The coffee berry borer can cause yield losses of between 30 and 35 percent and affects the quality of the coffee beans, directly impacting the income of growers.

Hawai'i's third most valuable crop, the macadamia nut, is under threat from the macadamia felted coccid. Macadamia Felted Coccid has been found in all of Hawai'i Island's prime macadamia growing regions. The felted coccid reduces macadamia

tree output by draining nutrients from the tree. Invasive species coupled with increased rain led to a 22 percent decline in the macadamia nut harvest this year compared to last year. Increased research, eradication and quarantine dollars are needed to mitigate these invasive pests and prevent other pests and diseases like the coffee leaf rust from entering the state. I especially want to thank this Committee for including the Macadamia Tree Health Initiative in last year's farm bill and for your continued support for the Coffee Plant Health Initiative and tropical and subtropical research. These critical initiatives provide research and extension grants and research support to crops that are vital to Hawai'i agriculture.

I will soon introduce an updated and strengthened version of my Hawai'i Invasive Species Act. I would deeply appreciate this Committee's careful consideration of my proposal given the unique challenges we face in preventing and controlling invasives and the severe negative consequences to Hawai'i from failing to do so.

In addition to invasive species, I want to urge the Committee to continue its great work on specialty crops, sustainability programs, conservation programs and rural housing. When I previously served on the Agriculture Committee, most of Hawai'i unique crops were not covered by crop insurance, but through efforts by me and my then and later colleagues and the sustained support of this Committee, crop insurance now covers more than 130 crops. USDA conservation programs have been an essential component in helping local Hawai'i products become more sustainable. USDA rural development programs have helped address Hawai'i's housing crisis in our farming communities. These programs have proven themselves in Hawai'i as they have elsewhere throughout our country.

In closing, thank you for your leadership in helping our nation's agricultural producers and for your consideration of Hawai'i's unique invasive species and agricultural and rural development needs.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman for his input, and we appreciate that.

We now welcome the gentlelady from the District of Columbia who is—I have a note—was one of my colleagues in our class of 1991. There are only a few of us left. Eleanor Holmes Norton.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, A
DELEGATE IN CONGRESS FROM DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You and I may be the only survivors from that class. I very much appreciate, Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway, the opportunity to testify this morning on H.R. 4885, the McIntire-Stennis Act. I call it the McIntire-Stennis District of Columbia Equality Act, which would amend the McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Act to make the District, your Nation's Capitol, eligible for funding. The District is treated as a state for Federal programs with very, very few exceptions, most of them simply oversights or failures to update. The exclusion of the District from the Act appears to have been just that, an oversight. As I shall explain presently, my bill would rectify the exclusion of the District from the Act, ensuring equitable treatment for the District and allowing the District to benefit from the funding opportunities available under the Act, competitively, of course.

The Act provides U.S. states and territories with formula funds as well to support state-designated institutions' cooperative forestry research programs. The Act defines *state* to include Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam. The District's notable, but faulty, absence from the definition makes it ineligible for funds that would support research at the District's state-supported university, the University of the District of Columbia. UDC's College of Agriculture, Urban Stability, and Environmental Science complements the District's ongoing forestry efforts. UDC is the nation's only urban land-grant university.

We appreciate that Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, and Guam are included under the definition of *state*, even though unlike District residents, their residents do not pay Federal income taxes. It would be particularly troubling if the District, whose residents pay the highest per capita Federal taxes in the United States, which support farm and other programs, continue to be excluded.

It has been argued that the District should be excluded because of the lack of local timber production. However, the Act says, and here I am quoting, “in making such apportionments, consideration shall be given to pertinent factors including” local timber production. *Including* is the operative word there. Proximity to timber is, therefore, only one in a non-exclusive list of factors that is part of the larger analysis regarding apportionments. Excluding the District from the definition of *state* merely because it is not located in an area with a timber industry runs counter to the clear intent of the Act. While timber production can be a factor in determining the amount of state allocations, there is no reason that the District should be excluded from the Act.

Moreover, UDC would particularly benefit from funding from the Act. The goal of the Act goes well beyond providing money to study timber production, and UDC’s position as the nation’s only urban land-grant university would make it especially well-qualified for funding under this Act. With increased urbanization in the United States, it is more important than ever that urban areas also deal with unique issues related to urban forestry and maintaining native ecosystems, and UDC is helping lead that charge.

For example, UDC has an Urban Gardening and Forestry Outreach Program that provides District residents with information on the benefits of the city’s many trees—this is, above all, a tree city—and the natural resources trees provide. As UDC notes on its website describing this particular program, “District residents are educated about tree care, forestry niche crops, and the invasive species that threaten the ecosystem.” Moreover, this program provides education materials, does demonstrations and workshops, provides technical assistance to interested parties, and conducts site visits and consultations. As urban areas face increasing environmental stress, it is more important than ever that our universities study matters, such as how urban forests and trees can help with flood mitigation and water absorption. UDC already works with the District to help reintroduce native species into Rock Creek Park, including trees that are part of larger forestry restoration efforts. It is important to avoid stereotypes about jurisdictions that could be deprived of funding for which they would otherwise qualify. It is unconscionable for UDC to be unable to get funding under the Act for its forestry programs simply because of its location in the Nation’s Capitol.

We believe, therefore, that the exclusion of the District must have been the result of an oversight during the original drafting of the Act; however, as you can imagine—and I don’t believe I was here at the time—this exclusion has serious consequences for the District, rendering UDC ineligible for these funds. Passage of my bill would allow students and researchers in the Nation’s Capitol to take part in this important forestry program.

Again, Chairman Peterson, I appreciate your allowing me to testify today, and I look forward to working with you to enact this bill. [The prepared statement of Ms. Norton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, A DELEGATE IN
CONGRESS FROM DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway, I am pleased to testify on H.R. 4885, the McIntire-Stennis Act District of Columbia Equality Act, which would amend the McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Act (Act) to make the District of Columbia eligible for funding. The District is treated as a state for Federal programs, with very few exceptions, most of them simply oversights or failures to update. The exclusion of the District from the Act appears to have been an oversight, as I shall explain presently. My bill would rectify the exclusion of the District from the Act, ensuring equitable treatment for the District and allowing the District to benefit from the funding opportunities available under the Act.

