

day: Bettina Poirier, Ken Kopocis, Jeff Rosato, Tyler Rushforth, Andy Wheeler, Ruth Van Mark, Angie Giancarlo, and Let Mon Lee. Also, I thank Senator BAUCUS's staff: Jo-Ellen Darcy and Paul Wilkins; and from Senator ISAKSON's staff, Mike Quiello. I mentioned Senator INHOFE's staff in that recitation of names. Without them, the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 would never be law.

I am proud to advise my colleagues that it is now law. When that last vote was cast, and when our Presiding Officer announced the vote, this bill became the law of the land. We can be very proud it is.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, may I take a moment to thank the chairwoman of this committee again for fulfilling the promise she made to have this bill—that was 7 years in the making—become law. And as of about 10 minutes after 12, eastern time, it did become law.

People in Louisiana and throughout the gulf coast are cheering, dirt is being turned, levees are being built, and wetlands are being preserved. This Congress has kept its word to the people of Louisiana and the gulf coast, and for that this Senator is very grateful.

Again, I thank the Senator from California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

ENDA

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, last night the House passed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act with a strong bipartisan vote. The House bill prohibits employers from discriminating against workers on the job because of their sexual orientation. It protects Americans from being fired, denied a job or promotion, or otherwise intentionally discriminated against because of their sexual orientation. Although the bill is narrower than many of us had hoped, the House action is still a main step in the long journey toward full civil rights for every American.

In the Senate, I will work to move the Employment Non-Discrimination Act this Congress. The bill that the House passed is being held at the desk, and I am working with leadership to move this bill forward as quickly as possible.

This Nation was founded on the principle of equal justice for all. That noble goal represents the best in America—that everyone should be treated fairly and should have the chance to benefit from the many opportunities of this country. The House action brings us closer to that goal.

Forty-three years ago, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964. At that time, some in our country were violently opposed to outlawing racial discrimina-

tion, and it was very difficult for Congress to reach a consensus. But the best in America, and the best in the Senate, prevailed. My first major speech in this body as a freshman Senator was on that Civil Rights Act. I said then that I “firmly believe a sense of fairness and goodwill also exists in the minds and hearts” of Americans, and that laws creating the conditions for equality will help that spirit of fairness win out over prejudice, and I still believe that today.

Since the 1964 act was passed, we have seen enormous progress in this beloved Nation of ours. Civil rights laws giving national protection against discrimination based on race, national origin, gender, age, and disability have made our Country a stronger, better, fairer land. African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asians have made extraordinary advances in the workplace. People with disabilities have new opportunities to fully participate in our society. The workplace is far more open to women in ways that were barely imagined four decades ago. In countless businesses, large and small, glass ceilings are being shattered. Women and girls have far greater opportunities in the classroom and in the boardroom.

But that progress has left some Americans out. Civil rights is still the Nation's unfinished business. Today, it is perfectly legal in most States to fire an employee because of sexual orientation or gender identity. Many hard-working Americans live every day with the knowledge that, no matter what their talents and abilities, they can be denied a job simply because of who they are. Many young students grow up knowing that no matter how hard they study, the doors of opportunity will be locked by prejudice and bigotry when they enter the workplace.

Although some States have outlawed job discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, in most of the country, workers have no recourse at all if they are fired because simply because of who they are. That is unacceptable, and we have a duty to fix it, and to do so on our watch.

In the past 40 years, our Country has made great progress in guaranteeing fairness and opportunity.

When we passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and then the fair housing acts of 1968 and 1988, we took courageous steps, and we were proud that the Senate did the right thing each time. We must also do the right thing—the courageous thing—today. In the 1960s, these laws were controversial. But today, none of us, Democrat, Republican, or Independent, would question that they were the right steps to take, and we must take the right steps today.

Over the years, the Senate has recognized time and again the importance of our goal of equal employment opportunity. Even if we have sometimes disagreed about its proper interpretation, there is no division among us that the

principle of equal employment opportunity is a core American value.

That is what the Employment Non-Discrimination Act is all about—equal job opportunities for all Americans. By extending the protection of title VII to those who are victimized because of their sexual orientation, we are moving closer to that fundamental goal. No one should be denied a job simply because of who they are.

That ideal is at the heart of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

In 1996, we fell one vote short of passing the bill in the U.S. Senate. In the decade since, public support for outlawing such discrimination has only grown stronger. Now that the House has acted, I hope that we will be able to finally succeed in the Senate in passing the Employment Non-Discrimination Act this Congress, and I look forward to the coming debate.

America stands for justice for all. Congress must make clear that when we say “all” we mean all. America will never be America until we do.

FARM, NUTRITION, AND BIOENERGY ACT OF 2007

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the pending business.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2419) to provide for the continuation of agricultural programs for fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Harkin amendment No. 3500, in the nature of a substitute.

Reid (for Dorgan/Grassley) amendment No. 3508 (to amendment No. 3500), to strengthen payment limitations and direct the savings to increased funding for certain programs.

Reid amendment No. 3509 (to amendment No. 3508), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3510 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 3500), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3511 (to amendment No. 3510), to change the enactment date.

Motion to commit the bill to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, with instructions to report back forthwith, with Reid amendment No. 3512.

Reid amendment No. 3512 (to the instructions of the motion to commit to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, with instructions), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3513 (to the instructions of the motion to recommit), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 3514 (to amendment No. 3513), to change the enactment date.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, for the benefit of all Senators, we are now back on the farm bill. The farm bill was laid down 2 days ago, on Tuesday. We have asked the other side if they want to offer amendments, but we have seen no amendments. We have one amendment pending. The Grassley-Dorgan or Dorgan-Grassley—I don't know which came first on it—amendment is pending. But we have heard from the leader on the other side that they want to offer amendments.

We are here. We are on the farm bill. We have asked for amendments, and in the intervening 48 hours, or 2 days since we laid the bill down, I have not seen one amendment from the other side that has been proffered to be taken up. So here we sit. We are trying to get a handle on how many amendments there will be, trying to reach some agreement, as we always do, to have a package of amendments that we could go to today and tomorrow, spill over into next week, and then reach some agreement, as we always do around here, on how many amendments on their side, on this side, reach an agreement, get a time limit set up on these amendments, and then get to a finish on the farm bill I hope sometime next week before we leave for Thanksgiving. I know there is some other business the majority and minority leaders probably want to conduct next week, but we have to get this farm bill done. It is a good bill.

I remind my fellow Senators and others who may be watching that this farm bill passed the committee unanimously. There was not one vote against it. It is a bipartisan bill. I think regionally it is a balanced bill, for all the regions of the country. I think it addresses the real needs of our farmers and ranchers, as well as the other titles of the farm bill that are encompassed in the farm bill. Energy—we have put a lot, again, into promoting biofuels and bioenergy. In conservation, there are big increases for conservation all over this country. In research, we have money for continuing a strong, robust research program. In nutrition, we have met our obligations to the neediest in our society, providing substantial increases in the Food Stamp Program in terms of the benefits and indexing them for inflation, making sure we have more money for the Emergency Food Assistance Program, for our food banks around the country.

In all the different areas that are covered by the farm bill, I think we have met our obligations to move ahead. We have done so in a very fiscally responsible manner. This farm bill meets all the pay-go requirements we instituted here in the Senate earlier this year—that we would not increase the deficit but that we would pay for things by finding offsets in other areas. The Finance Committee met, and the Finance Committee came up with some loophole closing, some tax collections. I daresay there is not any increase in taxes; it is simply going after taxes that are already owed but are not being collected.

I commend both Senator BAUCUS and Senator GRASSLEY and all the members of the Finance Committee for their help. With their help, we were able to put in a disaster program for the farm bill, a new disaster payment program—much better than what we have ever had in the past, I would add. Also, we were able to get some funding for some conservation programs and some of the

energy programs. This has been a very bipartisan approach on this bill by committee, I would say, between the Agriculture Committee and the Finance Committee.

We are out here on the floor, and I think we can move ahead in good faith by agreeing upon whatever amendments we can agree on on both sides. These are negotiations that take place in every bill in which I have ever been involved. They took place on the last one I was the manager on here, the appropriations bill on Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor. But you can't negotiate if you do not have anything to negotiate on.

I say again to my friends on the other side of the aisle, if there are amendments, if we bring them forth we can discuss them, and maybe we can reach some agreement on a package of amendments that we can then get to and start disposing of, one way or the other.

That is where we are. I see my friend and ranking member, Senator CHAMBLISS, is on the floor. I thank him for all of his good work on the committee. We have worked hard on this bill, and I think we have a good bill, one that, as I said earlier, I could basically support without amendments. I assume there will be amendments—some I may support, some I may not; some Senator CHAMBLISS may support, and some he may not support. But that is the way we do things around here. Then we will go to conference and work it out. I am just hopeful we can get some amendments proffered here and brought over so we can look at them.

I say the same thing on our side too. I have heard of amendments other than the Dorgan and Grassley amendment, and I say if we have Members who have amendments they want to offer on the farm bill, they or their staffs ought to bring them to us as soon as possible so we can take a look at them, see if they are relevant to the farm bill. If they are relevant to the farm bill—I say this very clearly and forthrightly—every amendment that is basically relevant to this farm bill will be considered and disposed of one way or the other. That is really what we have to focus on, amendments that are relative to the farm bill.

Again, I hope Senators on both sides would, if they have amendments, bring them forth so we can put a package together and we can get to it.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I thank the chairman, my friend, my colleague, for his comments. I concur with exactly what he said, that we do need to have amendments filed so we know where we are. My understanding is, as of right now there are 67 amendments that have been filed. I don't know whether all of them are relevant. We have the list, but we will have to see which ones are and which ones are not.

But I think the biggest obstacle we have is the majority leader made the decision to fill the tree.

We have had some discussion, not debate by any means, on the Grassley-Dorgan amendment the other day. I understand there is some conversation about filing cloture on that amendment which is fine if that moves us ahead.

But until the leadership on the Democratic side makes a decision as to whether we are going to limit amendments, what those amendments are going to be, then I think we are kind of limited as far as moving ahead.

Let me say to Members on both sides of the aisle, particularly on our side of the aisle, that if you have an amendment, if you will file the amendment and, while you cannot call it up because the majority leader has filled the tree, come on over while we have got some time and talk about your amendment. It will certainly speed up the process when we do get to the point, as the chairman says, and I think he is exactly right. On every bill such as this, we will ultimately come up with a list of amendments. I would hope all of them are germane. There may be some that have to do with something else, as the Senate always has on every major piece of legislation. We have some that may not be farm bill related that will have to be considered. But that is for negotiation and agreement.

But if anybody has an amendment, I would say: Come over, make sure your amendment is filed, talk about your amendment, and at the point in time when the amendment ultimately is considered, it simply will speed up the process.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I appreciate first off the bill that came out of the Ag Committee. It was a consensus product. There was a lot of bipartisan support for it. I think it is important we move it forward.

What is happening here now is delaying something that is of critical timing to the producers in this country; they need to know what the rules are before they go into planting season next year.

By running out the clock, which essentially we have done this week, and unless we come to some agreement on amendments, we are going to lose next week. Then we are into December, and it is going to be awfully difficult to get a bill conferenced and on the President's desk before the end of the year.

I, for one, have an amendment, along with Senator DOMENICI and Senator NELSON, that has been filed. So I would say to my friend from Iowa that we are more than happy, if the leadership on the majority side would be agreeable, to us calling up amendments.

But as was noted by my colleague from Georgia, the current state of play is they have filled the amendment tree, thereby making it impossible for us to get amendments called up, pending, under consideration, debated, and voted upon.

But I have one that I think is very important, it is very relevant. You talk

about amendments that are relevant to the farm bill that would expand the renewable fuel standard. That was something that was supported by the Senate in the Energy bill. I have my doubts about whether we are going to get an energy bill this year. But I cannot think of anything that is more important to farm country right now than making sure we have a higher renewable fuel standard, particularly in the short term.

2008 is critical. We are already at 7½ billion gallons. Where the current renewable fuels standard sits that was passed in 2005, we are going to, and have, eclipsed that. If we do not raise this renewable fuel standard in 2008 in the short term, we are going to have a terrible crunch out there.

We are already seeing ethanol plants that are stopping construction, those that are under construction that have stopped it. We have some, I know of one in North Dakota that ceased operations for a while because the margins are not there.

This is a very relevant amendment to the underlying farm bill, one that would strengthen the energy title in the bill and one which is critically important, from a timing standpoint, to producers across this country and those who would invest in the renewable energy industry. I would add, because I think this is a very important point not just for farm country, not just for our farmers and those in rural areas of this country who have benefited from ethanol production economically, but also it is important for our energy security.

We have got a very serious problem. Oil is approaching \$100 a barrel. We need to be increasing the amount of renewable energy we produce, home-grown energy in this country, so we can lessen that dependence upon foreign energy. We have an opportunity to do that. The ethanol industry in this country has done remarkably well, thanks, in large part, to the renewable fuels standard enacted in 2005. But we have been overtaken by events. We are passing, we are blowing by that 7½ half billion gallons. We need to get the new renewable fuel standard in place.

The amendment we have offered—it is a bipartisan amendment—would do that. It would get us to 8½ billion gallons in 2008, which is critically important. We are running into a wall out there. It is dramatically affecting the ability of this industry to compete and to make sure that it continues to operate profitably and move us in a direction that lessens our dependence upon foreign energy.

So I would simply say to my colleagues, to the Senator from Iowa, the chairman of the committee, the ranking Republican, Senator CHAMBLISS, that it would be very advisable, and I think advantageous, for us to be able to come to some agreement on amendments because delay, in the end, is not an option.

We cannot afford to go into next year without a farm bill. I would like to see

this amendment considered. I hope the majority would make way for us to be able to offer amendments. This whole notion of filling the tree, I am not sure exactly what that accomplishes, other than to shut us down, at least in the short term.

So I would simply say we have an amendment, we are ready to do business as soon as the other side decides they want to open this bill for amendment. I hope we can do that and do it soon.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I would like to speak for 20 or 30 minutes on the farm bill, if I might. I would first like to associate myself with the remarks of Senator THUNE, the distinguished ranking member of the committee, Senator CHAMBLISS, and our distinguished chairman, Senator HARKIN.

Let me point out that Senator HARKIN did something very unusual. After handling one bill on the floor of the Senate, he then had the challenge of trying to move the farm bill, which is sometimes about as easy as pushing a rope. But he did it through committee in a day and a half. I think that is a record.

I have been through seven farm bills, two technical farm bills that were really farm bills, and I have never seen committee action be expedited in that fashion. So I wish to thank the chairman for that.

There were some differences of opinion. Obviously, we always have that. But he handled it very well. So I am in agreement with the chairman and with the ranking member and Senator THUNE, and I think almost everybody on the Agriculture Committee, that we would like to see action on this bill.

This morning, once again, I had the privilege of being on the "Farm Show" in Topeka, KS, America, on good old WIBW. That is where the farm broadcasters always ask you: Where is the farm bill? How is it coming?

I said: Well, it is not. We have sort of a briar patch we have gotten ourselves into in regard to something called filling the tree, that is a fancy word around here meaning you cannot climb up the tree and climb out on a limb and drop our acorn or your amendment down to see if it would be considered.

On the other side of the fence, let me say Chairman HARKIN has done some work, and I think he has done the homework to the extent to show in the last three farm bills not many non-germane amendments ever popped up on the floor in regard to the farm bill. That is a good thing.

Now, I am not going to be in a position to try to determine what is germane and what is not, but as I recall, there was only one amendment, I think it was by Senator KYL on the estate tax, I do think that is obviously germane to farmers and ranchers, but that is obviously a tax measure, but that was perhaps ruled out of order.

But hopefully we can get an agreement and say X number of amendments on your side and X number of amendments on our side and then proceed. I would hope we would not have to go to cloture to even debate the farm bill.

But farmers, ranchers, their lenders, whether it be in Iowa or whether it be in Georgia or whether it be in the Dakotas or in Kansas, they need answers now. I hope we do not get into a situation where our only option is to simply extend the current bill.

Now I am going to get to my prepared remarks. I have some points I would like to make. I will try to make them as short as possible. As I indicated to my colleagues, this is my ninth farm bill, either as a staffer or a Member. If you include the technical corrections I talked about, which sometimes means a complete rewrite of the farm bill, we do not usually say that, we usually say it is a technical correction, I have lost count.

Sometimes those technical corrections may seem somewhat covert but on most occasions they are not. Each farm bill debate is unique. Certainly, this one is as well. I would like to start off by saying there is some good news. I wish to thank the manager of this bill for including some important provisions I helped author. Senator CONRAD and I have been working on our open fields bill for quite some time. I am glad to see it included. It is clearly a win-win for sportsmen and also sports-women, as well as farmers and ranchers who take advantage of the program. So that is a good thing.

