

Efforts to boost the U.S. specialty crops and organic food industries will not come to fruition in a timely manner—thereby threatening America's world leadership positions—if part of the responsibility for research continues to lie within one USDA agency and part in another, with inadequate coordination between the two!

Problems such as the twin (and related) epidemics of obesity and diabetes cannot be overcome with Federal research, education, and extension efforts divided among two USDA agencies (and some 105 land-grant universities) unless the Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics has under his immediate supervision a national program staff that can provide overarching vision, guidance, and leadership for those two agencies.

Madam Speaker, these are only four examples—among dozens that I could have chosen—but they make the case for the comprehensive approach embodied in CREATE-21. They demonstrate that the opportunities and challenges we face demand both an improved organizational structure and enhanced funding.

When the House Committee on Agriculture sits down in the next few weeks to develop the 2007 Farm Bill, I am hopeful that the foundational precepts and specific provisions embodied in the legislation I introduce today will form the basis for the Committee's Research Title. Therefore, I want to take a few minutes to highlight three key provisions:

CREATE-21 will increase planning and implementation across intramural (e.g., ARS and ERS) and extramural (e.g., land-grant) facilities through a single national program staff working directly for the USDA Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics.

CREATE-21 will also establish a new National Institutes for Food and Agriculture (replacing the current Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service) to provide continuing and expanded support to America's land-grant and other universities and related institutions.

Finally, CREATE-21 will double authorized funding for the food, agriculture, and natural resource research, teaching, and extension programs currently administered by Cooperative State Research, Education, and Economics Service in order to address the enormous opportunities and daunting challenges that face the country and the greater global community.

Besides these distinctive elements, CREATE-21 has three other unique attributes:

CREATE-21 will strengthen the land-grant system with its integrated, National network of State Agricultural Experiment Stations, more than 3,000 Cooperative Extension offices, and universities in all 50 states, DC, and the U.S. territories.

CREATE-21 will augment “integrated” USDA funding programs so that many more grants which integrate research with extension and/or education are awarded through competitive, peer-reviewed procedures.

Lastly, CREATE-21 will bolster university capacity, especially for the historically black (1890), tribal (1994), insular area, and small 1862 land-grant universities and members of the American Association of State Colleges of Agriculture and Renewable Resources (AASCARR).

In addition to these provisions, the legislation I am introducing today contains many

other amendments to USDA research, extension, and teaching statutes, reflecting the best thinking of a broad cross-section of America's land grant community. These provisions include critical updates that will enhance, among other things, the basic programs providing sustenance for the 1890 land-grant institutions and critical food, health, and nutritional information to low-income families and youth through the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. In fact, this legislation addresses ALL of the Farm Bill priorities outlined by the Presidents of the 1890 colleges.

While I support the key tenets of this legislation and am pleased to introduce it in the House, we all recognize that difficult problems require consensus-based solutions and I remain open to suggestions. I look forward to working closely with my colleagues on the Agriculture Committee as we develop a Research Title for the 2007 Farm Bill that truly has at its core mission: “Creating Research, Extension, and Teaching Excellence for the 21st Century.”

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 21, 2007

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Speaker, on Monday and Tuesday, May 14 and 15, 2007, I was attending to personal family matters in the District. Consequently, I missed Rollcall Votes No. 342, “To extend the District of Columbia College Access Act;” No. 343, “Supporting the Goals and Ideals of a National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims;” No. 344, “Recognizing National Americorps Week;” No. 345, “American Veterans Disabled for Life Commemorative Coin;” No. 346, “Army Specialist Joseph P. Micks Federal Flag Code Amendment Act of 2007;” No. 347, “John R. Justice Prosecutors and Defenders Incentive Act of 2007;” No. 348, “COPS Improvement Act of 2007;” and No. 349, “Safe American Roads Act of 2007.”

If present, I would have voted “aye” on all matters.

THE AFFORDABLE GAS PRICE ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 21, 2007

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce the Affordable Gas Price Act. This legislation reduces gas prices by reforming government policies that artificially inflate the price of gas. As I need not remind my colleagues, the American people are being hard hit by skyrocketing gas prices. In some parts of the country, gas prices have risen to as much as \$4 per gallon.

This increase in the price of gas threatens our already fragile economy and diminishes the quality of life for all Americans. One industry that is particularly hard hit is the trucking industry. The effects of high gas prices on the trucking industry will be reflected in increased costs for numerous consumer goods, thus further harming American consumers.

Unfortunately, many proposals to address the problem of higher energy prices involve increasing government interference in the market through policies such as price controls. These big government solutions will, at best, prove ineffective and, at worst, bring back the fuel shortages and gas lines of the seventies.

Instead of expanding government, Congress should repeal federal laws and policies that raise the price of gas, either directly through taxes or indirectly through regulations that discourage the development of new fuel sources. This is why my legislation repeals the federal moratorium on offshore drilling and allows oil exploration in the ANWR reserve in Alaska. My bill also ensures that the National Environmental Policy Act's environmental impact statement requirement will no longer be used as a tool to force refiners to waste valuable time and capital on nuisance litigation. The Affordable Gas Price Act also provides tax incentives to encourage investment in new refineries.

Federal fuel taxes are a major part of gasoline's cost. The Affordable Gas Price Act suspends the federal gasoline tax any time the average gas prices exceeds \$3.00 per gallon. During the suspension, the federal government will have a legal responsibility to ensure the federal highway trust fund remains funded. My bill also raises the amount of mileage reimbursement not subject to taxes, and, during times of high oil prices, provides the same mileage reimbursement benefit to charity and medical organizations as provided to businesses.

Misguided and outdated trade policies are also artificially raising the price of gas. For instance, even though Russia and Kazakhstan allow their citizens the right and opportunity to emigrate, they are still subject to Jackson-Vanik sanctions, even though Jackson-Vanik was a reaction to the Soviet Union's highly restrictive emigration policy. Eliminating Jackson-Vanik's threat of trade-restricting sanctions would increase the United States' access to oil supplies from non-Arab countries. Thus, my bill terminates the application of title IV of the Trade Act of 1974 to Russia and Kazakhstan, allowing Americans to enjoy the benefits of free trade with these oil-producing nations.

Finally, the Affordable Gas Price Act creates a federal study on how the abandonment of the gold standard and the adoption of freely floating currencies are affecting the price of oil. It is no coincidence that oil prices first became an issue shortly after President Nixon unilaterally severed the dollar's last connection to gold. The system of fiat money makes consumers vulnerable to inflation and to constant fluctuations in the prices of essential goods such as oil.

In conclusion Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Affordable Gas Price Act and end government policies that increase the cost of gasoline.

JAY EAGEN'S RETIREMENT

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 21, 2007

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jay Eagen on the occasion of