The Act provides U.S. states and territories with formula funds to support state-designated institutions' cooperative forestry research programs. The Act defines "state" to include Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam. The District's notable, but faulty, absence from this definition makes it ineligible for funds that would support research at the District's state-supported university, the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). UDC's College of Agriculture, Urban Stability, and Environmental Science complements the District's ongoing forestry efforts. UDC is the nation's only urban land-grant university.

We appreciate that Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam are included under the definition of "state," even though, unlike District residents, their residents do not pay Federal income taxes. It would be particularly troubling if the District, whose residents pay the highest per capita Federal taxes, which support farm and other Federal programs, continued to be excluded.

It has been argued that the District should be excluded because of its lack of local timber production. However, the Act says, "[i]n making such apportionments, consideration shall be given to pertinent factors including" local timber production. Proximity to timber is, therefore, only one in a non-exclusive list of factors that is part of the larger analysis regarding the apportionments. Excluding the District from the definition of "state" merely because it is not located in an area with a timber industry runs counter to the intent of the Act. While timber production can be a factor in determining the amount of state allocations, there is no reason that the District should be excluded from the Act.

Moreover, UDC would particularly benefit from funding from the Act. The goal of the Act goes well beyond providing money to study timber production, and UDC's position as the nation's only urban land-grant university would make it especially well-qualified for funding under this Act. With increased urbanization in the United States, it is more important than ever that urban areas also deal with the unique issues related to urban forestry and maintaining native ecosystems, and UDC is helping lead the charge. For example, UDC has an Urban Gardening and Forestry Outreach program that provides District residents with information on the benefits of the city's many trees and the natural resources trees provide. As UDC notes on its website describing this particular program, "[District] [r]esidents are educated about tree care, forestry niche crops and the invasive species that threaten the ecosystem." Moreover, this program provides education materials, does demonstrations and workshops, provides technical assistance to interested parties, and conducts site visits and consultations. As urban areas face increasing environmental stress, it is more important than ever that our universities study matters such as how urban forests and trees can help with flood mitigation and water absorption. UDC already works with the District to help reintroduce native species into Rock Creek Park, including trees that are part of larger forest restoration efforts. It is important to avoid stereotypes about jurisdictions that could be deprived of funding for which they would otherwise qualify. It is unconscionable that UDC cannot get funding under the Act for its forestry programs simply because of its location in the District.

We believe, therefore, that the exclusion of the District must have been the result of an oversight during the original drafting of the Act. However, as you can imagine, this exclusion has serious consequences for the District, rendering UDC ineligible for these funds. Passage of my bill would allow students and researchers in the Nation's Capitol to take part in this important forestry program.

Again, I appreciate your allowing me to testify today, and I look forward to working with you to enact this bill.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady, and we will take it under advisement.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. As I said earlier, we are recognizing people as they enter the room, so next, Mr. Vela from Texas, then Mr. Delgado would be next, Mr. Fitzpatrick, and then Mr. Van Drew.

So the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Vela.

**STATEMENT OF HON. FILEMON VELA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM TEXAS**

Mr. VELA. Good morning, Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Conaway, and thank you for holding this hearing today.

I am here to speak on the importance of H.R. 4482, the Protecting America's Food and Agriculture Act of 2019. This bill will provide Customs and Border Protection the authorization to hire agricultural specialists and technicians to fill the deficit that their own resource application model has determined is necessary to carry out inspections, as well as authorization to add canine teams for these inspections.

Currently, according to CBP's resource allocation model, there is a deficit of 695 agricultural specialists, and it will authorize the hiring of up to 240 specialists a year until CBP meets its workforce targets. On an average day, CBP processes more than one million passengers and pedestrians; 358,000 incoming international air passengers; 81,000 truck, rail, and seas containers; 90,000 shipments of goods approved for entry; and \$120 million in fees, duties, and tariffs at U.S. ports-of-entry by land, sea, and air. On these days, they seize more than 2,112 kilograms of drugs; 100 shipments; 4,370 prohibited plant materials and/or animal products; and 319 agricultural pests and diseases.

Agricultural specialists and technicians are the frontline for preventing the entry of these illicit and invasive species. These pests and diseases cause an estimated \$120 billion in economic damage to the United States, with more than ½ of that figure accounting for damages to the agricultural sector.

With the rising transmission of African Swine Fever across Asia and Eastern Europe, the protection of our domestic swine herds is imperative, and the expansion of our domestic surveillance at ports of entry is critical to protecting our hard-working pork producers. With estimated losses of over 300 million pigs in China due to African Swine Fever, increasing detection and eradication of products contaminated with African Swine Fever is imperative to prevent the devastation of our domestic hog herds.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation to protect our domestic agricultural economy from the entrance of illegal agricultural products. We need to be proactive instead of reactive in defending our agricultural production and this bill is a critical first step to protecting our nation's food and agriculture.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Vela follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. FILEMON VELA, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
FROM TEXAS

Good morning, Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway, and thank you for holding this hearing today.

Today I stand to speak of the importance of my bill, HR 4482, the Protecting America's Food and Agriculture Act of 2019. This bill will provide CBP the authorization to hire Agricultural Specialists and Technicians to fill the deficit that their own Resource Application Model has determined is necessary to carry out inspections, as well as authorization to add canine teams for these inspections. Currently, according to CBP's Resource Allocation Model, there is a deficit of 695 Agricultural Specialists and this bill will authorize the hiring of up to 240 specialists a year until CBP meets its workforce targets.

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I urge my colleagues to support this legislation to protect our domestic agricultural economy from the entrance of illegal agricultural products. We need to be proactive instead of reactive in defending our agricultural production, and this bill is a critical first step to protecting our nation's food and agriculture.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman for his statement.

Now, Mr. Delgado, the gentleman from New York, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ANTONIO DELGADO, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM NEW YORK**

Mr. DELGADO. Thank you, Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway, for the opportunity to join you this morning.

I am pleased to be here on behalf of the nearly 5,000 small farms and over 8,000 farm operators in my district, 96 percent of which are family farms. We do not have big corporate farms back home in upstate New York, which makes things challenging, given how much of our Federal policy is geared towards supporting the large-scale operations.