I also appreciate the authors for working with me to address my concerns regarding the rural utility services broadband loan program. The reforms included do represent a very real bipartisan consensus. That was an effort to bring broadband Internet to more Americans. That is in the bill.

The committee bill includes crucial and very important language on rural hospitals. Senator HARKIN was a leader in that effort, that will make a real difference in many of our rural communities. The rural health care delivery system is always under pressure in keeping what we have. As a member of the Finance Committee I know that as well. We need to strengthen and preserve what we have and then improve it.

Finally, I also wish to thank Chairman HARKIN and our ranking member, Senator CHAMBLISS, and their staff for creating an agriculture security title in this legislation. This is something we have worked on for several years.

Now, despite the fact that our Nation enjoys but does not apparently appreciate the fact that production agriculture does provide this country and a very troubled and hungry world the very best quality food at the lowest price in the history of the world, we have heard a lot of repeated calls for dramatic reform of our farm programs.

Now, while targeted and pertinent reforms in some of our programs are certainly needed, and this bill takes major

steps to do that in answering those calls, it seems to me we must be cautious of what lurks under the banner of reform.

We must be mindful of the unintended consequences of our actions. Nowhere in this bill is that more evident than in the livestock title. I represent a State where cattle outnumber people more than two to one. Cattle represented 61 percent of the agriculture cash receipts by generating over \$6 billion in 2005. That is a lot of money.

I tell you this, so you understand that when I say the livestock industry is vital to Kansas and the country and our economy out there on the high plains and also to our livelihoods.

Now, competition issues are nothing new to this body. I understand that. I agree that our producers need to be able to compete in today's markets. It is the role of the Government to protect producers from unfair practices and monopolies, and I understand the calls from some for increased Government involvement and oversight.

At the same time, we must take careful steps to ensure that in any action we might take, we do not suffer from the law of unintended consequences and risk the significant gains the livestock industry has experienced. It has changed dramatically.

During this debate, we have heard from several Members about how farm bill debates rarely fall along party lines and traditionally follow regional interests. This may seem odd to those who have not worked on a farm bill before, but that is the case.

Agriculture in one region can mean something different, very different, than agriculture in some other region. These differences do not just include the crops and the commodities that are produced, there are significant differences in practices, farming practices, and input costs, what it costs to have a successful cropping operation and risk; risk, which is a big-time consideration among the different regions.

We have low risk in certain States, where I have often said in jest, where they simply put the seed in the ground, they do not farm it, it just comes up, as opposed to other areas where we have high risk, we really have to farm the ground and other areas.

As a Senator from a State with higher risk agriculture, and there are many of us representing these States, many of our current farm programs unfortunately have not worked for our constituents. However, some of them do. In recent years, they have represented a lifeline to our hard-pressed producers who needed a lifeline, and it has been their only lifeline.

In particular, I am talking about direct payments and crop insurance. I will come back to that and come back to that and come back to that. This is why it is vital that as a Federal Government, we craft farm programs that do not merely benefit one region or one crop but that we draft legislation that is national in scope.

So reducing programs that benefit one region to increase programs that benefit another region is a dangerous enterprise. I caution my colleagues against taking this route.

If we want a farm bill that represents the entirety of agriculture, we must not play games that pit one sector of agriculture against another. I remember the days of the whole herd buyout back when I was privileged to be a Member of the House of Representatives. That may have been of help—I underscore the word may—to the dairy industry, but it put a lot of livestock producers out of business. I underscored that in my mind and to my colleagues at that time, that we must not get into another situation where one section of agriculture is competing against another and putting them at a disadvantage. We certainly do not need that.

For several years now I have been telling everybody who will listen about how the current farm bill does not provide assistance when our producers need it the most. When Mother Nature starts stirring up trouble—and we have seen that in Kansas and other States, either through a drought for, 2, 3, 4 years, or a flood, or a freeze, or tornadoes, I don't know what could come next from Mother Nature—our producers in the field take it on the chin and in the pocketbook. Yields go down; prices jump up. Again, the only programs that do provide them any cover are direct payments and crop insurance. The countercyclical program currently in the farm bill, which when we wrote it we predicted prices would be lower, simply doesn't offer them a payment. So if you lose a crop, the only thing you get again is a direct payment and crop insurance. In regard to crop insurance, during a drought your average production history goes down, and that impacts your crop insurance that will allow you to work with your lender and stay in business.

This story isn't new to anybody who farms in what we call the breadbasket of the world. Thankfully this bill does not cut direct payments. I know direct payments may seem like an easy target or a bank, for some, but to those in the fields, our farmers, the direct payment program helps them produce the safest, most abundant food supply in the world. Once again, the standard farm program rationale—I know Chairman HARKIN has made these comments, I have made them, everybody connected with the Agriculture Committee and agriculture in general has made these comments—our farm programs are a big reason why we in the United States enjoy a market where we spend only 10 cents of each dollar of our disposable income on food. That is one dime. That frees up 90 cents for the consumer to spend on other things, whether it be housing, health care, education, leisure time activity, whatever. That is the lowest in the history of the world. This speech used to be made by leaders in the House Ag Com-

mittee some years ago. Then it was 18 cents, 19, 20. Now it is one dime we spend in regard to food, freeing up 90 cents.

Without farm programs, that consumer would have to rely on market disruptions that happen and the fluctuations that happen, they would be at a big disadvantage, especially those disadvantaged and living in the cities. We need to thank our producers for this. But if you look at this farm bill, you will see that only 14 percent now goes to the commodity title. When Senator CONRAD was on the floor earlier this week, he informed us that commodity title payments under this bill represent a mere one-quarter of 1 percent of all Federal outlays. In fact, \$6 billion comes out of the commodity title to pay for initiatives in other titles. That \$6 billion comes out of the pocketbooks of the folks who provide the food and fiber for a troubled and hungry world for other programs. I am not trying to perjure other programs. They are good programs. But we should not take it out of the hides of farmers and ranchers who desperately need help when they lose a crop.

The conservation title receives an increase of over \$4 billion, appropriate, but it is up \$4 billion. A plus-up in nutrition program funding is over \$5.5 billion which brings total nutrition title spending to two-thirds of the entire bill. I know there are amendments being considered that will take more out of the commodity program, give more to nutrition programs. I suggest that \$5.5 billion in additional funding and two-thirds of the entire bill going to nutrition is appropriate. Let's work through that. Let's get at the Nation's problems of obesity and good health and wellness. That is appropriate.

Yet I have no doubt that during the course of this debate, Members will come down to the floor and argue for additional cuts to producers to fund these other programs. I am not saying our conservation and nutrition programs don't need additional funding. I hope I have made that clear. Quite the contrary. I am here today saying this bill already puts enough of that responsibility on the backs of farmers and ranchers. Let's not pile anymore on.

Production agriculture needs a voice in this debate. I am happy to stand up for those producers. We have heard it a lot in farm bill debates from critics of any farm bill, 15 percent of producers do produce 85 percent of our Nation's food and fiber. But in the national media and among many of the sideline groups and organizations, these producers, because of the size of their operations, are either described or tattooed as "rich." They say "How can you not be rich if you are farming 10,000 acres? How could you not be rich if you are farming 5,000 acres, whatever is cost efficient in whatever region of the country you farm in?" In many instances, they are simply taken for granted or ignored. In some cases, they don't even exist. Look at their contribution. That is the key. Look at

their contribution. Kansas is the top wheat and grain sorghum-producing State in the country. Since 1996, Kansas farmers have produced an average of 365 million bushels of wheat each year. If you are taking away programs that help them in dire straits especially crop insurance and direct payments, you are risking that 365 million bushels of wheat each year, which I submit is a vital national asset. In 2007 alone, the plains States—talking about from North Dakota all the way down to Texas—produced more than 1.5 billion bushels of wheat. We don't want to do anything that could injure or set back that kind of production. There is a reason we are known as the breadbasket of the world. If we cut these direct payments and crop insurance which are vital to sustaining this production, who will supply the United States and the world? Who will give ample supplies to the world food program to respond immediately to the humanitarian crises we see daily in the world? What would this do to our prices if we lost these producers? Do we want our grain supply to come from China or Brazil or somewhere else?

I traveled through much of western Kansas in August. Much of Kansas suffered heavy losses on its wheat crop this year. Western Kansas for a change was different. Many of those producers had a bumper crop, thank goodness. But I want everybody in the Senate to hear this, for many of them it was their first crop after 5 years of devastating drought. Again, under the auspices or the way this farm bill works or doesn't work, they received no help other than direct payments and crop insurance. Stop after stop on my tour, producers and their lenders, bankers and farm credit, made clear to me one very important fact: Had it not been for direct payments and crop insurance during those 5 years, many of those producers would not have been around to grow that bumper crop this year. We are talking about anywhere from 350 to 400 million bushels of wheat, let alone many other crops.

That is why I get concerned when I hear folks talking about cutting direct payments or crop insurance during this debate. It is why I will fight and oppose any such proposals should they come forward trying to use the logic I have described in these remarks.

I want to make clear to my colleagues who it is they are impacting the most, if they come forward with amendments and attack these programs. They are not going to be attacking this Senator. They are not going to be attacking some political or some small farm philosophy or some business. They will be attacking the people who feed this country and a troubled and hungry world. I have said that three times because it is true. They will be attacking the farmer who has farmed land for 40 years or more, the land that his or her father, grandfather, and great-grandfather farmed before them. They will be going after

the young family, the husband-and-wife team with two or three young children and agriculture degrees from Kansas State, Nebraska, Colorado State, North Dakota State, all of the land-grant universities throughout the high plains, and the list goes on. The young couple who will return to the farm to raise their families because they believe in agriculture, farming, rural communities, and raising their children as part of the family in what is called rural America, what we in Kansas call "real America." They get up at 5:30 in the morning. They often don't quit until 10 at night. They are working hard and maybe farming 2,000 or 3,000 acres. But they are not rich simply because they farm 2,000 or 3,000 acres. They are not rich simply because they are big farmers. This business of trying to means-test farm programs based on the size of an operation simply ignores reality in regard to production and what we produce for this country and the value of that production.

It is not the size of the operation. They are still young—I am talking about the farm couple again—so they don't have the liquidity built up in their operations that allows them to survive on their own through droughts that last 2, 3, 4, and, yes, even 5 years. They have kept the dream alive. They stayed in business. They secured the operating loans they needed because they and their bankers knew they could depend on direct payments and also on crop insurance.

When you talk about that next generation farmer and where they will come from and who will replace them, that is the issue. These folks are highly educated. They are feeding this country and the world, but they are operating on the margin. The actions we take here have real-world impact. Yes, conservation is important. We are increasing that funding. Yes, nutrition is important, and we are increasing that program \$5.5 billion. Yes, renewable energy programs are important, and we need and we are increasing the funding for these programs. But so are all those farmers out there, especially that next generation.

To some here in the Senate, that young family farmer farming the 2,000 or 3,000 acres is a big farmer. I don't know what that means. Are we talking about aiming the farm program? I don't know. Senator CHAMBLISS has heard me say this before. I am not sure what that means. If we are going to aim the farm program at only small family farmers? I don't know whether that is somebody 5 foot 3 up in the Northeast part of the country who has maybe 40 acres, maybe has a pond and an orchard. Obviously, the orchard would be organic. They are going to be farming specialty crops now that have a program, over \$2 billion worth, probably more by the time we get through. Maybe that person is a small family farmer. I suspect he is sitting on his glider on his wraparound porch. He is

only 5 foot 3 so he is a small farmer, and he only has 40 acres. He has a three-legged dog named Lucky and he pats him on his head and reads his Gentleman's Quarterly. He is a retired airline pilot and his wife works downtown as a stockbroker.

I have a big farmer. He is 6 foot 3. He and his wife and three youngsters farm 10,000 acres because it is more cost efficient. Maybe some year they don't hit it very big. Maybe 1 out of 2 or 3 years they hit it really big. That production is vital to the food and fiber of this country. So somebody at least has to stand up and say: Wait a minute. What are you trying to do in terms of means testing in regard to size?

Now, I used a little cynical or perhaps sarcastic example. I apologize for that. But that is where we are. Not everybody in America can take the time to come to the farm-to-market sales at their local communities. They are good. They are great. They are serving more vegetables, more fruit, more organic produce. I am all for that. But that is not going to make up what this country needs in regards to 20 percent of our GDP and \$64.4 billion worth of wheat, corn, sorghum and cotton program crops, and enabling in this country, again, every consumer to spend only one thin dime out of their disposable income dollar for food.

Well, I have some good news for you. Yes, they farm a lot of acres out there, these aren't "big farmers" or so-called rich farmers, but they are family farmers in every sense of the word, and they are struggling to survive. So consequently, I hope we do not make the mistake again of pitting one region against the other or one kind of cost input situation or one kind of risk situation against the other. We need truly a national program.

I hope before we start offering and passing amendments around here—once we get to that point, if we can get to that point—because we think we can save money or because we have had a questionable GAO report that we think about the impact of our actions in regard to the real world.

I commend our chairman, Chairman HARKIN. I commend Senator CONRAD and Senator BAUCUS on the Finance Committee and Ranking Members CHAMBLISS and GRASSLEY for moving us forward without cutting any direct payments. Chairman HARKIN has gone from managing the Labor-HHS appropriations bill on the floor—that is a tough challenge—to the Ag Committee farm bill markup in a day and a half—that is a record—to now floor consideration of the farm bill in a few short weeks. That is quite a task.

Now we find ourselves in a legislative or parliamentary quagmire in what we call filling up the tree. Well, I really think—I don't know, Senator CHAMBLISS—have we agreed to about 10 amendments on each side, 5 amendments on each side. As a matter of fact, we could take our amendments, and they would be in order, and then

maybe we could not consider somebody else's. But that is not fair, certainly not in the Senate where everybody tries to amend everything. So certainly we could reach some accommodation here with the leadership and with yourself and Chairman HARKIN to say a reasonable number of amendments could be offered—maybe 10, maybe 5, maybe 15. I do not know. But obviously we have a long way to go before this bill is ready to become law.

The people who are waiting are the farmers and the ranchers and the bankers and the lenders. We are not going to consider this farm bill, apparently, unless we have a cloture vote. That may be next week. Then we will have other considerations on the floor as of next week. Well, the farmers and the ranchers and their lenders are in the middle of planning decisions, lending decisions. They cannot wait.

There is a school of thought: Oh, just extend the current farm bill. The current farm bill does not work well, as I have said, again, in regard to a farmer who has lost his crop. We are sitting here in this legislative briar patch while they wonder what on Earth we are doing back here in regard to trying to pass a farm bill.

There are still several things in the House and Senate bills that still need some work.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, certainly I will be happy to yield to the distinguished Senator.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I say to Senator ROBERTS, you have a tremendous amount of experience from a legislative standpoint on farm bills. This is your which farm bill?

Mr. ROBERTS. I think it is the seventh. But I did not count the technical corrections that, as I have said, for some cases that really represented a rewrite of the farm bill.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I know during my first year in the House, you were the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee. I was privileged to serve on the House Agriculture Committee, and you chaired the committee that wrote the 1996 farm bill.

You talked about farm bills seeking to deliver funding to the small farmer. That is such a difficult issue. It sounds good from a legislative standpoint. It sounds like something we ought to be able to do in practice when, in fact, it is so difficult to do, because what is a small farmer? I am not sure what a small farmer is in Kansas. It is probably different from what a small farmer is in Georgia. But a large farmer participates in the production of agriculture in America just like whatever that small farmer does.

I would simply ask the Senator, what is your thought on the production by a small farmer versus a large farmer? Who is the one who actually puts products into mainstream agriculture from the standpoint of the quantity of products that are put into agriculture? In

other words, what percentage of farmers produce the products?

Mr. ROBERTS. Well, as I said before, some of our critics—and we should have critics. We should have oversight. We are not doing everything right, that is for sure. And farm bills—I tell you, we passed the Rubicon. This is no longer a farm bill. This is a bill that should be titled—I don't know what to put first—but conservation, nutrition, food stamps, rural development. We have a brand new section for specialty crops, which is a good thing in that for too long they have been out of the farm program.

I must admit I never had a specialty crop producer come in my office and want to be part of the farm program because, inevitably, you have to put up a lot of rules and regulations, although I understand this one is done by State grant. I do not know whether we are going to have a hodgepodge of different programs for specialty crops. But specialty crops are a very important item.

So is that a small farmer. Do not misunderstand me. Small farmers have a niche market. Small farmers are into organic produce. Small farmers take their produce to a place such as Alexandria, which my wife tries to get me up in the morning to go and visit and at least purchase some fresh fruits or vegetables. That is a good thing.

But we cannot rely on just those folks or small farmers as opposed to the 15 percent of producers. Of course, the criticism is, they get most of the payments, but they produce most of the food and fiber—85 percent. If you add that up, as I have indicated, that is 20 percent of our GDP. That is \$64.5 billion worth in regard to the program crops I mentioned earlier. Yet you would think that everybody just takes them for granted. We are not an endangered species. We may be extinct in terms of the national media. Nobody pays any attention to production agriculture anymore. It is almost as if it is a bad thing to produce food.

Go to your grocery store. I am always amazed when we have the opportunity to take foreign visitors to a typical American grocery store. It just knocks their socks off and their eyes pop out in regard to the variety we have there. But much of that produce in that grocery store on behalf of the consumer is produced by production agriculture. That is not a bad thing.

That is the whole point I am trying to make. If you say, OK, somehow, if we go back and just limit it in size to a small family farmer, that does not work out on the High Plains. Yet Kansas is known as the wheat State, and we are known as the breadbasket of the world. The High Plains produce 1.5 billion bushels of wheat each year. That is what is at stake, not to mention the young farmers who do this.

Well, I am very hopeful that through this process we can improve our agricultural programs to better protect our farmers and ranchers in times of need and to provide assistance to both those

domestically and globally, increasing investments and stability in rural America. I know this farm bill tries to do that.

In the end, this bill should be about the men and women in the fields and on the ranches working every day to provide the safest, most efficient food and fiber source we have seen in the history of the world. Our farmers and ranchers would never put the seed in the ground if they did not have any faith and optimism that it would grow and they would have a crop. We owe it to them to make sure we make this the best bill possible and do all we can to keep the "farm" in the farm bill.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I, first of all, extend my appreciation to the Senator from Kansas. Senator ROBERTS is not only a great personal friend, but he is someone for whom I have tremendous respect in so many areas but in no area greater than agriculture. As I said earlier, we served in the House together. He was my chairman on the House Agriculture Committee. Now he is one of the leaders on the issue of agriculture in the Senate and somebody on whom I rely very much in my role as ranking member, as I did when I was chairman over the last 2 years.

I just want to say, as we went through this farm bill, with all the complexities we had to deal with in there, there was one issue that, frankly, was a new addition to the farm bill mix, and that was the issue of average crop revenue—an option that is added in the commodity title. It does not look as if it is going to be of much benefit to Southeastern farmers, but to farmers in the Midwest, it has the potential to be a very usable mechanism.

I thank Senator ROBERTS for taking that issue on and really getting into the "weeds" and doing the necessary study and homework on the issue and coming up with some strong and valuable amendments that have made that provision much better at the end of the day, when this bill came out of committee, than it was when we started.

We are still going to have some debate on the provision as we come to the floor now, but without his leadership, without his studying this issue, we would not be where we are. I know he feels exactly the way I do. The Presiding Officer is, sure enough, one of those farmers who know what getting dirt under their fingernails means, and I know he has an appreciation for this too.

We worked very hard over the last decade to improve the Crop Insurance Program. It is not perfect, but what we tried to do was to put the decision of how many crops to plant, how many acres of each one of those crops to plant, in the hands of the farmer and the banker who banks that farmer and him having the ability to use the tools of farm programs, plus the availability

of a good, solid crop insurance program and to take the decision off the Government mandating to that farmer what he ought to plant and putting it in the hands of that farmer.

I think we have done that over the years. Still, it is not perfect. But today there appear to be some folks who, for whatever reason, want to take some shots at the Crop Insurance Program. I know the Senator from Kansas feels just as strongly as I do about the fact that we do not need to weaken the Crop Insurance Program. We need to strengthen that program to, again, move away from dependence by farmers on the Federal Government and allow them to have the market dictate their stream of income and have safety nets in the form of agricultural programs and crop insurance.

So I thank him for his leadership, and I thank him for the comments he has made today relative to the product that came out of the committee.

Mr. ROBERTS. I thank the Senator. Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I wish to take just a minute to address an issue that appeared in the Washington Post earlier this week. In an editorial, the author made some significant statements about the Cotton Program that exists in this current 2002 farm bill. Since we are in farm bill season, we have a constant barrage of editorials that come out—some of them in favor of farm programs; most of them seem to think farm programs are an easy target, and therefore they are very negative. This one was very negative. But as with most people who write these editorials and publish them around the country, frankly, this editorial is filled with total inaccuracies. I want to talk about a couple of those.

I want to set the record straight relative to what this author is talking about because there is one particular issue in here that has been discussed over the last several years that is simply wrong.

First of all, this editorial takes on the Cotton Program in the 2002 farm bill and says this program has a very negative effect—if you can imagine this—a very negative effect on the ability of cotton farmers in the West African countries of Benin, Burkino Faso, Chad, and Mali. Now, in this editorial the author writes to start with:

For years, the Federal Government has guaranteed American cotton producers about 72 cents a pound, even though the real market price of cotton has averaged about 57 cents.

Nothing could be further from the truth. That is just a completely inaccurate statement. What the author is talking about is the fact that in the 2002 farm bill, there is a target price for cotton of 72.4 cents a pound, but that simply does not guarantee a cotton farmer 72 cents a pound. The only correlation between guaranteeing a cotton farmer a floor on the price of cotton and the farm bill is the fact that there is a marketing loan available to a cotton farmer, and the marketing loan rate is 52 cents a pound.

That is the amount guaranteed to a cotton farmer from the 2002 farm bill. The fact is, the price of cotton today is in the range of 60-plus cents, so what that means is there would be no marketing loan benefits available to a cotton farmer as long as the current price is above the marketing loan rate.

So for some off-the-wall editorial writer to come in and say a cotton farmer is guaranteed 72 cents a pound by the 2002 farm bill is misleading and is typical of the statements that are made about farm bills by folks who have no idea what they are talking about.

Let me point out another inaccuracy. The author goes on to say:

Since 2002, market prices haven't even covered the cost of producing cotton, but the amount of acres planted in cotton has increased because the government guarantees a higher price.

Again, the author of this editorial simply has not done their homework.

Here are the actual facts: Cotton acreage in the United States in 2002 was 17.2 million—17.2 million. In 2007—this year—cotton acres in the United States are 10.5 million. Instead of cotton acres increasing in the United States, we have seen a 39-percent reduction in the number of acres planted from 2002 to 2007.

Furthermore, the author goes on to say:

Who benefits from the current system of cotton subsidies?

His answer to his own question:

About 20,000 American cotton producers, with an average annual income of more than \$125,000.

Let me tell my colleagues who really benefit from the cotton program in America as we know it today. We have in the United States today about 20,000 cotton producers. Those cotton producers deliver their cotton to gins where it is then processed, and the outcome of ginning cotton is a cotton bale. The cotton bale then goes into the marketing stream, where it can be sold to domestic cotton mills or exported, as most of our cotton is today. Unfortunately, all of our textile mills that were located all over the Northeast and then in the Southeast today are located in either the Caribbean region or in China or in Vietnam or elsewhere. Therefore most of our cotton is exported. But the farms and businesses directly involved in the production, distribution, and processing of cotton employ more than 230,000 Americans and result in direct business revenues of more than \$27 billion.

Additional economic multipliers through the broader economy, direct and indirect employment surpasses 520,000 workers with economic activity in excess of \$120 billion.

Now, the author of the editorial makes this statement:

The effects in the cotton-growing regions of West Africa are dramatic.

The author is talking about the U.S. cotton program's impact on West African countries. What they say is, the production of cotton in the United

States under the current farm bill dictates to cotton growers in Africa what they can get for a pound of cotton. Again, nothing could be further from the truth because I have already noted what happened relative to the decrease in the production acres of cotton in the United States. Well, guess what has happened in other parts of the world. If we are having such a negative impact on producers in Africa, does it not stand to reason we are also having a negative impact on cotton growers in Brazil and in China and in India and in other cotton-growing areas? I do not think it would have just a negative impact in West Africa.

The fact is, in China, in 2002, the cotton acreage was 10.3 million acres. In 2007, cotton acreage in China was up to 15.1 million acres. During this time that we have been negatively impacting West African cotton growers, China has increased its cotton acreage by 50 percent. In 2002, India had cotton acreage of 18.9 million acres. In 2007, that was up to 23.5 million acres, an increase of 24 percent. In Brazil, in 2002, 1.8 million acres of cotton were planted. In 2007, 2.8 million acres of cotton were planted in Brazil. Again, up 55 percent.

For the author of this editorial to say the United States cotton program is having such a negative impact on four West African countries is totally ridiculous. This editorial failed to mention the fact that in this farm bill the Senate has before it for consideration, we provided significant reforms in the cotton program itself to reduce amber box government expenditures. The administration of the cotton marketing loan program is reformed to improve the efficiency of the program. The target price for cotton is the only target price in the Senate bill that is reduced. We thereby save \$150 million over ten years.

The trade title also includes provisions that repeal authority for the supplier credit and GSM-103 program, measures that are necessary for the United States to comply with the Brazilian cotton case and the WTO. That creates a savings of \$50 million. Also, we have significantly reformed the payment limitation provision, and the Adjusted Gross Income limitations are reformed, which saves \$456 million.

None of this is mentioned in this grossly mischaracterized, inaccurate article that is aimed solely at a program that provides over 520,000 American jobs.

If we examine the production of cotton in China during the same 2002 through 2007 period that I alluded to a minute ago, China increased by 57 percent, India has increased by 122 percent, Brazil increased by 79 percent, and the U.S. increased cotton production by 6 percent—6 percent versus 57, 122, and 79 percent in those other three countries.

The article insinuates U.S. cotton production alone resulted in the overproduction of cotton when, in fact, U.S.

cotton production in 2006 represented only 17.7 percent of the world production and is estimated to be just 15.1 percent in 2007.

One other fact that is conveniently left out of this article is, if, in fact, the U.S. cotton program has a direct impact on the C-4 countries in West Africa, it was not that many years ago when the price of cotton worldwide was \$1 per pound—\$1. There is no mention of the fact that if we had a negative impact, certainly we had a positive impact when the price of cotton was \$1 a pound.

As one would expect, the editorial cites economic studies by organizations with anticotton agendas that show U.S. cotton production impacting world prices. However, several independent analyses show minimal price impacts attributable to the U.S. cotton program on these West African countries and any other country. The most recent economic study by researchers at Texas Tech University show world price impacts of 3 percent or less attributable to the U.S. cotton program.

West African cotton farmers receive less than 40 percent of the world market price. Why is that the case? These West African countries are rampant with fraud and corruption and the issues that typically are present in underdeveloped countries. Growers in China and India are paid between 90 and 100 percent of the world price for their cotton, so somebody other than the West African cotton farmers is receiving the difference. It is pretty obvious there is a lot of corruption going on in the West African cotton industry. But, again, this article conveniently fails to mention that point.

West African cotton yields are going down, while cotton yields in other countries are increasing.

Here are the real facts that are conveniently left out of this article:

From 2001 to 2005, the average yield in the C-4 countries fell by 15 pounds per acre, down to 353 pounds per acre. Average yields in India increased by 77 pounds per acre. Average yields in China grew by 272 pounds per acre. Brazilian yields have increased by 668 pounds per acre in 10 years.

West African farmers also have refused to take the latest, most technologically advanced assets that are available to them to utilize in the growing of cotton—again, a fact that the author conveniently left out of this article. They continue to reject genetically enhanced crops, while the adoption of those genetically enhanced crops in China, India, and Brazil allow their farmers to reap the benefits of improved yields and lower costs. The C-4 countries have little in the way of a textile industry, and the textile industry would like to have cotton close by. That is why we are seeing a huge increase in the production of cotton in China, for example.

What has the U.S. actually done from the standpoint of impacting the West African countries? Here is exactly what

we have done—another fact that is conveniently left out of this article. The United States is engaged in a number of outreach activities with West African countries that began in 2004 which are aimed at raising their agricultural productivity, spurring economic growth, and alleviating hunger and poverty. These efforts are coordinated by the U.S. cotton industry, with USAID, the Trade Representative's Office, and the Millennium Challenge.

Now, I could have picked out another crop, be it corn, soybeans, or whatever crop is under attack right now, but this just happened to be a totally inaccurate editorial that appeared in the Washington Post earlier this week. Unfortunately it is pretty typical of the criticism that is leveled at farm programs by people who have no concept of the commitment that farmers and ranchers in America—be they a small farmer or a large farmer—make to ensure the development of their land and production of quality agricultural products that ultimately wind up in the grocery store, which allows all Americans to spend less than 10 cents out of every disposable dollar on food products. That is the lowest—the lowest amount of money that is being spent on food products by any country in the world, and that is the benefit the American consumer gets from our agricultural producers.

As we move forward over the next couple of days, I am very hopeful my colleagues will come to the floor and talk about what amendments they have. I see the distinguished Senator from Colorado is here to perhaps talk about some issues he has of concern.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I note with some interest that "agriculture" does not appear in the title. It is called the Food and Energy Security Act. I think that in this particular piece of legislation, we are missing the boat, with commodity prices up, doing very well, and generally rural America is in a better position—at least in Colorado—than it has been in recent history. I think this would have been a good time to bring forward some reform in the agricultural programs. I am disappointed we don't have any reform in this particular piece of legislation. I do have some amendments I would like to be considered.

I noticed that the chairman of the committee said no Republican amendments are coming forward. That is not true, the amendment tree has been filled. That means if you bring an amendment, you cannot call it up. You don't have that opportunity. So we have some very serious amendments that I would like to bring up for discussion on this bill. Our staff has been working some with the agricultural staff on some of these amendments. We think we will reach agreement on some of them. There may be several on which I would want to have votes.

These are serious amendments which I think are important—items that ought to be brought up before the Senate for discussion and ought to be reviewed. I think they have some value in what we are trying to propose.

I am anxiously hoping that we can put the bill in a posture so that amendments can be applied. I know the ranking Republican, along with Senator HARKIN, have worked hard on this piece of legislation. There are some good things in it; they are not all bad. I appreciate their effort on what they worked on together.

There are some things that continue to concern me: We have expansion of Davis-Bacon; we have tax increases and some budget gimmicks to make it look as if there is not as much spending as there is. Frankly, there is a lack of reform. I haven't made up my mind on how I will vote on final passage of this bill. I am waiting to see what it will look like after amendments have been adopted on the floor, if any, if we get an opportunity to do that. Hopefully, we can pass this bill in a way that won't adversely impact our trade agreements.

This is another concern that gets brought up in relation to this issue. We have to be careful we don't do things that adversely affect our trade agreements, which come back and haunt us and reverse policies that may be decided and be applied to the agricultural industry and lose some of our export markets, which are so very important. Colorado is one of those States in the agriculture area that have benefited by these free-trade agreements—NAFTA in particular—and we continue to export our beef and our grain. They continue to be a valuable part of our economy. Agriculture is important to the State of Colorado. But if we can move more toward a market-based way of managing our agricultural produce, I think we would be much better off.

So every piece of legislation that has come up in the Senate has a tax increase in it, or they call it revenue enhancers. Many of them are, frankly, tax increases, or they may be fee increases.

I want to take a little bit of time on the floor to talk about tax reform. Mr. President, I rise to talk about the issue of taxes. This issue is very important to the hard-working men and women of our great country. I think we need to look seriously at tax reform.

I believe the Federal tax burden is excessive and overly intrusive. Reform of the IRS and the current system is long overdue. In recent years, it has become abundantly clear that we have lost sight of the fact that the fundamental purpose of our tax system is to raise revenues to fund our Government. In its current application, the U.S. tax system distorts the economic decisions of families and businesses, leading to an inefficient allocation of resources and hindering economic growth. Our tax system has become unstable and unpredictable. Frequent changes to the

tax code have caused volatility, and it is harmful to the economy and creates additional compliance costs.

The tax system was originally intended to be an efficient system designed to raise revenues for national defense, social programs, and vital Government services. However, the current tax system is now so complex that approximately \$150 billion is spent each year by U.S. taxpayers and the Federal Government just to make sure taxes are tallied and paid correctly.

This is an enormous expense and is a waste of resources. At present, the United States has instituted a tax system that thwarts basic economic decisions, punishes wise and productive investments, and rewards those who work less and borrow more. As it stands, the quagmire that is our existing Tax Code penalizes savings, contributes to the ever-increasing cost of health insurance, and undermines our global competitiveness.