Indeed, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue has repeatedly opined that the demise of the small family farm is *inevitable*. I disagree. It is a choice. The choice is exactly why I sit with you today. This past weekend, I joined the Schoharie County Farm Bureau at Argus Acres farm where I met with several dairy farmers operating across the county. They represent generations of family farms. We cannot and will not choose to leave these folks behind when crafting Federal policy. Supporting our family farmers starts with pushing back against group think supporting economies-of-scale rather than economies-of-cooperation. Economies-of-cooperation ought to guide our work to create inclusive policy that helps every farmer get ahead. That means giving small family farmers the tools to access increased market share, supporting the next genera-

tion of farmers, equipping our farmers to respond to a changing and challenging climate, and crafting legislation that specifically combats monolithic agriculture policy that drowns out the voices of family-owned farms.

A first step to addressing these headwinds facing small farmers includes giving our farmers the increased flexibility to reorganize their finances. To that end, I worked with Chairman Peterson on legislation that will help farmers through this challenging time for agriculture. The Family Farmer Relief Act lifts the eligibility cap from \$3 million to \$10 million for Chapter 12 bankruptcy filings, which allows small farmers the flexibility to reorganize, restructure and repay their debt. It passed the House and Senate earlier this year and was signed by the President in August. This law is not a panacea, but it certainly helps our farmers.

While it is important for our farmers to have increased flexibility, I urge the Committee to better tailor our Federal policy to support family-owned farms. This includes removing barriers to success for the next generation of young farmers. I have introduced the bipartisan Young Farmer Success Act, which adds farmers and ranchers to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. This legislation, which is currently moving as a part of the College Affordability Act, will be voted on by the full House soon.

As we think about the future generations of farmers, we must also consider the significant risks posed by climate change. As farmers face unpredictable growing patterns, threats to long-term soil health, and more severe, extreme weather events, I urge the Committee to support tax credits and incentives for climate-friendly practices, including carbon sequestration.

Additionally, as a Committee, it is our duty to acknowledge the significant headwinds facing dairy producers today, including low prices and increased market consolidation, and continue to fight for the interests of our small dairy farmers and protect their ability to stay in business.

I am proud to support the bipartisan Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2019, which allows schools in the School Lunch Program to buy flavored and unflavored whole milk for students, and the DAIRY PRIDE Act which combats mislabeling nondairy products, are important incremental steps to bolster support for our small dairy farms. I will continue to push to bring more product from our local farmers into our public schools, hospitals, and other more localized institutions. As we consider future legislation to support our farmers and specifically consider the plight of small farms, the policies pursued by this Committee should not foster market consolidation, but rather, serve as a check against it.

Our small farms are also feeling disproportionate impacts from the President's scattershot trade policies. The United States is now paying more to help our farmers deal with tariffs than we did to bail out the auto industry during the great recession, more than double.

The Administration's own attempts to combat these tariffs continue to advantage big ag. For example, the Environmental Working Group found that in the Administration's first round of trade aid for farmers, more than ½ of total payments went to the top ten percent of farmers. In other words, the largest and wealthiest

farms in the country. Our policies must be tailored to address urgent needs for small family-owned farms during this down farm economy.

I will close this morning by once again highlighting my experiences this weekend with dairy farmers in Schoharie County. These are the folks we must look out for, those who have maintained family farmland for generations. This time-honored tradition is crucial to our upstate way of life and we will not allow them to just go away.

I thank you all again for the opportunity to testify, and look forward to continuing to working alongside the Committee to support our small farmers.

I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Delgado follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. ANTONIO DELGADO, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM NEW YORK

Good morning. Let me start by thanking Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway for the opportunity to join you all this morning.

I'm pleased to be here on behalf of the nearly 5,000 small farms and over 8,000 farm operators in my district, 96% of which are family farms.

We do not have big corporate farms at home, which makes things challenging given how much of our Federal policy is geared towards supporting the large-scale operations. Indeed, Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue has repeatedly opined that the demise of the small family farm is inevitable. I disagree. It is a choice.

This choice is exactly why I sit before you all today. This past weekend, I joined the Schoharie County Farm Bureau at Argus Acres farm where I met with several dairy farmers operating across the county—they represent generations of family farmers. We cannot and will not “choose” to leave these folks behind when crafting Federal policy.

Supporting our family farmers starts with pushing back against group think supporting economies-of-scale rather than economies-of-cooperation.

Economies-of-cooperation ought to guide our work to create inclusive policy that helps every farmer get ahead: that means giving small family farmers the tools to access increased market share, supporting the next generation of farmers, and crafting legislation that specifically combats monolithic agriculture policy that drowns out the voices of family-owned farms.

A first step to addressing these headwinds facing small farmers includes giving our farmers the increased flexibility to reorganize their finances.

To that end, I worked with Chairman Peterson on legislation that will help farmers through this challenging time for agriculture. The *Family Farmer Relief Act* lifts the eligibility cap, from \$3 million to \$10 million, for Chapter 12 bankruptcy filings which allows small farmers the flexibility to reorganize, restructure and repay their debt. It passed the House and Senate earlier this year and was signed by the President in August. This law is not a panacea, but it certainly helps our small farmers.

While it is important for our farmers to have increased flexibility—I urge the Committee to better tailor our Federal policy to support family owned farms. This includes removing barriers to success for the next generation of young farmers. I've introduced the bipartisan *Young Farmer Success Act* which adds farmers and ranchers to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program. This legislation, which is currently moving as a part of the *College Affordability Act* will be voted on by the full House soon.

As we seek to address the challenges facing our farmers, we must acknowledge the significant headwinds facing dairy producers: including low prices and increased market consolidation. As a body, it is our job to continue to fight for the interests of our small dairy farmers and protecting their ability to stay in business.

The bipartisan *Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2019*, which allows schools that participate in the School Lunch Program to buy flavored and unflavored whole milk for students, is an important step to continue to support our small dairy farmers. I will continue to push to bring more product from our local farmers into our public schools.

In addition to these specific legislative proposals, combating the consolidating markets and the tariffs must remain our north star on this Committee. Right now,

the Administration's own policies continue to advantage big ag by basing subsidies on the number of employees and volume of production. There's no way that small farmers can compete with this metrics-based mind-set.

I will close this morning by once again highlighting my experiences this weekend with dairy farmers in Schoharie County. These are the folks we must look out for, those who pass down farmland from generation to generation. These time-honored traditions are crucial to our upstate way of life and we will not allow them to decline.

I thank you all again for the opportunity to testify before you and look forward to working alongside you all to support our small farmers.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman for his statement.