More disturbing is the fact that Americans spend more than 3.5 billion hours doing their taxes, which is the equivalent of hiring almost 2 million new IRS employees—more than 20 times the agency's current workforce. On average, Americans spend the equivalent of more than half of one workweek—26 hours—on their taxes each year, not to mention the amount of time they work to pay the taxes themselves. At the end of the day, despite our lengthy codified tax law, there is no evidence to suggest that Americans really know how much they should be paying in taxes in any given year, or why. The Tax Code should aspire to be clear, transparent, rather than multifarious and convoluted. Everybody should be able to have a basic understanding of the Tax Code, knowing how and why they are taxed.

The Tax Code's constant phase-ins and phase-outs are a nuisance at best, and a negative force at worst, in the daily economic lives of American families and businesses, which include farmers and ranchers. Moreover, taxpayers with the same income, family situation, and other key characteristics often face different tax burdens. This differing treatment creates a perception of unfairness in the Tax Code and has left many Americans discouraged. At present, how much or little taxpayers pay in tax is sometimes dependent on where they happen to live and the choices made by their employers.

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan, a true visionary in this area, signed the Tax Reform Act of 1986, which reduced top marginal individual tax rates from 50 percent to 28 percent and increased the standard deduction and reduced the top corporate tax from 50 percent to 34 percent, and in so doing, this reform act simplified the Tax Code, broadening the income tax base, allowing for lower marginal rates, and curtailing the use of individual tax shelters.

While the 1986 act was a step in the right direction, unfortunately, it didn't

produce a long-lasting transformation of the tax system. Today, our tax system bears little resemblance to the simple, low-rate system promised by the 1986 reform. This is due to constant tweaking over the years, as we are seeing in these legislative proposals coming before the Senate in this particular piece of legislation. More than 100 different acts of Congress have made nearly 15,000 changes to the Tax Code.

I support broad-based tax reform and a simplified tax system. It is my belief that any reform to the current tax system should benefit the middle class. The vast majority of taxpayers are the middle class, and they have borne the burden of the current system. While I was a member of the Colorado Legislature, we implemented a 5-percent flat tax for Colorado. I believe we should take a similar approach on the Federal level.

While I would be willing to consider a flat tax, a sales tax, and other plans on the Federal level, it is important that any replacement plan be simple and fair. The replacement system must provide tax relief for working Americans. It must protect the rights of taxpayers and reduce tax collection abuse. Most important, a new system must eliminate the bias against saving and investment and promote economic growth and job creation.

No one can deny that our Tax Code is in dire need of reform. Its complexity, lack of clarity, unfairness, and disproportionate influence on behavior have caused great frustration. Our current Tax Code has been shaped by goals other than simplicity, by intentions other than helping the taxpayer plan ahead, and by objectives other than expanding our economy. Not only has it failed to keep pace with our growing and dynamic economy, frequently changes have made it unstable and unpredictable.

Years of hodgepodge Government interference and ad hoc meddling have left our Tax Code in shambles. While we cannot change the past, we can learn valuable lessons from the same and remedy our mistakes. If we don't take steps to immediately simplify and reform our Tax Code, it will become more complex, more unfair, and less conducive to our economy's future growth. Small reforms are not enough. A total overhaul of the existing system is the only chance we have to get our economy and deficits back on track.

We must act now. We have a responsibility to our constituents and this Nation to resolve the predicament in which our current tax system has put us in. If we here in Congress don't act sooner rather than later in reforming our tax system, it will become more complex and cumbersome.

Mr. President, here we are again, and we have a piece of legislation before us that meddles with the Tax Code, takes piecemeal action on the Tax Code, and leads us more into a deeper quagmire of the complicated code. One of the aspects of our economy that gets im-

pacted more than any other is the small business sector. They have to struggle with these. Large corporations have accountants and lawyers on staff. It is not a problem for them. It is a problem but certainly not as great a problem as for a small business, which may be a man-and-wife operation, or a business run out of a home, or it may be just a small workforce, a small business with 10, 15, 30 in the workforce. Many times, we look at it as we would a ranch, where it is just a family operation or a farm operation. They are the ones who are disproportionately impacted by a complicated Tax Code.

Here we go again, in this particular farm bill, raising taxes and piecemealing the Tax Code. I hope the Congress—certainly, it is too late in this session—in the following sessions can come forward with serious attempts to simplify our Tax Code to make it fair and to not be piecemealing it, as we are seeing it in this particular farm bill and other pieces of legislation that have been brought up on the floor of the Senate.

It is a challenge. It is not an easy task. I have been a part of those discussions on simplifying it, and there are many perspectives. It is becoming essential, and it is getting to the point where I don't think we can continue to ignore the challenges because of the adverse impact it is having on the citizens of this country and the difficulty they have in understanding the Tax Code and how taxes adversely affect productivity, such as farmers and ranchers, which we are trying to address in this bill, and small businesses throughout the country that are trying to do their best to be able to make a living for their families.

So I felt we needed to take a little time to talk about taxes. Again, I am seeing a pattern in this legislation that really concerns me.

As I said earlier in my introductory remarks, I have not decided if I am going to vote for the farm bill. Certainly, it is not a perfect piece of legislation. We have to weigh all aspects. Certainly, there are some provisions in this legislation about which I have concerns. I hope the majority leader and the chairman of the Agriculture Committee, working with ranking members, can get us off this stalemate so Republicans can move forward and can offer amendments. I have a number of them that I wish to have an opportunity to offer.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARPER). Who seeks recognition?

The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for no more than 10 minutes.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRADE POLICY

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, the House of Representatives today passed a bilateral trade agreement with the

country of Peru. I was disappointed that there was another ratification in our Government of another job-killing trade agreement, a trade agreement that will mean more unsafe food at our kitchen tables and more unsafe toys, consumer products, in our children's bedrooms.

We have seen this over and over again. We saw it with NAFTA in 1993 when the year before NAFTA was passed, we had a trade deficit in this country of \$38 billion. Last year, the trade deficit was literally 20 times that amount. President Bush I said every \$1 billion of trade deficit or surplus translates into 13,000 jobs. So a \$1 billion trade surplus means a growth of 13,000 jobs in our country; a \$1 billion trade deficit means a loss of 13,000 jobs.

Do the math. When our trade deficit goes from \$38 billion in 1992 to upstairs of \$700 billion in 2006, we know our trade policy is not working. It is not working for our workers, it is not working when we have layoffs in Lima, Canton, Youngstown, Toledo, or Dayton. We have these layoffs, and look what it does to police, fire, and schools, layoff of teachers. All that comes from a failed trade policy.

Yet the House of Representatives again today passed another trade policy. We not only know that trade policy does not work for our workers and does not work for our communities where we have plant closings or, short of that, layoffs of large numbers of workers and services and our communities decline, from Galion to Gallipolis, from Avon Lake to Buckeye Lake, but we also know what these trade policies mean to consumer protection and food safety.

Almost every week for the last several months, we have seen a new recall. It might be toys, it might be tires, it might be toothpaste, it might be vitamins. Yet, literally, almost every week there seems to be a recall, often from China, but not always.

We are setting ourselves up. Think of it this way: In 2006, we imported \$288 billion worth of goods from China. That \$288 billion, tens of billions of dollars—if my math is right, that is about \$700 million or \$800 million every day from China—tens of billions of dollars for toys, consumer products, and food products.

Of those tens of billions of dollars, think about it this way: When we buy products made in China, the People's Republic of China, a Communist government, we know that Government puts no real emphasis on food safety, on consumer product safety, or on worker safety. So we are buying products from a country that puts no real premium on the safety of those products we are buying. That is the first problem.

The second problem is, when we import large numbers of toys, for instance—let's take toys as an example because we have seen that over and over—when we import large numbers of toys from China, we know American

companies such as Mattel go to China and subcontract with Chinese companies. Then Mattel and these other companies say to the Chinese subcontractors: You have to cut costs, you have to cut corners, you have to make these products cheaper. What do they do? They use lead paint. Why? Because lead paint is cheaper, it is easier to apply, it dries faster, and it is shinier.

Mattel then brings these products back into the United States after they have told their Chinese subcontractor: You have to cut costs, you have to cut prices, you have to cut corners. They bring the products back into the United States with no corporate responsibility on their part. They bring them into our country. These toys end up in our children's bedrooms, these food products end up on our kitchen tables, and we have an inspection system that is increasingly falling apart, increasingly disintegrating.

We have fewer inspectors than we have ever had at the Consumer Product Safety Commission. That Commission, when it began two or three decades ago, was twice the size it is today, and we were not even importing products from China or other places around the world. They were inspecting tires two decades ago, mostly made in the United States. They were inspecting toys two decades ago, mostly made in the United States under pretty good conditions.

Today they have significantly less inspectors and tens of billions of dollars of products coming into this country from China, which doesn't have a consumer product safety commission of any import and doesn't have a food regulatory system, which we hold so dear in this country.

It is a perfect storm: You trade, buy tens of billions of dollars from a country that doesn't have consumer product safety rules, you have an American company importing products and is pushing, saying, you have to cut costs, pushing quality and safety aside, and then you have a Consumer Product Safety Commission in this country underfunded by the Bush administration, weakened by the administrators and the White House, that does not protect American children.

That is the problem with what we have seen at the Consumer Product Safety Commission. That is why it is time for Nancy Nord, the chairperson of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, to step aside. She is the acting chairperson but, unfortunately, we see a lot more inaction from her and from that Commission than action. It is time to put a chairperson in place who is not satisfied with saying: Well, we are doing the best we can. "The best we can" is a chairperson who understands his or her primary responsibility is to protect the safety of our children and the safety of our families.

Let me go a little further. Back around the time of Halloween, I asked Ohio Ashland University professor Jeff Weidenheimer to test 22 Halloween

products for lead. He is a chemistry professor. He has looked into lead-based paint applied to consumer products, to toys, for some time.

The acceptable level of lead, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, is 600 parts per million for adults, and for children, the Consumer Product Safety Commission says the acceptable level is zero.

What Professor Weidenheimer found, of these 22 Halloween products, 3 out of the 22 were not safe. They had much too high levels of lead. For example, the Halloween Frankenstein cup, which I mentioned on the Senate floor before, contained 39,000 parts per million of lead. Again, the upper level of safety for adults is 600 parts per million. This was 39,000 parts per million. This was a Halloween Frankenstein cup that likely children are going to put to their lips and some of that lead will clearly end up in their system.

Forty years ago, we banned lead in paint. Now we need to ban lead in toys. We need to get tough enforcing safety standards abroad so we will not see these unsafe products coming in. We need to, most importantly, hold responsible those importers who are bringing those products into the United States, subsequent to their pushing their contractors to cut corners and cut costs. At the same time, we need a Consumer Product Safety Commission that is going to work.

A week or so ago, Chairwoman Nord of the Consumer Product Safety Commission was lobbying against the legislation submitted by our colleague, Senator PRYOR from Arkansas, that will make the Consumer Product Safety Commission work better. She said they have an adequate budget, even though their budget is half of what it used to be when it was an agency on the side of the public.

Everyone agrees on one point: We want more trade with countries around the world, but we want fair trade. First, more than anything, we want a trade policy that protects our workers, protects our country, protects our communities, protects our families on food safety issues, protects our children on consumer product safety issues. It is our first responsibility as Senators to protect our families and make our families safe. Part of the way to do that is a very different trade policy. Part of the way to do that is a very different Consumer Product Safety Commission. Part of the way to do that is for Chairwoman Nancy Nord to step aside and put somebody in whose first, primary responsibility that he or she will recognize is protecting American families.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I wish to discuss an amendment today authorizing the Minor Use Animal Drug Program. This is a program which carries out valuable research at land-grant institutions across the country for veterinary pharmaceutical research, such as research being done right now at the University of Wyoming.

This program is currently being administered by the USDA in cooperation with the Food and Drug Administration. It is identified as National Research Project No. 7. It is called NRSP-7.

Minor species industries nationwide represent about \$1.5 billion in State and local farm revenues each year. Processing and export of minor species food and fiber projects represent an additional \$4.5 billion in revenue each year. Now, individually, these minor species represent drug markets which are too small to cover the high cost of developing new veterinary drugs. As a result, few approved drugs are available to treat diseases in these minor animal species.

The USDA established a national Minor Use Animal Drug Program in 1982. So over the last 25 years, this program has been used to facilitate research for the drug approval process. NRSP-7 offers an opportunity for producers of minor animal species, such as sheep, goats, fish, and honeybees, to have veterinary drugs approved for their use. This project is of particular importance to the American sheep industry and to the people in the State of Wyoming. The American sheep industry produces a superior product. Lamb is a delicacy around the world. In fact, our recent guest, the President of France, enjoyed an American lamb dinner when he dined at the White House on Tuesday evening. I have no doubt his meal was exquisite thanks to the American ranchers who prepared those animals for the plate.

There are over 69,000 sheep producers in the United States. Those producers care for their animals and they produce valuable wool and lamb products for the country and the world. In Wyoming, 900 sheep producers care for close to a half million sheep. There are almost as many sheep in Wyoming as there are people, so it is almost a one-to-one ratio.

Nationwide, the sheep industry may be considered minor. Drug companies may not see profit potential in the sheep industry based on the nationwide numbers. But in Wyoming, we see opportunity, opportunity in the sheep industry, and we see a pressing need for development of veterinary drugs to promote growth of the sheep industry.

The industry is a big part of our heritage in Wyoming. Shepherders have been incredible stewards of rangelands for more than a century. In Wyoming, we believe in a ranching way of life. We believe every man or woman who has

the courage to work hard on the range can build a future for his or for her family, and they have. The sheep industry has supported that dream for thousands of people in Wyoming over the decades.

Sheep ranchers take care of their animals, and their animals provide a valuable industry. Treating animals for injury or for disease is a major component of a successful ranching business. The Minor Use Animal Drug Program offers sheep ranchers the same opportunity as other livestock operators to maintain a healthy herd and healthy businesses.

Having the right drugs to treat animal health problems is of great importance. New threats evolve each year and research carried out by the Minor Use Animal Drug Program helps keep the sheep industry up to date. To give a for-instance, NRSP's No. 7 research has led to approval of three drugs for respiratory diseases and two drugs for lung worms in sheep. Researchers are currently testing florfenicol for respiratory infections and a progesterone delivery method for breeding purposes.

Without sheep-specific research produced for these drugs, producers are left to guess at adjusting the doses from what they use in cattle and other animals. This can lead to problems of antibiotic resistance and it raises questions about drug residues in meat products. NRSP-7 provides the right research on appropriate drugs for responsible uses so that sheep producers know they are getting the best treatment for their animals.

The United States is far behind the rest of the world in vaccines, in reproductive aids, and in approved antibiotics for sheep and goats. NRSP-7 gives American sheep producers a fighting chance to keep up with the competition, and it is international competition.

It is not only the sheep industry that benefits from NRSP-7. For the last 25 years, NRSP-7 has facilitated drug approvals for species as varied as pheasants, quail, bighorn sheep, catfish, goats, partridges, lobster, shrimp, and the list goes on. At a time in our country when questions about animal disease are running rampant—when we face threats from avian influenza, from brucellosis, and from West Nile virus—it is the role of good government to protect human safety and animal safety.

Having well-researched and approved drugs at the ready to meet animal disease threats needs to be a priority for our Nation. NRSP-7 provides an opportunity for Government to create a level playing field for all agriculture sectors. Authorizing the Minor Use Animal Drug Program helps prepare us for the future and for the future of agriculture production.

I hope my colleagues will support this effort, this amendment to authorize NRSP-7, the Minor Use Animal Drug Program.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, the other day the administration issued a veto threat against the farm bill that is pending before the body. More precisely, the President didn't say he would veto the bill, his aides said they would recommend to the President the veto if the bill that is currently pending before the Senate went to the President.

We all know what that means in this town. It may sound like gobbledygook to almost anybody listening, but there is a nuance to what they are saying. The nuance is they are seeking negotiating leverage. That is what this is all about.

At the end of the day, I don't think the President is going to veto the farm bill. I think that would be a very unwise move on his part. But I rise today to talk about the chief complaint they raised. They asserted there is too much spending in this farm bill, so I thought it might be useful to look at the President's proposal and how much it spends compared to the spending that is in this farm bill. Since they are asserting there is too much spending in the farm bill that has passed out of the Senate Agriculture Committee, that is before the whole body now, what about their proposal?