I now recognize the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Fitzpatrick.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM PENNSYLVANIA**

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Good morning, Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway. Thank you for your time this morning.

I am here today to urge the Committee to take up two very important bills, pieces of legislation, regarding animal protection. The first is H.R. 1002, the Welfare of our Friends, or the WOOF! Act, introduced by myself and Congressmen Crist, G.T. Thompson, and McGovern, which to date has garnered over 200 cosponsors. This bipartisan bill would amend the Animal Welfare Act to prohibit the issuance or the renewal of a license to dog breeders and exhibitors until they have demonstrated compliance through facility inspection. This is common-sense legislation that will help to stop puppy mills and abusive dog breeders from continuing to get their licenses in a direct family member's, spouse's, or cohabitant's name. And it also ensures that those that have had licenses suspended or revoked in the last 10 years do not procure one.

This legislation helps to bolster the actions that the Department of Agriculture is currently taking with their rule proposal which seeks to eliminate automatic license renewals. It suggests that re-application would be necessary every 3 years. And while I am supportive of the USDA's proposed rule, I believe that the WOOF! Act goes one step further in protecting dogs from abusive handlers by making licensing requirements stricter.

Second, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member, I would like to bring to the Committee's attention H.R. 2442, the Puppy Protection Act. This bill was introduced by myself and Congressmen Crist, Reschenthaler, and McGovern. It currently has 37 cosponsors. This bipartisan bill would amend the Animal Welfare Act to ban harmful practices such as cage stacking and wire flooring in pet areas. It requires the following: that dogs over 12 weeks old have room to exercise; dogs be fed at least twice a day and have access to clean and unfrozen water at all times; all dogs receive annual veterinary examinations; and it also includes many other common-sense measures meant to ensure reasonable well-being of these animals. While some of the provisions in the bill are in the USDA's proposed rule, the Puppy Protection Act provides additional standards of care to ensure that dogs in USDA licensed facilities are treated humanely.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, both of these bills have the strong support of the Humane Society, the ASPCA and numerous other animal advocacy groups. I hope that the Committee will con-

sider these two important pieces of legislation that will help protect our friends in need of these protections.

I thank the Committee for its time, and I urge the Committee to take up these bills.

I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fitzpatrick follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM PENNSYLVANIA

Good morning, Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway, I am here today to urge the Committee to take up two important bills relating to animals.

H.R. 1002, the Welfare of our Friends or WOOF! Act introduced by me Congressmen Crist, G.T. Thompson, and McGovern has garnered 195 cosponsors.

This bipartisan bill would amend the Animal Welfare Act to prohibit the issuance or renewal of a license to dog breeders and exhibitors until they demonstrate compliance through facility inspection.

This common-sense bill will help to stop puppy mills and abusive dog breeders from continuing to get licenses in a direct family member's, spouse's, or cohabitant's name. It also ensures that those that have had licenses suspended or revoked in the last 10 years do not procure one.

This legislation helps to bolster the actions that the Department of Agriculture is currently taking with their rule proposal which seeks to eliminate automatic license renewals. It suggests that reapplication would be necessary every 3 years. While I am supportive of the USDA's proposed rule, I think that the WOOF! Act goes a step further in protecting dogs from abusive handler, by making the licensing requirements stricter.

I would also like to bring the Committee's attention to H.R. 2442, The Puppy Protection Act. This bill was introduced by me, Congressmen Crist, Reschenthaler, and McGovern.

This bipartisan bill would amend the Animal Welfare Act to ban harmful practices such as cage-stacking and wire flooring in the pet areas. It requires the following: that dogs over 12 weeks old have room to exercise, all dogs be fed at least twice a day and have access to clean unfrozen water at all times, all dogs receive annual veterinary examinations, it also includes many other common-sense measures meant to ensure reasonable well-being for canines.

While some of the provisions in the bill are in USDA's proposed rule the Puppy Protection Act provides additional standards of care to ensure that dogs in USDA licensed facilities are treated humanely.

Both of these bills have the strong support of the Humane Society, ASPCA and numerous other animal advocacy groups.

I hope that the Committee will consider these two important bills that will help protect our friends that need protecting the most.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman for his statement.

I now recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Van Drew.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF VAN DREW, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM NEW JERSEY**

Mr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway, for this opportunity to speak about agriculture in my district, and southern New Jersey.

I represent New Jersey's second Congressional district which encompasses over 40 percent of the state's land mass, and is a leader in the state for most crops that have market value and for agricultural products sold. Many times when we think of New Jersey we forget it is "The Garden State" and even fewer know that the nickname comes from a 19th century southern New Jersey farmer named Abraham Browning. Mr. Browning coined the term when describing New Jersey when $\frac{2}{3}$ of the state's landmass was beautiful rolling farmland.

Today, New Jersey's second Congressional district, my home, is responsible for 48 percent of the state's total agricultural sales. As the state's economy has changed, New Jersey's agricultural industry is still the state's third largest industry and in south Jersey, the importance of the agriculture economy cannot be overstated. That is usually quite a surprise for people, to hear in the State of New Jersey that agriculture is the third largest industry.

In order to continue to help and support our farmers and their families, I would like to highlight three areas that I believe are vital to the continued growth and success of our agriculture economy.

Rural Development: Having over 40 percent of the land mass of any state means you will have rural parts to your district no matter what part of the state you come from. My district encompasses eight counties and 92 towns, where the eastern shore is beaches and aquaculture, and the western mainland is farmland and agriculture. These hard-working communities need our support for continued economic growth. For example, rural towns such as the Borough of Woodbine and Downe Township have been granted recipients of USDA Rural Development Grants for Water and Waste Removal. For communities such as these, where they are below sea-level and flooding can be a major problem, these systems are vital. We need to continue to support our farmers and rural communities and provide them with the tools and technology that is commonly afforded to non-rural areas so that they are on an equal footing.

Broadband: I am proud to support the ReConnect Program, which helps support our rural communities to get access to broadband internet access. It is of vital importance. Although New Jersey is rarely thought of as a rural area, where I come from, many of our rural communities have been lacking in access. This has been an issue I have cared about over my career, taking on the issue as a State Senator as well now as a Congressman.

The importance of this program and similar programs to do business, access opportunities in education, and receive specialized health care in rural America today cannot be understated. The broadband programs that Rural Development administers continue to have strong interest from rural communities who are looking to either obtain or improve access to broadband.