Here is what I found. These are not my numbers. These are the estimates of the Congressional Budget Office. They say the bill before us that came out of the Senate Agriculture Committee will cost \$285.8 billion over the next 5 years. But look at what they found the President's bill would cost over 5 years. Again, this is not my estimate. These are the professional estimates of the Congressional Budget Office. The Congressional Budget Office said the President's proposal over 5 years would cost \$287.2 billion. In other words, the President's proposal costs more than the proposal that came out of the Senate Agriculture Committee. I wish to repeat that. The President's proposal costs more, over the 5 years, than does the proposal that came out of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

This is only a 5-year bill. I know the President's people tried to make it into a 10-year bill, but it is not a 10-year bill, it is a 5-year bill. The 5-year scoring of the legislation that came out of the Senate Agriculture Committee by the Congressional Budget Office says the bill before us would cost \$285.8 billion and the President's proposal would cost \$287.2 billion. So if our proposal costs too much, what does he say about his own proposal? What do they say about the proposal they have advanced?

Interestingly, in addition, we actually came up with the pay-fors. We

have completely offset the cost of the bill that is before the Senate. The Congressional Budget Office has so certified. They say we do not add a dime to the deficit. In fact, what they do say is we have a slight savings at the end of the day, \$61 million over 5 years. That is what they say about our bill.

The President has never said how he would pay for his bill. So we have an irony here. The President criticizes our bill as costing too much. His costs more. We have specified how this bill would be paid for. He has never specified how his would be paid for.

On this question of the cost of this bill, we now have the latest calculations. These are the full and final calculations of what the forecast was at the time the last farm bill was written and the forecast now for this farm bill. It is very instructive. Again, these are the estimates of the Congressional Budget Office and the Congressional Research Service. These are not my numbers. These are not made-up numbers, unlike the numbers the White House used the other day, in which they tried to make a 5-year bill into a 10-year bill. It is not a 10-year bill. It is a 5-year bill. When you compare it on a 5-year basis to the White House proposal, our proposal costs less.

This extends the analysis and looks back at what the Congressional Budget Office forecasts the current farm bill would cost in relationship to all Federal spending. They said, at the time, the farm bill would be 2.33 percent, 2½ percent of total Federal spending. This is what they are saying the new farm bill will cost over the 5 years of its life: 1.87 percent of total Federal outlays. In other words, the proportion of total Federal spending in this farm bill is lower than the proportion of total Federal spending of the previous farm bill.

Agriculture's share of total Federal spending is going down and going down about quite a bit—about 20 percent. These are facts. In addition, regarding the commodity programs that are the ones that draw all the attention and all the controversy, the projection, when the last farm bill was written, was that would take up three-quarters of 1 percent of Federal spending. It turned out it didn't cost that much. It turns out it was one-half of 1 percent of Federal spending.

But look at what the Congressional Budget Office is telling us this farm bill will cost in the commodity area. They are saying it will only be one-quarter of 1 percent of total Federal spending; one-half as much as the previous farm bill. I didn't see the White House mention that. I didn't see them mention this farm bill is going to cost less as a share of total Federal spending than the last farm bill. I didn't see them say the commodity provisions that are controversial provisions, that were projected when the last farm bill was written to absorb three-quarters of 1 percent of Federal spending and wound up costing less, only one-half of 1 percent of Federal spending, is now, if

this bill is approved, going to consume only one-quarter of 1 percent of Federal spending.

It would be nice if facts were at the basis of an analysis of this legislation. It would be nice if we were dealing with an accurate description of what this bill costs, in comparison to what the President's proposal costs. That would be a useful debate to have. Because, as I have indicated, this bill before us costs less than the President's proposal; in fact, \$1.4 billion less than the President's proposal. And he is accusing us of having too much money in this bill? Come on.

In addition, we have completely offset the cost. This doesn't add one dime to the Federal deficit or debt. We have completely offset the cost. The President has never presented a plan for paying for his proposal, which costs even more.

In addition, I want to rivet this point: When you look back at the last farm bill, CBO said it would consume 2½ percent of total Federal spending. It turned out to be somewhat less. On commodities, they said it would cost three-quarters of 1 percent. Look at this bill. This bill now is estimated to only cost 1.87 percent of total Federal spending and the commodity provisions one-quarter of 1 percent.

What does this bill do? This bill is critically important to the national economy. It is critically important to people all across America. Sixty-six percent of this bill goes to nutrition, 9 percent of this bill goes to conservation, so 75 percent of the cost of this bill goes to nutrition and conservation. Those are needs that are equally and evenly spread all across America. Certainly, there are parts of the country that need more help and some less help but very broadly that money is evenly distributed across the country. The commodity provisions are less than 14 percent of the cost of this bill, and we now know they will consume only one-quarter of 1 percent of Federal spending.

In addition, this legislation has a critical national priority—to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Mr. President, \$2.5 billion in this bill is dedicated to reducing our dependence on foreign oil, to develop cellulosic energy that can help transform America's position in the world. Think how different our country would be if, instead of spending \$270 billion a year buying foreign oil from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and Venezuela and all the rest of the major oil producers, so many of whom are in unstable parts of the world—how different our country would be if that \$270 billion were spent here, how different it would be if, instead of relying on the Middle East, we could turn toward the Midwest and the Southeast and the Southwest and the northeast for the energy supplies of America, how different it would look if that \$270 billion, instead of going to Dubai, was going to America.

This bill is important for the country. When the President issues a veto

threat, saying there is too much money in it, and his proposal costs even more, they have some explaining to do. They have some explaining to do.

I hope my colleagues are paying attention.

Before I conclude, I would like to once again thank the ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, the Senator from Georgia, who has worked extremely hard to bring this bill to the floor. This is a bill with strong bipartisan support. He and his staff worked tirelessly to produce a professional product, one the country could be proud of.

I believe he and his staff, working with the rest of us, accomplished that. I believe this is legislation that is going to help change our country and change it for the better and do it in a way that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil and also do it in a way that will help improve the American competitive position around the world.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. CONRAD. I will yield.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I thank you for your kind comments. This is only my fifth year in the Senate, but I have never seen a situation evolve in a more bipartisan fashion than we have with respect to this farm bill. I commend you for, No. 1, your insight into ag issues, your insight into budget issues, your insight into finance issues, all of which, when melded together, have been so critical in putting this bill together.

Were it not for you and your commitment to the American farmer, we simply would not have this good product on the floor today. I see you have your staffer, Jim Miller, there. Were it not for Jim working very closely with my staff and Senator HARKIN's staff, there is no question that we would not be where we are today.

But your charts are of significant interest because you and I worked together on the 2002 farm bill. We both remember there was a lot of criticism directed at that farm bill, exactly the same criticism that has been directed at this farm bill today. As I remember, there was a veto threat by the White House in 2002. Is it not true the projected outlays in just the commodity title of the 2002 farm bill have been significantly lower, from an annual expenditure standpoint, than what was presented in 2002?

Mr. CONRAD. The Senator has a good memory. The Senator is exactly right. We saved \$17 billion just from the commodity provision alone from what was projected at the time the last farm bill was written. Part of it was, we did a good job of fashioning an agricultural policy that when prices are higher, the support is reduced.

The result was very significant savings for the American taxpayer; in addition to that, a food policy that meant the lowest cost food, as a share of national income, in the history of the world. That is a fact. And by a long

way. We have the lowest priced food, as the Senator well knows, of any country in the world, and by a big margin.

We are spending 10 percent of our income on food. That includes food eaten at home and food eaten out. Other countries are spending, most of the industrialized world, 14 and 15 percent. That is just for food eaten at home. So we are beating them by a country mile.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. If the Senator would continue to yield for a question, is it not true when we talk about reforms between the 2002 farm bill and this 2007 farm bill, that you mentioned the figure of about 14 percent of this farm bill is spent on the commodity title; that in 2002 about 28 percent of the expenditure in the farm bill was dedicated to the commodity title? So when somebody says we have not reformed the commodity title, that we have not reformed this farm bill, would the Senator not agree there is significant reform just in the pure dollars that are being dedicated to the commodity title?

Mr. CONRAD. Well, once again, the Senator is exactly right. We can go back. These are not my numbers, these are not your numbers, these are not the Agriculture Committee's numbers. These are the numbers of the bipartisan, nonpartisan, Congressional Budget Office.

When the last farm bill was written, they said the commodity programs would consume three-quarters of 1 percent of the Federal budget. They say this farm bill, the commodity programs will consume one-quarter of 1 percent.

Now, in fairness, they were wrong in the last farm bill. The last farm bill did not cost three-quarters of 1 percent of Federal expenditures, it cost one-half of 1 percent. That is still double what this bill does as a share of Federal spending.

Sometimes you wonder when you read these press statements by some of the national media, what are they writing about? They are not writing about this bill because they clearly have not analyzed the bill. It is as clear as it can be that we have dramatically reduced the share of this bill going to commodity programs. We have dramatically reduced it on any measure.

In addition, there are, as the Senator well knows, two of the most significant reforms that have been the goal of reformers, and I have always considered myself a reformer. No. 1, we have the end of the three entity rule, and, No. 2, we have the requirement for direct attribution of payments to living, breathing human beings, rather than paper entities.

Anybody who does not recognize that is significant reform does not know much about agriculture policy.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Well, again, if the Senator would yield, I say this is not a perfect product. It is not maybe exactly what you would like or what I would or what Senator HARKIN would like, or any member of our committee

or this body. But when you take the interest of agriculture all across America, I think this farm bill truly represents the needs of American farmers. It represents the needs of our nutrition folks around the country, whether it be the School Lunch Program, our food banks, or our food stamp beneficiaries.

It represents the needs from a conservation standpoint, both farmers and nonfarmers who want to maintain the integrity of the land and the environment. It looks at the needs from a research standpoint, looks at the needs as you mentioned from an oil dependency standpoint, and helps move us in the direction of becoming less dependent on foreign oil.

At the same time, it does it, as the Senator well knows because he is chairman of the Budget Committee, within the numbers that were given to us by the Budget Committee. I daresay this is the first bill that has hit the floor this year that does, in fact, stay within the budget numbers.

We can argue about that, but the fact is, we were given a budget number by your committee, and we had to craft a farm bill that gave us significantly less money than what we had in 2002. With your leadership, and Senator HARKIN, we have been able to craft a farm bill that fits within those budget numbers.

Mr. CONRAD. Well, let me say if there were a model around here for fiscal rectitude, this bill would be it because not only does this bill come in within budget, it came in under the budget. As you know, there was a reserve fund created to take advantage of these opportunities that everyone recognized for our country in energy. So there was an extra \$20 billion passed by both Houses of the Congress to be available for the Committees on Agriculture to write a farm bill, with the thought in mind that those resources would go for the energy opportunity and to deal with enhanced conservation.

And what happened? This committee has come in only \$8 billion above the so-called baseline, so well under the amount of additional resources that were allocated by both Houses of the Congress.

The occupant of the chair now is a very valuable member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, the distinguished Senator from Nebraska, someone who has a very strong business background, someone who was Governor of his State, someone who balanced budget after budget after budget in that State, and someone who is very attuned to being fiscally responsible, I might add.

I want to tell him we have just now gotten the numbers that show what our bill costs, the bill that came out of committee, the bill that is on the floor of the Senate right now, compared to the President's proposal.

The President, through his staff, did not issue it. We have to make that clear. His staff said they would recommend to him a veto. They said the

problem with it is we spend too much money. Well, now we have been able to compare what the committee did and what the President proposed. Guess what. The President's proposal, according to the Congressional Budget Office, costs \$287.2 billion over 5 years.

Our bill, the bill that is on the Senate floor, is \$285.8 billion. In other words, the President's bill, the President's proposal, cost \$1.4 million more than ours—not by my scoring, not by the Agriculture Committee's scoring, but by the scoring of the Congressional Budget Office.

That is on a 5-year bill. Now, the President came up—the President's staff, not the President—the President's staff came up with all kinds of almost bizarre ideas. They tried, in part of our bill, to turn a 5-year bill into a 10-year bill. They did not do that with his proposal. But with ours, they tried to take some of the provisions and make them 10-year provisions, and they are 5-year provisions.

The fact that there will not be money for some of these things if the next farm bill does not find money to provide for them, those things will end. This is a 5-year bill. And the 5-year scoring shows ours costs less than the President's—less.

So I would expect by probably late this afternoon, Mr. Conner, who is acting as head of the Agriculture Department, will issue an apology to us and no doubt have a press conference with the national media and acknowledge that the Congressional Budget Office has found that their proposal costs more than ours.

I wait with great interest and anticipation that press conference by Mr. Conner to acknowledge that after new review, and after having an objective third-party analysis of our two proposals, they find ours costs less than theirs, and there will be an apology forthcoming to all of us who crafted this legislation.

I eagerly await the announcement of that press conference. Again, I thank the ranking member of the committee for his determination to give good farm legislation for this country, legislation that is not just good for farmers and ranchers, but legislation that is good for taxpayers of this country, legislation that is good for all those who benefit from farm legislation, who are well beyond the farm and ranch gate.

Because, as I have indicated, 66 percent of the funding in this bill is for nutrition, 9 percent is for conservation, three-quarters of the money in this legislation is spread broadly across America.

In addition, there is money for research. In addition, there is money for trade to make us more competitive. There is money for rural development, and there is money for energy to make us less dependent on foreign oil. The commodity provisions, the ones that draw all the controversy, are down to 13.8 percent of the funding. They will account for only one-quarter of 1 percent of Federal spending, according to

the Congressional Budget Office. This committee has done its work and done it well.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. NELSON of Nebraska). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to thank the staff of Senator CHAMBLISS, my own staff, and Senator HARKIN's staff who worked night and day, weekends, night after night, late into the night on this legislation. They are the unsung heroes. They get too little attention. We are out front. We are the ones who get talked about as helping to craft this bill. I emphasize the extraordinary efforts and performance of staff members from the three Members who worked to put this bipartisan compromise together.

From the staff of Senator CHAMBLISS, Martha Scott Poindexter is somebody who has great credibility with my office. She has been extremely professional, worked very hard, has very good judgment, and deep knowledge. We appreciate the attitude she brought to this effort. Vernie Hubert is another absolute first-class professional on the staff of Senator CHAMBLISS who was great to deal with throughout the process. Vernie Hubert is somebody who spent the time to understand the implications of this legislation. We are talking about major legislation. It was held up the other day, but this is what I am talking about. This is an incredible effort, to do it and do it right. I acknowledge the excellent work of the staff of Senator CHAMBLISS.

I have expressed the high regard I have for Senator CHAMBLISS, but Senator CHAMBLISS has been ably assisted by Martha Scott Poindexter, Vernie Hubert, and many more whom I have not dealt with.

On the staff of Senator HARKIN, I wish to single out Mark Halverson, staff director, and Susan Keith. They have done an extraordinary amount of work, brought dedication to this effort. We thank them for it.

On my staff, Jim Miller, who knows more about these farm bills than any living human being, has such an absolute commitment to helping family farmers and ranchers. Scott Stofferahn is my staff director back home. He ran the Farm Service Administration in my State. He was a leader in the State legislature and is my very close friend and confidant, somebody in whom I have absolute confidence.

Tom Mahr, my legislative director, is one of the smartest people I have ever had working for me. He led the negotiations that involved the relationship of Finance Committee funding and Ag-

riculture Committee funding and helped make sure all of this adds up. He did a superb job. John Fuher is relatively new to my staff but comes from a North Dakota farm family, as straight an arrow as one could ever ask for, somebody who absolutely believes in the importance of family farm agriculture to the economic strength of the country. He comes from a wonderful family and acquitted himself very well. I was amazed at the responsibility John took on in this process. Miles Patrie, another young member of my staff, did a terrific job as well. They were assisted by Joe McGarrey, who is my energy aide and who played a central role in negotiating the energy provisions of this bill.

I thank them. Some people have an idea that the people who work in public service have cushy jobs. I wish they could see the work these people have put into this over the last 4 months. I wish they could see night after night, many nights here until 1 and 2 in the morning, weekend after weekend, here late on a Friday, then all day Saturday, then all day Sunday, and then right back here Monday morning and then late every one of these nights, week after week after week. To anybody who does not understand the commitment of people who have done this work, the fact is, virtually every one of them could make a lot more money downtown. They could make a lot more money down on K Street. They have an abiding interest in serving the public and doing right. They have done right on this bill. I am intensely proud of all of them.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to talk about one of the most important bills that will come before the 110th Congress and that we will be considering for this country at the beginning of this century, and that is the farm bill. I wish to specifically address both the disaster fund, which has been created under the great leadership of our committee chairs and committee membership, as well as later on address the issue of energy and the importance of the energy provisions in this bill.

At the outset, I, again, thank both Senator HARKIN and Senator CHAMBLISS for their leadership in producing a farm bill that has had tremendous bipartisan support coming out of that committee. I also wish to thank all members of that committee who worked so hard over the last 2 years to deliver a product we can all be truly proud of as members of that committee.