Research: Research is vital for the continued growth of our agriculture industry, whether it is to grow more efficient crops, or it is in search of disease resistant crop strains. One of the country's prominent research facilities is Rutgers University, a land-grant institute that has been doing great work for our farmers. It is my alma mater. A research effort that has been extremely successful in New Jersey, which was to study the impact of Fairy Ring Disease in cranberries, which are of major, major importance in our state. Cranberries are one of New Jersey's top crops and the state ranks third in the entire country for sales of cranberries.

I would like to thank Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway for this opportunity. These priorities in research, rural development and access to broadband highlight the importance of the work being done in the agriculture industry; and help to ensure south Jersey stays The Garden State for generations to come.

Thank you for the time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Van Drew follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JEFFERSON VAN DREW, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM NEW JERSEY

I represent New Jersey's second Congressional district which encompasses over 40 percent of the state's land mass and my district is a leader in the state across most crops for market value of agricultural products sold.

Many times when we think of New Jersey we forget it is "The Garden State" and even fewer know that nickname comes from a 19th century southern Jersey farmer named Abraham Browning.

Mr. Browning coined the term when describing New Jersey when $\frac{2}{3}$ of the state's landmass was rolling farmland.

Today, New Jersey's second Congressional district, my home, is responsible for forty-eight percent of the state's total agricultural sales.

As the state's economy has changed, New Jersey's agricultural industry is still the state's third largest industry and in South Jersey, the importance of the agriculture economy cannot be overstated.

In order to continue to help and support our farmers and their families, I would like to highlight three areas that I believe are vital for the continued growth and success of our agriculture economy.

Rural Development

Having over 40% of the land mass of any state means you will have rural parts to your district no matter where you come from.

My district encompasses eight counties and 92 towns, where the eastern shore is beaches and aquaculture, and the western mainland is farmland and agriculture.

These hard working communities need our support for continued economic growth and support.

For example, rural towns such as the Borough of Woodbine and Downe Township have been the recipients of USDA Rural Development Grants for Water and Waste Removal.

For communities such as these, where they are below sea-level and flooding can be a major problem, these systems are vital.

We need to continue to support our farmers and rural communities and provide them with the tools and technology that is commonly afforded to non-rural areas.

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I would like to thank Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway for this opportunity.

These priorities in research, rural development and access to broadband highlight the importance of the work being done in the agriculture industry; and help to ensure New Jersey stays The Garden State for generations to come.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman for his statement, and it was very good timing, Ms. Torres Small.

I now recognize the gentlelady from New Mexico, Ms. Torres Small, for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF HON. XOCHITL TORRES SMALL, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM NEW MEXICO**

Ms. TORRES SMALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman—

The CHAIRMAN. The microphone. There you go.

Ms. TORRES SMALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having me today. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to speak about the importance of agriculture in New Mexico's second Congressional district.

Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Conaway, and the entire Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on the important agriculture issues facing my district in southern New Mexico. We are famous for our green chilies and pecans, but we are also the proud home of thriving dairy and ranching industries. These crops and livestock are key to our economy and our culture, and it is my honor to work every day for these important programs. I am grateful for the work this Committee has done to pass and oversee the implementation of the 2018 Farm Bill, and to continue fighting for funding for these important programs.

There are three topics I would like to discuss today: first, the need for a modern agricultural workforce; second, the Livestock Indemnity Program, also known as LIP, and the Dairy Indemnity Program, also known as DIP; and third, tariffs.

First, the modern agricultural workforce. I know it falls out of this Committee's jurisdiction, so I will keep my comments brief. But please know, any time I meet dairy farmers and agricultural producers, one of the most frequent items I hear is the need for a reliable, legal labor workforce.

Second, I would like to express the vital role that LIP and DIP play in the lives of my constituents. For ranchers who face predations from protected species, LIP pays a percentage of animal's value as compensation for the loss. However, the process to receive compensation is incredibly complicated and onerous, and therefore ranchers are not paid for every loss. This unfairly increases the burden on our ranchers. In the coming months, I plan to introduce legislation to increase the percentage of compensation for predations, studying ways to improve the process for receiving compensation for predation. I am excited to work with the Committee on this important legislation.

Similarly, DIP compensates dairy producers if their milk is contaminated by chemicals, pesticide, or radiation. This has proved necessary for a farmer just outside my district, whose milk continues to be contaminated by PFAS runoff from a nearby Air Force base. Though the specific concern of PFAS contamination in water used for agricultural purposes is new, PFAS contamination in groundwater is an epidemic that has and will continue to plague our country. I am grateful that this Committee had the foresight to establish DIP to account for situations like this, but it is clear we will need to do more.

In this year's Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, I fought for the inclusion of an amendment authorizing the military to treat or provide fresh water for agricultural producers

who face PFAS contamination from military sites. That amendment came together with the support of your Committee, and I appreciate your willingness to work together on this important issue. We are all but certain to see PFAS continue to spread and to contaminate our agriculture, and I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that our agricultural producers aren't left holding the bag.

Third, I know I speak for many members of the agricultural sector when I say that we must urgently stabilize our trade agreements. I have written to Ambassador Lighthizer requesting lower tariffs on pecans sold to India, and I have regularly worked to maintain efficient ports-of-entry to ensure that products can easily flow between New Mexican producers and Mexico, my state's largest trade producer.

Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today, and thank you for your daily dedication to supporting our farmers and ranchers.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Torres Small follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. KOCHITL TORRES SMALL, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM NEW MEXICO

Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Conaway, and the entire Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on the important agriculture issues facing my district in southern New Mexico. We're famous for our green and red chilies and pecans, but we're also the proud home of thriving dairy and ranching industries. These crops and livestock are key to our economy and our culture, and it's my honor to work every day to protect this way of life.

There are three topics I'd like to discuss today: first, the need for a modern agricultural workforce; second, the Livestock Indemnity Program (also known as LIP) and the Dairy Indemnity Program (also known as DIP); and third, tariffs.

First, the modern agricultural workforce. I know it falls out of this Committee's jurisdiction, so I'll keep my comments brief. But please know, that any time I meet with dairy farmers and agricultural producers one of the most frequent issues I hear is the need for a reliable, legal labor force.

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Third, I know I speak for so many members of the agricultural sector when I say that we must urgently stabilize our trade agreements. I've written to Ambassador Lighthizer requesting lower tariffs on pecans sold to India, and I've regularly worked to maintain efficient ports of entry to ensure that products can easily flow between New Mexican producers and Mexico, my states' largest trade partner.

Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you today, and thank you for your daily dedication to supporting our farmers and ranchers.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. I appreciate your statement. We will take it under advisement.

I have been informed that Ms. Finkenauer and Mr. Westerman are on their way. I don't know exactly what that means. Anybody got an ETA on them? They are supposedly walking over. That has been going on for a while, so they must walk slow or something.

Why don't we just take a brief recess for a little bit. If they don't show up, we will have them submit their stuff in writing. We will take a recess for a few minutes in case somebody needs to go do something.

The Committee is in recess.

[Recess.]

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee will come back to order. We have a couple Members here, and we are getting towards the end.

So, we are now happy to recognize the gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. Westerman, for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BRUCE WESTERMAN, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM ARKANSAS**

Mr. WESTERMAN. Thank you, Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway. I appreciate you giving us the opportunity to come to your Committee and talk to you about issues that are important to many of us who aren't privileged to serve on your Committee. Today, I want to talk to you about something that is very near and dear to me, and that is trees. I know this Committee deals a lot with trees and forestry.

I will say that we are at a pivotal time in Congress, a pivotal time in our country, as we face issues on air quality, water quality, wildlife habitat, public recreation, energy, and carbon. We are at a pivotal time, but I'll also say we are at a point where we have a possibility for a very, very bright future ahead. And thanks to a lot of the work that has been done in this Committee, we are making some progress. If you look at especially the last farm bill that was passed and some previous legislation where we have been able to get things like a fire funding fix, where we have been able to—and not only this Committee helped establish the Good Neighbor Authority where Federal land managers can be assisted by state and local groups in managing their forests, but we have actually been able to improve the Good Neighbor Authority through work that was done on this Committee. We have several categorical exclusions out there that accelerate management activities on Federal lands, and we have things like the 20 year stewardship contracting that was in the last farm bill that we are already seeing good results from that as many manufacturers are bidding on projects in areas like Fort Frye, where you have a lot of small diameter timber that needs to be harvested to make those forests more resilient.

We have a lot of good things happening, but there is opportunity to do a lot more in the future.

I will say that I was out in California this past August and I saw them harvesting trees off of Federal lands in California, and they were doing it to make those forests more fire resilient to protect

sensitive watersheds, and really to provide a better environment. I will stress again that we are making progress, but we have a lot of work still to do.

One area that we need to focus on in Congress is the wildland-urban interface. These are areas where it is just what it sounds like, the wildlands interface with urban areas. We see more and more homes being built in these areas, and we see what happens when we get catastrophic wildfire in these areas, a tremendous loss of lives, loss of homes and property. And making some of these communities almost uninsurable because of the risks that are associated with catastrophic wildfire. And it is not something that is just limited to the western part of our country. We saw the huge fire in Tennessee a few years ago, and it can happen anywhere where you have wildlands and urban areas interfacing.

I hope that we can work together to do more to make those wildland-urban interfaces more resilient, and you know, to wrap up about something that is desperately needed to make our forests more healthy, and that is more markets for the products that come out of the forests. And I am excited that some legislation that I am working on that focuses on three areas: number one is to plant more trees. We have a lot of places in this country, marginal ag land, urban areas, wetlands where we can plant more trees. We need to be able to grow more wood on the forests that we have to make them more resilient and healthy so that we are not losing all that carbon back into the atmosphere during forest fires. And finally, we want to be able to store more carbon by using those wood products.

This Monday before I came back up here, I was at an announcement in my state where a new factory was being built to make mass timbers to go into the new corporate headquarters for Wal-Mart. They will build a 3½² million corporate headquarters to house 15,000 people, and they are going to build that out of wood, wood that is grown domestically. And the neat thing about wood, like the wood on this dais and these tables in here, that is about 50 percent carbon that was taken out of the atmosphere many years ago, and it is still being stored in this wood today.

We have a bright future ahead, and I look forward to working with the Committee on developing even better legislation as we move forward.

I thank you for your time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Westerman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. BRUCE WESTERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM ARKANSAS

Thank you, Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway, for hosting this time to allow Members like myself who don't serve on this Committee to testify.

I'm a forester, and I'm committed to using Federal resources to steward our nation's forests in the best possible way. I believe we're loving our trees to death—surrounding them with endless regulations and bureaucratic loopholes that increase wildfire risk and prevent forest managers from doing their job.

Last year's farm bill included some forest management reforms that I'd introduced, and I sponsored the Resilient Federal Forests Reform Act of 2019 to promote even more long-term changes.

Years of mismanagement have led to insect infestation, overstocked stands and dead and decaying trees. Congress must allow the Forest Service to use proven, scientific methods when managing our forests.

Some consider 2019 to be a relative light year for wildfires, but that's because "only" 4.6 million acres burned compared to 8.5 million acres burned in 2018. As urban areas move closer and closer to forested land, we can't let statistics like this become our new normal.

Arkansas has seen drought conditions and more environmental stress, but at the same time, we haven't seen an increase in the number or intensity of forest fires.

If changing climate was the only thing that increased wildfires, surely we would see an increase in the number and intensity in my state. However, because we actively manage our public and private forests, the state has a thriving and expanding forest economy.

These successes have led me to work with Minority Leader McCarthy on another piece of forestry legislation. This bill, which is still in a draft stage, has the end goal of planting one trillion trees.

Of course, if we're planting new trees, we need to be harvesting mature trees, so the legislation will also incentivize usage of more forest products.

At the height of maturity, a tree captures and stores several pounds of carbon each year. As it begins to decay, the tree will release that carbon back into the atmosphere. If it's harvested at maturity, however, the tree stores that carbon for the rest of its life—even when it's made into this very dais.

It's a simple formula: if we want more trees, we should all be using more products made from trees.

I'm looking forward to continuing to work with this Committee once I introduce the legislation, and I welcome your questions.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman for his statement. We appreciate that.