But it is not just the Senators who have the privilege of serving on that committee and coming and speaking on the floor; it is also the staffs of each of the Senators—on my staff, Brendan McGuire and Grant Leslie, and others who have worked so hard on this issue, but also people such as Mark Halverson, who have devoted their lives entirely to this legislation for the last couple years, along with Martha Scott Poindexter in Senator CHAMBLISS's office. To them I say thank you.

I thank Senator CONRAD for his great work and understanding of the budget and trying to pull together what truly is a fiscally responsible product for energy legislation, as we move it forward. I thank Senator GRASSLEY and Senator CHAMBLISS for their leadership in helping us pull all the pieces of this together.

Today I rise to speak briefly about the disaster trust fund which we have created in the farm bill and to voice my continued support for this aspect of the farm bill, with the hope that we are able to get this aspect of the legislation across the finish line, together with the rest of this farm bill, because it is so important to farm country.

It is no secret the commodity prices in the business section sometimes are not good indicators of how individual farmers and ranchers are doing. For example, if corn prices are up—as they have been during the last year—that does not necessarily mean farmers and ranchers in counties such as those in the Presiding Officer's State of Nebraska or those in Baca County or Yuma County in Colorado are doing well. That is because sometimes some of our cattle producers in those circumstances are not having an easy time.

I can tell you that when we look at \$3-a-gallon gasoline and \$3-plus, \$3.10-a-gallon diesel, it creates a hardship on the farmer. But, more importantly, what happens on an annual basis is we have to face the weather. Perhaps more than any weather vane, and those from the city who end up watching the weather on the 10 o'clock news, a farmer is more attune to what is happening in the seasons simply because they know the weather essentially is controlling their destiny.

They know when the frosts come in the fall. They also know when the last of those frosts leaves, so they can then make sure, as their plants start sprouting from the ground, they have the possibility of growing a crop. They also know, as they watch the clouds that come over the horizon, that when those clouds have a certain look of white on them, there is a possibility there is a hailstorm on the way, and that crop they have worked on—for which they have plowed the ground and planted the seeds and put in the fertilizer and done the irrigation and have nurtured—all of a sudden, in the course of a few minutes, could all be gone because a hailstorm wipes out the entire field.

That certainly has happened to my family. It has happened to me, and it has happened to those of us in this Chamber who have been involved in agriculture in our past. From one second to the next, what seems to be a promising and hopeful year—where you can be optimistic about the future and be in a position where you can make ends meet—can turn into a situation where all of a sudden you have to wonder whether you are going to be able to survive into the next year because you do not have the dollars to be able to pay off your operating line at the local bank. That happens time and time again across rural America.

For example, when you look at the issue of drought, in my State of Colorado, as is the case in many parts of eastern Kansas and some parts of the Presiding Officer's State of Nebraska, we know what drought has done to our communities. We know what drought has done in places such as the home State of the Senator from South Dakota over the last several years.

That is why in this body we have come together—the Presiding Officer, Senator THUNE from South Dakota, Senator CONRAD, Senator DORGAN—a whole host of us, to try to deal with the reality of disaster emergencies that affect rural communities in agriculture.

This picture I have in the Chamber has to do with the story of a farmer in my State who, through no fault of his own, has had to weather now the 6 years of drought that has affected my State that has put many farmers in a position where they either have lost their farms or have gotten to the brink of losing their farms.

But it is not just the droughts. For sure, we have had those droughts. For sure, in my State, I guess 6 years ago now, in 2001, we had the most horrific drought in the history of our State for an over 500-year period of time. It was the driest year on record for 500 years. The consequence of that was our farmers and our ranchers in rural Colorado suffered a great deal.

But it is not just the drought. It also comes with other weather-related events, such as a blizzard. I show you a picture of the blizzard that hit the southeastern part of my State, where thousands upon thousands upon thousands of cattle were killed because of this unexpected blizzard that piled up drifts that were as high as the telephone and utility posts we see in this picture.

You could drive across the southeastern part of Colorado and see carcass after carcass of cattle—dead cattle—on the highways and throughout the fields because of this devastating storm that had knocked out the future of so many ranchers in my State. So it is important we move forward in the proactive manner in which this legislation has moved forward to create a disaster emergency fund.

Typically, in Washington, when we see these kinds of disasters, what hap-

pens? How do we respond to the farmers and ranchers who provide the food security for our Nation? We move forward and say we must provide disaster emergency assistance.

The process, in its typical fashion, follows this order: First, the Governor gets concerned, and then the U.S. Department of Agriculture declares a disaster. Following that, Congress authorizes emergency spending. The bill sometimes gets stalled, and then farmers and ranchers have to wait not weeks, sometimes months, and, in fact, sometimes 2, 3 years before there is any help on the way.

That kind of wait, in many cases, is no help at all. So we must do things differently. We must do things differently because, first of all, we are not delivering disaster assistance efficiently and effectively. Second, we should not be relying on emergency spending to provide disaster assistance. We need to put these expenditures back on the books.

(Ms. KLOBUCHAR assumed the Chair.)

Mr. SALAZAR. Madam President, Congress has passed 23 other ad hoc disaster assistance bills since 1988. Since 1988, 23 ad hoc disaster assistance measures have been passed by the Congress.

Now, if this is not an indicator of the need for the creation of a permanent mechanism to deal with these disasters in farm country, I do not know what better indicator we need. Twenty-three emergency disaster pieces of legislation have passed this Congress since 1988.

I am supportive of that assistance, but we need to deal with this problem in an effective way and on a long-term basis. That is what we have done in the legislation. The members of the Agriculture Committee—and the Presiding Officer, as a member of that committee, has done a tremendous job in her freshman year as a Senator, contributing in a huge way to many of the titles we have included in the farm bill, including helping write significant portions of title IX, the energy part of the farm bill. I am very proud of her contribution.

But what we have done in this bill with respect to permanent disaster assistance is to work with Senator GRASSLEY and Senator BAUCUS and members of the Finance Committee, in a proactive way, to create a permanent trust fund for disaster assistance.

The disaster trust fund will dedicate over \$5 billion during the next 5 years to disaster relief. This will allow us to maintain discipline and high standards for determining when to pay out disaster funds, and it will allow producers to get help more quickly. The trust fund also brings disaster relief back onto the books so it is part of the budget of the national Government. This is a smart and fiscally responsible move.

I have spent a lot of time in my life in rural communities—living there, making a living there for part of my

life—and as a Senator and as attorney general for my State, I have been in all 64 counties in my State many times over the last decade.

Now, I do not buy the argument that all is well in farm country. I believe we have huge problems in farm country.

During the 1990s, in my State of Colorado, many of the counties in my State were deemed to be some of the fastest growing, more robust economic counties in terms of growth in the United States of America. The State of Colorado was seen as one of the fastest growing States in the entire Nation, and everybody was singing hallelujah to the kind of economic blessings that were being showered upon my State of Colorado. But if you traveled through 44 of the 64 counties in my State, you would have to say those counties were, in fact, doing as badly as they were in the 1970s and the 1980s and the 1990s. Indeed, not much has changed. In fact, the economic decline, including population decline, in those counties continues to be a reality and a way of life. In many of those communities where there used to be three grocery stores, now they were down to zero, and in many of them perhaps one. In many of those places where there used to be three filling stations, they were down to zero filling stations and perhaps only one.

In fact, in the town closest to our ranch, the town of Manasa, CO—this is a story of what has happened there. When I was growing up there and going to school at Manasa Elementary, I remember the three stores on Main Street. I remember the gas stations on Main Street. Well, today we are down to one gas station, and we are down to one small grocery store in the town of Manasa. So not all is well in farm country.

So today and this week and next week as we work on this farm bill, it is our effort to try to make sure rural America is revitalized. So this is an opportunity for us to make sure we reinvigorate and revitalize rural America and create a whole new chapter of opportunity.

This disaster trust fund which we are creating will help us deal with disasters. The other parts of the farm bill will also create huge opportunities for rural America.

I will conclude by saying this—because there will be other times when we will come to talk about other parts of this farm bill. For me, one of the most exciting chapters of this farm bill for 2007 is, we are creating the opportunity for rural America, for farmers and ranchers to help grow our way to energy independence. This is not a Democratic or a Republican issue; it is not a progressive or a conservative issue. This is an issue of national security for the United States of America. That is why so many people have come together to celebrate this agenda that we are embracing on a clean energy future for America. That clean energy future for the 21st century for America,

in my mind, is based on the inescapable drivers which we see here today.

First, it is about national security because as so many people have said, our addiction to foreign oil must come to an end because it is jeopardizing the national security of the United States of America.

Secondly, the environmental security of our country requires us to stop ignoring the problem of global warming, and what we do with energy is inextricably mixed in with how we confront the issue of global warming.

Finally, the economic opportunity that comes along with embracing a clean energy future for America is an incredible opportunity for all of the United States of America, but it presents a particularly positive opportunity for rural America. That is why there are many Members of this Chamber who have come together and supported the passage of a resolution which was crafted by Senator GRASSLEY and myself, which is called the "25 by 25" resolution, which sets forth a vision of a country where we will see our country produce 25 percent of all of our energy needs from renewable energy resources.

So at the end of the day, the passage of this farm bill is important for a lot of reasons. It is important for our food security, our national security, our environmental security, our economic security. So we do not have an option on this bill. We cannot not pass this bill. This bill must pass this Chamber with a significant bipartisan vote, as I am sure that it will, and at the end of the day, it is my hope President Bush, as President of the United States, will stand up also for rural America and say he is going to sign this bill because it is so necessary for the future of America and for the future of rural America.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Colorado for his comments, and the Presiding Officer, also members of the Agriculture Committee. We all worked together as has been mentioned. This was a bipartisan effort, and the product, I believe, has broad bipartisan support not only in the Agriculture Committee, but I think in the entire Senate.

It is important we get this bill under consideration. We are currently being blocked from considering amendments to it, and I hope the majority leader and the leadership on our side can come to some agreement about how we are going to proceed with regard to amendments because we don't have a lot of time left on the clock this year. It is critical that we get a farm bill passed so our producers across this country who are already beginning to make decisions about next year when it comes to planting, and lenders who are going to finance them, have some certainty about what the programs are going to be, what the rules are going to be as they begin to engage in making those decisions.

So I hope we can get this bill moving. It has been on the floor now for the past few days. "On the floor," I use that term loosely because for all intents and purposes, action on it has been stalled. It is important that we come to an agreement about how we are going to proceed and what amendments we are going to debate and vote upon. But we need to get a bill through the Senate and into conference with the House and, hopefully, eventually on the President's desk before the end of the year.

I do want to express my appreciation to the leadership on the committee: Senator HARKIN, the chairman of the Agriculture Committee, and the ranking member, Senator CHAMBLISS, for their efforts and leadership on the bill; also, my colleague from North Dakota, Senator CONRAD, who is chairman of the Budget Committee, and Senators BAUCUS and GRASSLEY, who are chair and ranking member, respectively, of the Finance Committee for their efforts in helping us craft funding that would allow the Agriculture Committee to draft a workable and what I believe is an effective farm bill which will move agriculture forward for the next 5 years.

As was noted by my colleague from Colorado, writing farm policy is more regional than it is political. I commend my colleagues on the Agriculture Committee who represent literally every geographic region in the United States for their tenacity in representing the interests of their State as we drafted the farm bill. Most of all, I commend them for the respect they have exhibited throughout this farm bill drafting process to the various needs of each Member's State.

Also, together the committee has drafted a bill I believe is something we can go home and talk proudly about not only in South Dakota to my farmers and ranchers, but also to our Native American tribes and to every man, woman, and child in South Dakota and across this country who enjoy the safest, most affordable food supply in the world.

The 2002 farm bill, which I helped draft as a member of the House Agriculture Committee, very successfully provided economic support to America's farmers and ranchers when prices dropped below the cost of production. Yet this same farm bill—this same farm bill saved American taxpayers \$20 billion over 5 years when prices improved and its economic safety net components were not triggered, which is good policy, and precisely the way it was intended to work.

Thanks to the success of the 2002 farm bill, we had \$22 billion less in the Commodity Credit Corporation baseline to write the 5-year, 2007 farm bill than CBO had estimated in 2002.

This farm bill addresses three of my highest priorities for the 2007 farm bill, and I would like to speak briefly, if I might, to each of those. As I said earlier, first, it must provide an economic safety net for American agriculture.

Today's farmers and ranchers face multiple uncertainties thanks mostly to the weather. Yet our Nation's farmers and ranchers not only feed every American, they help feed billions of others across the globe. They are expected to provide this food economically—and have done so—often at prices lower than their production costs. Thankfully, commodity and livestock prices are higher now than they have been for most of the past decade, but so are input costs such as fuel, fertilizer, and chemicals. Those things have all gone up as well. The 2007 farm bill needs to continue with safety net provisions that support agriculture when commodity prices drop because input prices will not drop accordingly.

The provision in this farm bill which extends the current farm bill countercyclical program accomplishes this price protection. Yet as I stated earlier, it is of no cost to taxpayers when commodity prices reach the levels we are experiencing now.

Permanent disaster coverage is another farm bill essential I have been fighting for over the past several years, and I am pleased it is also included in the 2007 farm bill.

In agriculture's uncertain economic future, direct and countercyclical payments, a permanent disaster program, and a healthy crop insurance industry are all important to a sound economic future for South Dakota agriculture.

So the economic safety net for American agriculture is a critically important priority in this farm bill. It is addressed. It maintains the basic framework that has worked so well from the 2002 farm bill which, as I said earlier, actually has saved the taxpayers billions of dollars over what was projected at the time because as prices went up, commodity prices went up, subsidy payments went down, which is precisely the way the farm bill was designed to work. We build upon that in the safety net of the 2007 farm bill.

The second priority we need to have in this bill is this farm bill needs to include alternative energy development and expansion. Alternative energy; namely, corn-based ethanol, has already changed the American agricultural landscape and has given many farmers and local economies renewed hope for the future. However, we recognize the limitations placed on corn-based ethanol, simply due to the number of acres that can be devoted each year in this country to producing corn. Thanks to the groundwork that was laid by corn-based ethanol, cellulosic ethanol is positioned to complement corn ethanol.

The energy title in this farm bill contains the sustainable cellulosic ethanol production incentives that were laid out in my Biofuels Innovation Program legislation, which I introduced earlier this year along with Senator BEN NELSON from Nebraska. Cellulosic ethanol produced competitively will not occur on its own. It is imperative these incentives are included in the 2007 farm

bill to kick-start the cellulosic ethanol industry.

The energy title in this bill also includes \$25 million in mandatory spending for the Sun Grant Initiative, which is already established in land grant universities across the United States and which has made great strides in research and development of cellulosic ethanol.

I want to come back to that point in just a minute, but I also want to address what I think is the third important priority in this particular farm bill and that is a sound conservation title.

Conservation should not compete with production agriculture; rather, it should complement it.

Along with uncertain weather conditions, our Nation's agricultural landscape with its fertile and productive farmland is also peppered with millions of acres of marginal and fragile lands. The conservation title of this farm bill includes an assortment of conservation programs that include tools for farmers and ranchers to exercise sound land stewardship in unison with maximizing crop production.

My home State of South Dakota is unique in that along with its high ranking as an agricultural State, wildlife and outdoor recreation contribute mightily to its economy as well. I believe the conservation title included in this farm bill will assist South Dakota farmers and ranchers in their efforts to maximize agricultural output, protect and enhance its fragile lands, and help keep our State's recreational industry vibrant and healthy.

Additionally, \$20 million is provided per year to fund the Open Fields Initiative. Open fields underwrites State programs, such as the 1 million-acre program in South Dakota that offers incentives to farmers and ranchers who voluntarily open their land to hunting and fishing.

I believe this farm bill targets a higher percentage of Federal farm program payments to family-sized farming operations. Several modifications to payment caps and the elimination of the three entity rule included in this bill are a step in the right direction to providing assistance where it is most needed: to family farmers and ranchers across America.

However, those who criticize farm policy must be careful in their characterizations of "large-scale" farmers. A family farming operation consisting of a father and one or more offspring in today's agricultural scale can easily gross several million dollars, while providing a modest living to the family members. We don't want to shut the door of these family operations by taking away economic safety net programs or the conservation tools they need to productively farm.

Americans' health and nutrition is a major consideration in this farm bill as well. For example, of the total budget outlays in this farm bill, 67 percent of the amount falls under the nutrition

title, compared to less than 15 percent for the commodity title, and 9 percent for the conservation title. In the Senate farm bill, the Fruit and Vegetable Program, a part of the School Lunch Act which was previously restricted to a number of States, would be expanded to operate in every State in the country. Additional funding would be made available to each State based upon the proportion of the population of a State to the population of the United States.