We recognize now the gentlelady from Iowa, Ms. Finkenauer, for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ABBY FINKENAUER, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM IOWA**

Ms. FINKENAUER. Thank you, Chairman Peterson and Ranking Member Conaway. It means a lot to me to get this opportunity to speak here today to the Agriculture Committee. I obviously do not get the distinct privilege to sit on this Committee, but I do sit on Small Business where I chair Rural Development, Agriculture, Trade, and Entrepreneurship. And I come to you today because I truly believe that my role as a Congresswoman is to make sure that my constituents are heard here in D.C. It has been my biggest priority, and right now, my constituents desperately need to be heard wherever they can be, especially when it comes to agriculture.

I am, quite frankly, scared about the future of my state and my district. You see, I represent Iowa's first Congressional district. It is 20 counties in the State of Iowa. We have three bigger city centers, and the rest is rural. My brother-in-law and my sister are corn and soybean farmers. My neighbors that I grew up with in Sherrill, Iowa, are also corn and soybean farmers. And I have seen them hurting in more ways than one over the last 20 months because of the reckless ongoing trade war we have seen from this Administration when it comes to China, and also the attacks on renewable fuels. It has been blow after blow, and I have brought Iowans to D.C. to have their voices heard on these issues. We have had them at our Subcommittee. We have had actually two farmers and also somebody from Labor at our first Subcommittee that we had on Rural Development, Ag, Trade, and Entrepreneurship. One of the women who actually—she is a sixth-generation farmer. She sat there and she told my Committee that day that she has three sons, and she is telling them all right now not to go into farming

because she is worried about their future. I sat there and I thought of my nephews who are now—well, about 3 and 6 months old, and thought about their future. And I knew at that moment that my brother-in-law was sitting there with a bin full of soybeans that were worth about \$60,000 less than they were 5 years ago when they took over the farm after his parents passed.

These stories aren't unique. I have had people come into my office telling me that they are dipping into 401(k)'s, that they are filing for bankruptcy. And by the way, now Iowa actually holds more agriculture debt than the State of California. It is not right. They have been ignored way too long, and I thank the folks on this Committee who have uplifted these issues to the Administration. But we must do more.

I am happy we have the USMCA now a deal reached. That should add some certainty that the President won't be reckless pulling us out of NAFTA, costing us even more markets. But it is not enough. We don't have time today for a victory lap on USMCA. We must have the President at the negotiating table getting a deal with China, adding those markets for our soybean farmers, and we must, we must have more answers on the attacks that this President has done to renewable fuels. It is not okay. It is wrong. And we need answers.

And so, I am grateful again for what you all have done, the issues that you have brought up on this Committee. You have a friend in me to continue to uplift these issues, but we cannot take our foot off the pedal. The future of my state is quite literally on the line, and every day that this trade war continues, Brazil is deforesting as fast as they can, planting more soybean fields, taking those markets away from my district, markets that took decades to build.

We must, again, do more. I am grateful for what you all do here, and again, we cannot take our foot off the pedal.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady for her statement. We appreciate that, and we now are going to recognize the last Member that I have on the list for me, who is also the Chairman of the Rules Committee, the distinguished gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. McGovern, for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM MASSACHUSETTS**

Mr. McGOVERN. Thank you very much, Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Conaway, and Members of this Committee. I am proud to be able to be a Member of this Committee, and I want to thank you for holding today's hearing and for extending an opportunity for all Members to be able to testify.

Today, I am here to speak about an issue that you all know is one of my strongest passions, and that is ending hunger. As much as I wish I was here to speak on the positive strides we have made as a country in this area, lately it seems that things are moving in the wrong direction. In the past 12 months alone, this Administration has proposed not one, not two, but three separate rules that will further disadvantage this country's under-resourced and underprivileged.

I want to take a moment to highlight the final rule announced by the Trump Administration last week that would restrict a states' ability to waive the 3 month SNAP participation time limit for able-bodied adults without dependents, known as ABAWDs. Under current regulations, an individual can only participate in SNAP for 3 months in a 36 month period, unless they work an average of least 20 hours per week. States, however, have long been given limited flexibility to waive this time limit in areas where there were not sufficient jobs.

Last week, however, the Trump Administration finalized this rule to further restrict state flexibility, with the effect of literally hundreds of thousands of Americans being kicked off of SNAP and thrown further into the depths of food insecurity. According to USDA, the finalization of this change will help able-bodied adults without dependents "restore self-sufficiency through the dignity of work." What is particularly galling about this statement is that it further generalizes and stigmatizes ABAWDs as people who simply don't work, and further, it implies that USDA has enough data about ABAWDs to even make that kind of a generalization, when in reality, they do not.

On February 27, 2019, Secretary Sonny Perdue appeared before this Committee. During the hearing, I asked him if there was any specific research that FNS used to justify the rule change. Sadly, instead of conducting the research needed to understand this population, this Administration has resorted to name calling and relying on false stereotypes. Now, if they had done the research, they would know that ABAWDs are an extremely complex group of people. They include veterans, young adults who have aged out of the foster care system, ex-felons who were products of mass incarceration, and workers who either aren't given 20 hours of work per week or fall just below the threshold.

USDA only has access to limited information on SNAP participants, and that is part of the problem. Age, ethnicity, and citizenship status doesn't tell the whole story. The Administration continues to ignore or misstate that the overwhelming majority of SNAP participants who can work actually do work, but often in jobs that are either unstable or pay so little that they still qualify for SNAP.

In addition to stigmatizing struggling individuals and families, this rule goes against the intent of Congress by imposing restrictions that were specifically rejected for inclusion in the farm bill signed into law just last year. Instead of allowing us to do the jobs we've been sent here to do, the President has sidestepped our authority, yet again, to push his own political agenda.

So, I am going to conclude my testimony with this. President Trump and his Administration have said that the proposed rule is about "work-work-work." Well, I have never heard of anyone testify that hunger makes it easier to find a job or get back on their feet. No. We know what this is really a partisan attempt to stigmatize low-income folks who are trying to pull themselves out of poverty.

That is why I urge you and the Members of this Committee to raise this issue to the forefront of our agenda, and to oppose any attempts by this Administration to take food off the table of the

most vulnerable individuals and families. Food for the hungry shouldn't have a time limit.

I would just say one other thing. In the House Rules package that we approved at the beginning of this session, we have a provision in there that authorizes our legal counsel in the House to go to court, if necessary, to fight these changes in SNAP, because Congress did not vote for these, and the farm bill was very clear on what we support and what we don't support.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Conaway, and others, I thank you again for the opportunity to address the Committee on this matter. I just think we need to make it clear that when it comes to people who are struggling in poverty who are hungry or food-insecure, that we are on their side and that we are not going to buy into a false narrative. We have to stand up for these people.

I thank you very much, and appreciate your willingness to give me an opportunity to testify.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McGovern follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM MASSACHUSETTS

Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Conaway, and my fellow Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, I thank you for holding today's hearing and for extending the opportunity to testify. Today, I'm here to speak on an issue that you all know is one of my strongest passions—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

As much as I wish I was here to speak on the positive strides we've made as a country in this area, lately it seems that things are regressing rather than progressing. In the past 12 months alone, the President and his Administration have proposed **three** rules that will further disadvantage this country's under-resourced and underprivileged.

The first of these rules was proposed on December 20, 2018, and would restrict a states' ability to waive the 3 month SNAP participation time limit for Able-Bodied Adults without Depend[en]ts (known as ABAWDs).

Under current regulations, an individual can only participate in SNAP for 3 months in a 36 month period, unless they average working at least 20 hours per week. States, however, were given limited flexibility to waive this time limit in areas where there were not sufficient jobs. Last week, however, on December 4th, the Trump Administration finalized this rule to further restrict state flexibility—with the effect of over 750,000 Americans being kicked off of SNAP and thrown further into the depths of food insecurity.

According to USDA, the finalization of this change will help ABAWDs "*restore self-sufficiency through the dignity of work.*"

What's particularly upsetting about their statement is that it further generalizes and stigmatizes ABAWDs as people who simply don't work, and further, it implies that USDA has enough data about ABAWDs to even make that kind of a generalization, when in reality, they don't.

On February 27, 2019, Secretary Sonny Perdue appeared before the Agriculture Committee. During the hearing, I asked him if there was any specific research that FNS used to justify the rule change—but what I received in response was a lot of information condemning this population, rather than information aimed at understanding the situation.

What I don't think the Trump Administration understands about ABAWDs is that they are an extremely complex group. According to witnesses from the Nutrition Subcommittee's ABAWDs hearing in April, this group includes veterans, young adults who have aged out of the foster care system, ex-felons who were products of mass incarceration, and workers who either aren't given 20 hours of work per week or fall just below the threshold. USDA only has access to limited information on SNAP participants—and that's part of the problem. Age, ethnicity, and citizenship status doesn't tell the whole story.

What I think they're failing to recognize is that the overwhelming majority of SNAP participants who **can** work **do** work, but often in jobs that are either unstable or that pay so little that they *still* qualify for SNAP. So, it's not that ABAWDs

are jobless by choice—many are jobless because they lack opportunity and they are trying to get on their feet.

In addition to stigmatizing struggling families, the finalization of this rule goes against the will of Congress by imposing restrictions that were *specifically* rejected for inclusion in the farm bill signed into law just last year. Instead of listening to us, and allowing us to do the jobs we've been sent here to do, the President has sidestepped our authority—yet again—to push his own political agenda.

President Trump and his Administration have said that the proposed rule is about “work-work-work” but we all know what this really is: it's a call to rally up extremism and stigmatize low-income households. This is a rule that is trying to “solve” problems that don't exist—and it's putting our most vulnerable citizens at a further disadvantage. We can't stand by and let things like this happen.

That is why I urge you and the Members of this Committee to raise these issues to the forefront of our agenda, and to oppose any attempts this Administration makes to overburden struggling people and families.

Food for the hungry shouldn't have a time limit.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Conaway, thank you again, and for the opportunity to address the Committee on this matter. I yield the rest of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman, and the gentleman, as he noted, is one of our senior Members on the Committee. We appreciate his advice here today.

With that, before we adjourn, I am going to invite the Ranking Member to make any closing remarks that he might have.

Mr. CONAWAY. I just appreciate all of the Members who aren't on the Committee, as well as those on the Committee, but those who aren't on the Committee for helping us share the issues that face rural America, and the production of food and rural development. They are ambassadors to get the messages out about just how hard things are in rural America. I appreciate that. I appreciate the Members on the Committee sharing with us their information as well.

So with that, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman, and I also want to thank all of the Members that took time to come before the Committee today and share their concerns and insights and suggestions. It is very much appreciated, and we will take that to heart here under advisement on the Committee, and take it into consideration as we move forward.

Under the Rules of the Committee, the record of today's hearing will remain open for 10 calendar days to receive additional testimony or materials relating to today's proceedings.

This hearing of the Committee on Agriculture is therefore adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:23 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

[Material submitted for inclusion in the record follows:]

SUBMITTED STATEMENT OF HON. GUY RESCENTIALER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM PENNSYLVANIA

December 6, 2019

Hon. COLLIN C. PETERSON,
Chairman,
House Committee on Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.;

Hon. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY,
Ranking Minority Member,
House Committee on Agriculture,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairman Peterson, Ranking Member Conaway, and House Agriculture Committee Members:

I am writing regarding my support for H.R. 2442, the Puppy Protection Act, which I introduced with Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-1), Charlie Crist (FL-13), and Jim McGovern (MA-2). I join my colleagues in respectfully requesting the House Committee on Agriculture consider this crucial legislation in a future hearing and subsequent mark-up.

I have long championed legislation that protects our nation's animals from abuse and neglect. Prior to coming to Congress, I was a leader on a number of animal welfare initiatives in the Pennsylvania State Senate. I helped pass Libre's Law, which increased penalties for animal abuse. I also authored a puppy mill ban, which would protect consumers and animals by ending the sale of commercially bred puppies at pet stores, since the vast majority of dogs sold at these stores come from inhumane puppy mills. This legislation is currently pending in the Pennsylvania General Assembly and other states have made efforts to pass similar legislation.

Earlier this year, I was proud to join my colleagues to introduce the Puppy Protection Act. This bipartisan legislation aims to improve standards for federally licensed commercial dog breeders. H.R. 2442 will not impact family pets, livestock, or family breeders, but rather updates standards for veterinary care, housing, breeding practices, and the humane placement of retired breeding dogs. Too many of our dogs currently suffer from inhumane conditions in commercial breeding facilities, but I look forward to working with you and my colleagues Representatives Fitzpatrick, Crist, and McGovern to provide protections for these animals in the future.

Thank you for holding this Member day to discuss priorities currently pending in the House Committee on Agriculture and for considering my request.

Very respectfully,



Hon. GUY RESCENTIALER,
Member of Congress.