Additionally, a provision I offered, which is included in the farm bill, expands the fresh fruits and vegetables School Lunch Program to over 100 Indian reservations nationwide.

Mr. President, one of the problems we encounter when drafting farm legislation, when commodity and livestock prices are higher, is the perception that these high prices will last. A farm bill lasts only 5 years. We have no guarantee current prices will remain steady for the next 5 years. Anybody who has been associated with production agriculture for any period of time will tell you these prices we are experiencing currently are not going to last permanently.

The 1996 farm bill was written during a higher commodity price cycle, with not enough thought given to how the policy would work when prices dropped. During the last 2 years of that farm cycle, billions of dollars in market loss assistance payments were issued because of an inadequate "safety net."

The current direct payments structure included in this farm bill is a fixed payment based upon historical planting, not current crops, yields, or prices. This decoupling keeps the United States more compliant with international trade agreements.

Mr. President, I encourage my colleagues to support this farm bill. I ask them to carefully consider the countless hours of discussion and negotiations, the numerous field hearings held by the Agriculture Committee across the country, and the voices of the American people that have been heeded by the Agriculture Committee in writing this bill.

As noted earlier, this is not a perfect bill. There has been no perfect farm bill in my experience, and I have been associated with several as a former staffer, and now as a Member of the Senate, and prior to that, as a Member of the House of Representatives.

This is a balanced farm bill that will make America a better place for all of us and will make rural America stronger. It includes the important components I talked about: A strong safety net that includes the disaster title of the bill, which is something we fought long and hard for; a strong energy policy that will help encourage and provide financial incentives for the development of cellulosic ethanol production in this country; and a strong conservation title and, as I said earlier, a tremendous investment in the nutrition title of the bill. It is all done in a way the CBO says is paid for.

I think it is important, as we move the bill forward, we help people across this country understand what is at stake in a farm bill. I think a lot of people across the country sometimes fail to grasp the importance of making sure we have a safe and reliable and affordable food supply in this country. If you look at other countries in the world—such as in Europe—they know what it is like to go hungry.

One of the reasons we have had farm policies in place for some time is because Americans learned during the Great Depression we have to have a strong farm economy that meets the food needs of people in this country.

The other thing I will mention—and I will come back to it because I said I would—is that this traditionally has been a farm bill that deals with food and fiber for the American people. I believe we are making a transition as well. In this particular farm bill, it is not just about food and fiber, it is also about fuel. I believe we have a responsibility as Members of Congress to do everything we can to lessen our dependence upon foreign sources of energy. I am deeply concerned about the future of this country when oil prices are approaching \$100 a barrel and gas is over \$3 a gallon, with no end in sight. We have little or no control over that because 65 percent of our petroleum comes from outside the United States from foreign cartels.

I happen to believe, as a matter of principle and practice, it is better for us, as a country, when it comes to buying our energy, to buy it from an American farmer where we are adding jobs and growing the economy in this country than giving our money to some foreign cartel that might use it to fund a terrorist organization that will turn around and attack the United States. That is why the energy policy of this particular farm bill is so important.

I have an amendment that has been filed, along with Senators DOMENICI, DORGAN, JOHNSON, and NELSON—I believe the Presiding Officer is on it as well—which would expand the renewable fuels standard beyond where it is today. The standard we adopted in the 2005 farm bill calls for 7.5 billion gallons of renewable energy by 2012.

Mr. President, we are going to hit 7.5 billion gallons by the end of this year. It is important for those who are investing in the ethanol industry, for our farmers and for those making decisions about whether to build another plant—and a lot are planned and under construction. We have 13 ethanol plants in South Dakota, and four are under construction. We have ethanol plants all across the country in some phase of construction that have been stopped cold because of the uncertainty about the future of the industry. When we blow by 7.5 billion gallons of production of ethanol, we need to know what the future holds.

The Energy bill contained a provision that expanded the renewable fuels

standard to 36 billion gallons by 2022. We have said we hope the Energy bill passes, but in the event it doesn't—and that looks to be uncertain—we ought to try to get that renewable fuels standard passed as part of this farm bill. It improves and strengthens the energy title in the farm bill by guaranteeing there is a market not only 10 years from now, or in 2022, when it calls for 36 billion gallons, but next year, in 2008, when we have already gone by the 7.5 billion-gallon cap called for in the 2005 bill.

This amendment would get us to 8.5 billion gallons by next year. So there would be another billion gallons of ethanol production called for in the renewable fuels standard. That is of immediate concern to this industry. We need to grow the industry. If you look at the statistics, in 2006, the production and use of ethanol in the United States reduced oil imports by 170 million barrels, saving \$11 billion from being sent to foreign and sometimes hostile countries.

This is an industry we need to continue to support. When we get 65 percent of our petroleum needs outside of the United States, it is critical we continue to develop home-grown energy we can make from renewable sources in the United States, which is not only good for the economy and the environment, but for our energy security. I hope during the course of the farm bill debate, when decisions are being made about which amendments to allow to be considered and debated and voted upon, the renewable fuels standard amendment is on that list. I think it is that important. I don't think there is anything, frankly, more important that we can be doing, with the exception of ensuring there is a good, strong safety net in the bill that will help secure American agriculture for the future, help keep this growing renewable fuels industry prospering and expanding and doing what they do best, and that is reducing our dependence upon foreign energy, having a renewable fuels standard in place that expands dramatically beyond where we are today.

As I said before, there are great incentives in this bill for cellulosic ethanol production. People say we are running out of room or ceiling when it comes to corn-based ethanol. That may be true. We believe it is about 15 billion gallons that we can get from corn, and then we have to figure out how to make it out of some other form of biomass. But there is investment going on in R&D and technologies that, I believe, is going to be commercialized in the near future that will allow us to use switchgrass, wood chips, and other types of biomass. There is a project in South Dakota right now to make cellulosic ethanol from corncobs on a commercial scale. According to POET Energy, using more of the corn crop for ethanol production, such as corncobs, will be able to produce 11 percent more ethanol from a bushel of corn and 27 percent more from an acre of corn.

So we are already beginning to make a transition from the kernel of corn to the cob and dramatically increase the amount we can produce. Couple that with the research going into producing ethanol from switchgrass, blue stem grass, wood chips, and other types of biomass, the sky is the limit.

It is important we keep this going. We are facing a serious crisis, in my view, if we don't expand the renewable fuels standard. Frankly, I hope we increase the blends that are allowed of ethanol, blended with a gallon of gasoline, from the current 10 percent to a higher level—I hope to 20 percent—which would act in a dramatic way to double the market for ethanol. These are steps we need to be taking as a country, as a Congress, if we are serious—and we need to be serious—about this problem we have today of nearly \$100 a barrel of oil, with no end in sight to where it is going, and us having no control of that because we are so dependent upon foreign sources of energy.

The amount of ethanol we produce in this country, it could be argued, maybe isn't all that significant to the amount of gasoline we use—7.5 billion gallons of ethanol, and we use about 140 billion gallons of gasoline every year. When you talk about displacing 170 million barrels of oil, saving \$11 billion from being sent overseas to some foreign country, a foreign cartel, that is \$11 billion that is staying right here on American soil, investing in American jobs and in the American economy.

This is an industry we need to keep going. I hope the renewable fuels standard amendment will be included in that list and, as the bill progresses through the process, I hope we can get a product through in the near future so that we can pass it, go to conference with the House and, hopefully, ultimately, get a bill on the President's desk. At that point, we will have the challenge of getting the President to sign the bill.

I think the bill is made stronger by these energy provisions being included because I think it is so important to America's future—not just to the future of agriculture in South Dakota or Colorado or places like that, but to America's future. This farm bill takes us in a great direction, and the renewable fuels standard amendment will make it that much stronger.

I hope we can get into the deliberations about this and that we can get working on amendments and voting on amendments and getting a bill passed, with a big bipartisan vote, that we can send to conference and on to the White House that will put in place a policy for the next 5 years that will make agriculture strong, make America competitive in the world marketplace, and make sure we have food, fiber, and fuel for America's future.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TESTER). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COMMITTING TO VETERANS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to talk about something that has been a priority for me and for many of my colleagues; that is, our veterans. As we all know, Sunday is Veterans Day, the day that is designated for us to thank our Nation's heroes for their service to our country. It is also a time to ask whether our country has done enough to repay our veterans for all they have given to secure our safety.

As thousands return home from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, some now from their fifth tour of duty, I wish I could say the answer to that question is yes. But, tragically, this has not yet been an issue of priority for this administration. We have too often failed to provide the care our heroes have earned. From the shameful conditions at Walter Reed and VA facilities around the country we saw earlier this year, to a lack of mental health counselors, to a benefits claims backlog of months—and I am even hearing years—our veterans have had to really struggle to get basic care. Fighting overseas takes a tremendous toll, as we know, on the lives of our troops and their families.

It is unacceptable to me that those heroes have had to fight their own Government for the treatment they have been promised. So today I wanted to come out on the floor to talk to my colleagues and to talk to President Bush about the hurdles our veterans have faced. As we approach this Veterans Day, I hope all of us, especially the President, will reaffirm our commitment to our veterans by providing the money, the attention, and the leadership they deserve.

I know from personal experience how military service affects veterans and their families and how the wounds veterans suffer from their military service will shape their lives forever.

When I was a student in college at Washington State University, I was there during the Vietnam War, and I chose to do my internship at the Seattle VA. I was 19 years old when I headed off to the Seattle VA, a time when men and women who were my own age were coming home wounded from Vietnam. Every day I got on the elevator at the VA Hospital and rode up to the seventh floor and walked into the psychiatric ward, where those big, heavy doors shut behind me. Day after day, during my entire internship, I sat and watched these young men and women, who were my age, as some of them just stared blankly, some of them

screamed in anger, many of them felt cut off from their own country, and most of them felt their lives had changed forever. As a volunteer at the VA during that time, I learned how some of these veterans can easily slip through the cracks.

That experience also taught me that the doctors and the nurses who are there at the VA are really dedicated to trying to take care of these young men and women. It convinced me that the VA system is where our veterans can get the best care. Our VA system is uniquely positioned in this country to recognize and treat those specialized injuries, those medical conditions, and those mental health challenges which are caused by combat and military missions. Private medicine doesn't always have the knowledge base or the resources to deal with the unique challenges of a war. That is one reason I will continue to fight for better access to the VA, access that allows our veterans to get the care they need without the endless waits and redtape. Rather than kicking our veterans into yet another maze of processing and another maze of paperwork, we ought to be working every single day until we get it right, to provide better access to one of the best health care systems in the country to those men and women who have answered the call.

I know from my own experience in my own family veterans are sometimes reluctant to seek attention or care they need. My own father was a veteran of World War II. He was one of the first soldiers into Okinawa. When he arrived, he was greeted with mortar. He was injured quite badly. He was put on a ship and sent to Hawaii, where he was in a hospital for weeks, recovering from those wounds. I believe he was there about 3 months. At the end of that time, he was then sent back to war.

He was a courageous young man of 19 at the time. I didn't know him, obviously. He hadn't yet married my mother. I wasn't even a thought for him. I grew up with my dad. He was a disabled veteran. He was in a wheelchair for most of my life. Yet the story I told you he never told me. How had I found out that my dad was wounded and sent to a hospital and recovered under painful circumstances and sent back to war? I found out after he died, when I found his diary. That is the typical thing I hear from veterans. They are reluctant to tell us of the heroes they are.

Those two experiences in my life, working at the VA when I was 19 and finding my dad's diary years later, help to illustrate a larger lesson that applies to many of our veterans that we need to remember in the Senate and Congress as we develop our policies, and that is often these veterans do not want to call attention to their service. Sometimes they are suffering so much they don't ask for the help they need.

That is why I am so devoted to making sure we have a VA system that is

ready and able and capable of taking care of all the men and women who served our country—all of our veterans. Sadly, as we both know, we are now 5½-plus years into the war in Iraq. Today we know that the VA is struggling to provide some of the basic services for our veterans. It is surprising to me it took President Bush nearly 3 months to announce his head of the VA to lead this beleaguered system. For 3 months, our VA has been languishing without strong leadership to address the challenges they have. His lack of leadership on that critical appointment sent a signal to me, and to a lot of people, that he is not focused on that cost of war and he is not focused on our aging veterans who are now going into the system, who are facing long waiting lines and not getting appointments. It underscores to me his failure to count our veterans as a part of the cost of this war.

This week we learned the year of 2007 will go down as the deadliest year of the war in Iraq; this year, right now, the deadliest year of the war in Iraq. I know my heart and the heart of the Presiding Officer go out to the families of nearly 4,000 brave Americans who have made the ultimate sacrifice in this war and to the tens of thousands more who have returned with physical and mental illness.

The physical wounds our veterans have suffered in Iraq and Afghanistan are horrendous. I have worked, along with the Presiding Officer, as a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee to help shine a light on the mental wounds so many of our veterans are suffering from this war. As he and I know, these injuries are very deep and very personal and they can be very devastating, both to that servicemember and to his family.

This problem is still not getting the attention it needs from this administration. We all know our troops are under tremendous strain. In the past, we were always able to give our servicemembers a break in service to allow them time off from the frontlines to recover from their physical or psychological or emotional demands. We also know some of them are now serving in their third and fourth and even fifth tours in this war in Iraq. All of that increases the likelihood they will suffer post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental health conditions when they come home. In fact, according to our VA's own numbers, fully a third of all our returning Iraq veterans suffer from a mental health condition.

That is an astounding statistic, one-third of the men and women who have gone to Iraq and Afghanistan come home with mental health conditions that need treatment and support. But I also know that statistic is probably too low. That is because many of our veterans today do not seek care, either because of the stigma of mental health problems or because they live in a community where they do not know whom to ask. Today the VA is not reaching

out and trying to find these men and women, to bring them in, to give them the support and services they need. I have talked to one too many veterans myself who has told me: I didn't know that I could get care at the VA. I didn't know whom I could call.

We have a lot of work to do. Earlier this year, I went to Camp Murray and spoke with some of the National Guard members who told me they did not want to be labeled with PTSD or traumatic brain injury. They had gone to Iraq and come home and they were deathly afraid of having that label on them because they thought it would hurt their career. One soldier even told me that to be labeled with a mental trauma, "jeopardizes his life outside the service."

Clearly, this administration and every American needs to work to change that perception, because a soldier who is at home and doesn't seek the needed care is an explosive timebomb in his family and his community. More than that, we owe them the support and care they deserve. That is part of our job, to make sure these soldiers aren't lost when they come home.

We have a lot of work to do as well to ensure that when our servicemembers do try to get care, they do not have to struggle to navigate this horrendous system they are thrown into to get the treatment they need. So far we have not seen that happening. Last year, a VA official revealed some of the clinics in this country do not provide mental health care or substance abuse care. Or, if they do, and this was a VA official himself who said this, "waiting lists render that care virtually inaccessible." In other words, that VA official was saying, because the care is not there, we are denying the servicemembers the treatment they need.

I held a hearing on the issue of mental health care in Tacoma, WA, my home State, a few months ago. Dan Purcell—he is an Iraq veteran—spoke to me and summed up the frustration I think is felt by so many of the servicemembers I have taken the time to talk to. He said to me he felt like he was being "treated as a tool that could be casually discarded when broken or found to be no longer useful."

Can you imagine? A young man who went to serve his country in Iraq, served all of us, fought for our safety and security—no matter how we feel about this war—felt like he was discarded when he came home. That is not how any of us want the men and women who serve this country to feel.

I think it is shameful our veterans today, across this country, are forced to fight to get the mental health care they need. A lot of them struggle to even see a doctor, and they are forced to wait months or even years to get their claims processed.

Across the country, veterans who have health problems are given different ratings and different benefits. In 2003, the administration, surprisingly,

closed the door to VA health care for new Priority 8 veterans. Some veterans tell me it feels like the VA is fighting them instead of fighting for them. That is unconscionable.

When this war ends—and we all pray it will be soon—when the news fades and the conflicts become another page in our history books, we have to be here to make sure the commitment to our veterans does not fade along with that.

I wished to come to the floor this afternoon to highlight, on Veterans Day, how important it is that we recognize the men and women who serve us; how important our job is to make sure we provide the care. But I am not here just to say what they should do. I think it is important to talk about what we should do.

I think there are three clear areas where we can do a much better job, where we can improve. First of all, I believe we can work to make sure the mental health care needs of our veterans are met. We need to work to make sure the VA does all it can to raise the awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder and combat-related stress. We have to do everything we can to make sure they hire more counselors to help treat everyone, from the 20-year-old veteran returning from Iraq to the Vietnam veteran who is still struggling with his legacy of war.

We need to make sure all the employees throughout our VA system understand PTSD, so it isn't the receptionist who answers the phone who, when a veteran says to her: I can't get to sleep at night or I am having nightmares or I can't remember where my keys are or my kids don't understand me anymore, says: Well, let me see if I can get you an appointment. We have one 3 months from now. We need everyone, including the people who answer the phone, to understand post-traumatic stress syndrome and make sure we are reaching out and finding these veterans and getting them the care they need.

Next, we need to work with the VA to clear up that horrendous backlog of complaints our veterans are facing so they can finally get timely care. I hope the President signs legislation soon to ensure the Department of Defense and the VA are working with the same disability rating system and that records are not lost between those two systems.

We have worked hard in the Senate to address that issue, since the Walter Reed scandal broke. That legislation is within the Defense authorization. I hope we can get it to the President soon, that he signs it, and that the VA and DOD finally break apart those barriers that tell them they cannot talk to each other or will not talk to each other, and they can figure out a disability system that does not put our veterans into some kind of chaos between two bureaucratic systems.

Finally, most important, we, Congress, have to provide enough money so our veterans do get the quality health

care they deserve. The Senate has approved a bill that provides about \$4 billion more than the President asked us for that is going to take some important steps. It is going to improve the conditions at our VA facilities around the country—such as we saw at Walter Reed. That was symbolic of what is happening in our country, and we have to put the resources into these VA facilities so our veterans do not face these dilapidated conditions. We have to invest in new ways to treat military health ailments such as PTSD and traumatic brain injury. We don't know the best care for our veterans yet. We don't know all the outcomes of PTSD and all the treatments available, and our VA has to have the dollars to do that research so we can provide the best care possible.

That bill provides funding for better prosthetics for thousands of troops who have lost limbs in battle. I know the Presiding Officer and I have both talked with veterans and I have to tell you, the veterans coming home today who lose a limb in this war, they want to be able to climb Mount Rainier. They want to be able to run in a marathon. They want to be able to get up and be part of our society, our communities, and their families. We owe that to them, and better research on prosthetics and the capability of providing that to them is incredibly important. We provide for the research and the dollars in this bill to do that.

It is so frustrating to me that this administration has ignored these problems for so long. We, in the Democratic-controlled Congress, came in this year and we have taken action so now I hope the President supports this critical bill and proves his commitment to veterans as well.

The men and women in uniform have answered the President's call to serve in Iraq and Afghanistan without hesitation or complaint. They have left their loved ones for years. They have put their own lives on the line. Some have come home without limbs; others have returned with mental scars. Some, thankfully, have escaped without any injury. But everyone, to a person, has earned the respect and the best care possible when they come home. If we do not care for our servicemembers now, we will be weakening our military for decades to come.

President Bush has been more than willing to use our veterans as props when he argues in favor of this misguided war. I think it is time to turn that lipservice into reality and give our veterans the care they need and they deserve. We owe it to our country to ensure we are there to support our servicemembers, to support our veterans, and to support their families every single step of the way. Mr. President, I know, as you do, that this country is willing to do that, unlike in some of our previous conflicts.

I did not support the war, but I support the men and women who serve in it, and I will work every day to make

sure we do our job to care for them when they come home, and I know all Americans feel the way I do. The men and women who serve us are part of the cost of war, and may we never forget that.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE). The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thought I would talk about agriculture and the farm bill today. I have a number of amendments I would like to offer. For example, I have one that we hope will spur the planting of cellulosic feedstock on CRP land, which I think is necessary if we are going to go to cellulosic ethanol, growing switchgrass on CRP land, maintaining the Conservation Reserve Program requirements, and providing a reduced payment, CRP payment, in exchange for allowing that switchgrass to be harvested for cellulosic ethanol. That is just one of the steps we need to take in renewable fuels.

Today, I have filed an amendment at the desk called the Farm Red Tape Reduction Act. I think it is very important to give farmers a voice in Federal rulemaking whenever a Federal regulation threatens to impose severe economic pain on farmers. As we saw with small business, many times the Government overlooks the plight of the little guy who does not have the resources or know-how to weigh in with big Government agencies in Washington.

In 1976, Congress created the Office of Advocacy to ensure that small businesses have an advocate in Government and a seat at the table when new regulations affecting them are drafted. I wish to share that same success with farmers. We also did something along the same lines in the Small Business Committee about 10 years ago. We introduced—I introduced and we passed something called the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act, or SBREFA. That has allowed small businesses and small business advocates to have a say in regulations affecting them.

I believe we need to do the same thing for farmers. This amendment would help provide a more transparent Government, ensure that the Government listens to the people most affected by the regulations, and it would hold the Government accountable for its action. It is a message I think we all want to take to our constituents; that is, the Federal Government is meant to serve its citizens, not bully them. We want to make it an easy

process. Citizens should be heard while Government is deciding on a regulation that affects them, not after the decision is made.

The difference is subtle but important: Listen to farmers and agriculture first, to be inclusive. Cutting unnecessary redtape will provide greater flexibility for agricultural businesses by removing barriers to enterprise. Encouraging enterprise is essential if the United States is to compete in a global environment. Farms and other agricultural businesses will benefit from simplified rules. This measure will help in cutting redtape with a view to improving the environment for agriculture and business.

My experience on the Small Business Committee tells me there are currently dozens of regulatory proposals before Federal agencies but most without a true assessment of the impact on the very people they will affect. What are the initiatives necessary? Are they all essential? What are the consequences? I want the agencies to look into that question.

It is not my intention to throw out regulations simply as a matter of principle if, for example, they involve costs for agriculture. I am more concerned with obtaining solid impact analysis that can serve as a basis for informed decisionmaking. It is also quite clear that better regulations will be possible only if those affected also play their part since they will be responsible for implementation.

I ask my colleagues to support this amendment.

CARBON CAP

Speaking of burdens, Mr. President, this morning the Environment Committee conducted a hearing on the proposed Lieberman-Warner carbon cap legislation. I addressed then how I think this proposed legislation will hurt farmers in the farm economy.

As part of the farm bill discussion, I want people who are focusing on agriculture and the impact on farmers to know what could be happening to them if we were to pass the Lieberman-Warner bill. Now, I have great respect for both of these gentlemen. I also am concerned about reducing emissions, but I believe this legislation will be very expensive for them. It will make it much more expensive for all of us cooling our homes in the summer, heating them in the winter. It will make more expensive the electricity we need to light our homes. It will make more expensive the gasoline we need to power our cars and trucks.

An economist at that hearing today gave testimony that the Lieberman-Warner bill would cost American families and workers at least \$4 trillion—that is trillion with a “t”—\$4 trillion over the life of the bill. She expects a net loss of some 1.2 million jobs by 2015, and annual losses of U.S. production will top \$160 billion in 2015, rising to at least \$800 billion to \$1 trillion in production lost per year in the out-years.

The bill’s sponsors have tried to say that farmers will be spared some of the pain by goodies they put in the bill, but no farmer should fail to understand that the farm costs of this bill far outweigh its benefit.

Already record-high prices farmers now face will go even higher under Lieberman-Warner. For years, ammonia fertilizer cost farmers \$250 dollars a ton. No one thought it would break through \$400, and now we have seen \$500 per ton. Even corn at \$6 a bushel cannot support where fertilizer prices are heading. As one who buys a small amount of fertilizer, 13-13-13 fertilizer, I have seen the cost of fertilizer go up because nitrogen very often comes from natural gas. Well, Lieberman-Warner would make expensive fertilizers’ main ingredients much more expensive.

Now, electric utilities competing for natural gas to meet their own cap requirements can pay higher natural gas prices and then just pass them on to all of us as consumers of natural gas. But farmers will have to look to Middle East countries to import their fertilizer. That would make farmers dependent on Persian Gulf imports. Farmers will also face higher fuel costs to run their trucks and tractors, higher drying costs, and higher transportation costs to get their products to market.

The Lieberman-Warner ag offset program could decimate small farm communities. Electric utilities that lack the technologies to cut emissions to levels demanded by the bill will have to take full advantage of the bill’s so-called offset provisions. They will have billions of dollars to spend to retire cropland for its sequestration benefits. Those of us from farm country know the existing Conservation Reserve Program authorized through the farm bill has already taken more than 30 million acres out of production. The CRP is a conservation success. I support it. But that program has limits that prevent harm to local economies such as capping participation at 25 percent in any given county.

Nevertheless, we would be potentially taking even far more land out of production, land we need to ensure that our abundant food supply for people at home and export markets is met by farmers. Areas which exceed the level of 25 percent, especially in States to the west, show what happened to small communities. The resulting economic damage drove merchants out of business, people out of the communities. In the past, excessive CRP enrollment has led to a disinvestment in infrastructure and rail line abandonment which, in turn, triggered higher transportation costs for remaining farmers.

Of course, our Environment and Public Works Committee has not considered these farm problems. That is no surprise since we on the Environment and Public Works Committee don’t deal with farmers, and some have even less farm expertise.

I share with my colleagues who are concerned about agriculture and the impact this could have on farmers what they need to know about this bill that will cut carbon emissions. We need to cut carbon emissions without cutting family budgets or imposing a devastating impact on certain sectors of our economy. I am one who supports a broad list of measures to result in lower carbon emissions. An overwhelming majority of this body would. We have on the shelf, ready to go, carbon-cutting initiatives such as aggressive but achievable new CAFE vehicle standards to raise the mileage of automobiles and trucks. We have clean portfolio strategies to require a certain portion of power from renewable and clean sources such as wind, solar, nuclear, hydro, even tidal power. Help for zero carbon emissions nuclear power has been advanced in measures passed by this body. We need to do even more. We need to make sure we have the workers available to install those plants.

We need more low carbon emission biofuels. That is why I propose making switchgrass planting on CRP land permissible. We need to do more on clean energy technologies, such as clean coal, that can capture and sequester forever the emissions from our Nation’s abundant fuel source. We have 250 years of energy in the coal under our ground. We need to move more quickly to convert that coal to liquid coal, to gas, which will be cleaner burning and will allow us to sequester carbon emissions generally.

I urge my colleagues to consider that we have legitimate carbon-cutting strategies. I urge my colleagues in the name of agriculture, as well as vulnerable families and workers, to reject strategies such as Draconian carbon caps which have not worked in Europe and which will not work here and will result in great economic displacement and hardship.

I thank the Chair. I hope we will be able to introduce some of these very good amendments we have on the farm bill.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I rise to discuss an amendment that will help rural communities across the country develop affordable housing. This amendment will authorize appropriations for the Housing Assistance Council, HAC, which has been committed to developing affordable housing in rural communities for over 35 years.

The amendment provides \$10 million for HAC in fiscal year 2008 and then \$15 million in fiscal year 2009 to 2012. In the past, the council has received appropriations from the Self Help and Assisted Homeownership Opportunity Program. The funding has helped HAC provide loans to 1,875 organizations across the country, raise and distribute over \$5 million in capacity building grants, and hold regional training workshops. These critical services help local organizations, rural communities, and cities develop safe and affordable housing.

Throughout the country, approximately one-fifth of the Nation's population lives in rural communities. About 7.5 million of the rural population is living in poverty, and 2.5 million of them are children. Nearly 3.6 million rural households pay more than 30 percent of their income in housing costs. While housing costs are generally lower in rural counties, wages are dramatically outpaced by the cost of housing. Additionally, the housing conditions are often substandard, and there are many families doubled up due to lack of housing. Rural areas lack both affordable rental units and home ownership opportunities needed to serve the population.

In Wisconsin, HAC has provided close to \$5.2 million in grants and loans to 17 nonprofit housing organizations and helped develop 820 units of housing. Specifically, since 1972 the Southeastern Wisconsin Housing Corporation has partnered with the Housing Assistance Council to develop 268 units of self-help housing. The presence of the council in Wisconsin has made a huge impact on rural housing development in Wisconsin and other rural communities across the country.

I hope that my colleagues see the importance of this amendment and include it in H.R. 2419.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am disappointed that we haven't been able to accomplish more on the farm bill. We have asked for amendments Senators want to offer. There have been a number filed. I have asked that Republicans come up with a list of amendments they would like to have considered. It appears there is no effort made to work out arrangements on the farm bill passing. I state for the record that every farm bill we have handled in recent decades has never had nonrelevant amendments. They have all been relevant, with one exception.

In 2002, the last one we did, we had one nonrelevant amendment. It was a sense-of-the-Senate resolution on the estate tax. That is it. So I don't know, maybe the Republicans don't want a farm bill. Maybe they have all covered as a result of the President saying he was going to veto it.

As you know, the President has developed a new word in his vocabulary, and that is "veto." For 7 years he was not able to mouth that word, but in the last few months, the last year of his Presidency, he has decided to do that. Maybe the Republicans don't want a farm bill. Maybe they want to join with the President and not have a farm bill. That certainly appears to be the case.

We have basically wasted the whole week with my friends on the other side of the aisle pouting about procedure. The procedure on this bill is no different than any other farm bill we have done in recent decades.

The State of Nevada would benefit a little bit from the farm bill but not

much. I hope those constituencies who want a farm bill will start contacting Senators because the time is fast passing.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the conference report on H.R. 3222, the Defense appropriations conference report. I would note that this matter will be managed by Senators Inouye and Stevens.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The report will be stated by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 3222) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for fiscal year ending September 30, 2008, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment, and the Senate agree to the same, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of today, November 8, 2007.)

Mr. REID. Mr. President, Senator INOUE was called away for a meeting with another Senator. Therefore, it is my understanding the distinguished Senator from Alabama wishes to speak. Does he have any idea how long he is going to talk?

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I believe 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

FARM BILL

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I just have a comment to add to those of Senator BOND about the danger to farmers of making mistakes on energy policy. Energy prices are rising significantly. I saw some numbers recently that indicated for an average family, where one person commuted 29 miles to work every day, \$3-a-gallon gasoline could mean \$60 to \$80 a month more than they would pay for gasoline alone. That is after-tax money out of their pockets. That is a real cost.

We absolutely need to strengthen the energy portion of this bill. We need to do more to have a domestic supply of energy. But we also need to be sure we are not driving up the cost of energy so it falls hard on people such as farmers who utilize a lot of energy and a lot of gasoline and diesel fuel. It could be a real problem for them. I agree with Senator BOND that we need to be careful about this because we should not have as our goal driving up the cost of energy.

A lot of the policies I am hearing about are going to have little impact on the environment but a lot of impact on our wallets. My thoughts about the

Ag bill are that I hope we will be able to pass a bill we can be proud of. I hope to be able to support it. That is what I am looking to do. I will offer an amendment or file it a little later—I know we are not voting on them now—to deal with assisting farmers who suffer losses from disasters in their region. It can be painful for them. I would like to share some thoughts on this.

Our current crop insurance, as valuable as it is, has not proven to provide a fully adequate financial safety net for our farmers. The current system can be too expensive and not flexible enough. Farmers come to me all the time and say: I would like to plow under this crop and replant now, but the insurance people think if I let it go to full maturity, I might make enough money off of it that I wouldn't have to claim any insurance. So you have to wait on the insurance people before making a decision. They come out there. They have to make judgments. This is a burden. It can eliminate quick decisionmaking and can be costly.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the Government-subsidized Crop Insurance Program has expanded significantly over the last 25 years, and that is what we wanted to happen. We wanted more farmers to take out crop insurance. But yet CRS has found that despite this expansion, the "anticipated goal of crop insurance replacing disaster payments has not been achieved." Indeed, CRS reports that since 2000, "the federal subsidy to the Crop Insurance Program has averaged about \$3.25 billion per year, up from an annual average of \$1.1 billion in the 1990s and about \$500 million in the 1980s.

During this same time, from 1999 to 2006, CRS reports that the average per year ad hoc periodic disaster payment to fund persons who need payments in addition to the crop insurance has totaled \$1.3 billion a year. Since 2002, CRS reports that the cost to the Federal Government of Crop Insurance Programs combined with ad hoc supplemental disaster payments has averaged \$4.5 billion per year.

According to the Risk Management Agency, a group that supervises crop insurance, the average subsidy rate for this year—that is the average subsidy rate, the amount of money the taxpayers provide to subsidize a farmer's crop insurance—amounted to 58 percent of a producer's total crop insurance premium. The average amount of the Government subsidy is \$3,359. I am convinced for some farmers—I don't know how many—more flexibility could result in more benefits for those farmers. That is, of course, what we are about, trying to make sure we get the maximum possible disaster risk protection we can for our farmers.

Farmers do have a real need for a viable risk management strategy. Certainly, farmers need some form of protection when disasters strike. But these numbers do demonstrate the traditional crop insurance coverage on a