

farmers, ranchers, and agriculture stakeholders from all over the country, and they have been sounding the alarm of the dire circumstances they face in producing a safe, affordable, and abundant supply of food. Farmers from my home State of Arkansas shared with the committee last week about the difficult conversations they are forced to have right now about continuing their multigenerational farms and risking their families' futures in the industry. Unfortunately, this is a conversation many more farm families across the country will have if we do not act quickly.

Congress must deliver an updated 5-year farm bill that modernizes the safety net in order to minimize the liabilities farm families take on when they plant their crops. Food security is national security. Our country is blessed to have grocery stores stocked with food to put on our tables. This is the result of the hard work of our farmers and ranchers. These producers need the tools to be successful and continue to grow the food, fiber, and fuel our Nation depends on.

I know Brooke Rollins shares my commitment to enhancing policies that help farm families and rural communities thrive. Given her executive leadership, she is well prepared to hit the ground running when she walks through the doors of the USDA as Secretary and to deliver this certainty and predictability our producers need. I look forward to working with her and strengthening rural America for the men, women, and families who call it home.

I also want to thank everyone on both sides of the aisle for making it such that we can do this in such an expeditious way. It took a lot of cooperation. I think it just shows how important our farmers are to both Democrats and Republicans. It is one of the few areas in which it is not a partisan issue. It is all about helping the men and women who work so, so very hard to provide the food we eat.

With that, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

NOMINATION OF BROOKE ROLLINS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, anybody who knows me well knows that I say this a lot, and that is that agriculture is the lifeblood of South Dakota and the lifeblood of our country, and farmers and ranchers are hard at work every single day to feed America and the world. But what I hear lately from farmers and ranchers is not good.

Agriculture producers across the country have faced strong headwinds in recent years—higher input costs, high interest rates, lower commodity prices—all leading to declining farm income year after year. Natural disasters have struck many of our farm regions, and the bird flu continues to ravage agriculture across the country.

Of course, in the last few years, the Biden administration was hardly much

help. It imposed burdensome regulations like WOTUS, or waters of the United States, that threatened to devastate the farm sector. The administration put expanding market access on the back burner while our agricultural trade deficit grew to record levels, and their profligate spending led to inflation that hit farmers and ranchers especially hard in the form of higher input costs.

Meanwhile, Democrats here in Congress failed to prioritize a modernized farm bill to support agriculture through these challenges, and we are now more than a year past due for an updated farm bill. America's farmers and ranchers deserve better—much better.

I expect things will be different under President Trump, and I know that farmers and ranchers will have a friend in Brooke Rollins, the President's choice for Secretary of Agriculture.

Ms. Rollins grew up in the small, agricultural town of Glen Rose, TX. She spent summers working for her family on their farm in Minnesota, helping with their corn, potato, and soybean crops. She was a 4-H'er, an FFA State officer, and a barrel racer, and her four kids are keeping up her family's way of life by showing cattle in Texas.

After studying agriculture development at Texas A&M, Ms. Rollins went to work for then-Governor Rick Perry, where she worked on agriculture policy. She then continued her ag work by building up a Texas think tank, empowering the voices of farmers, ranchers, and rural communities. Then she served in President Trump's first administration—first leading the Office of American Innovation and then on the Domestic Policy Council.

Brooke Rollins is a policy wonk with a farmer's heart. She understands the needs of agriculture producers, and she knows how to deliver results. She promises to get right to work after she is confirmed on four key priorities: first, getting disaster and economic aid out the door and into the hands of farmers; second, getting the bird flu and other animal disease outbreaks under control; third, getting the farm bill done; and finally, revitalizing the U.S. Department of Agriculture to focus on its core mission and put America and American agriculture first. I am looking forward to working with Ms. Rollins on these key priorities.

Under this Republican majority, delivering a modernized farm bill is a priority, and I am glad that Ms. Rollins has pledged to work with Congress on one of the top farm bill needs, which is strengthening the farm safety net—essential to keeping existing operations going—and encouraging the next generation of producers to get started.

I was also pleased to hear Ms. Rollins acknowledge the need to improve the management of national forests. The Black Hills National Forest, among others across the country, has seen its timber industry decimated by bad man-

agement policies. So I look forward to working with the USDA, under Secretary Rollins, to provide relief from the dire situation in western South Dakota.

I am encouraged as well that she will prioritize getting disaster and economic assistance out the door. Last year, many parts of the country suffered from natural disasters, including South Dakota. As I said, farmers and ranchers have suffered lower commodity prices and declining incomes. In December, Congress passed \$31 billion in agricultural disaster and economic assistance, and we need to get that money into the hands of farmers and ranchers working to rebuild.

Brooke Rollins understands the mission of the USDA. She understands the day-to-day needs of America's farmers, and she has the expertise to deliver results. I trust that she will put America's farmers and ranchers first as Secretary of Agriculture, and I look forward to working with her in this role.

(The remarks of Mr. THUNE pertaining to the introduction of S. 587 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. THUNE. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WYDEN. 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. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to speak for up to 15 minutes, Senator CRAPO for up to 5 minutes, and Senator SCHUMER for 2 minutes prior to the scheduled votes.

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

NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, late into the night, Senators spoke on the Senate floor about why Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., is the least qualified nominee to ever be tapped as America's chief health officer.

On issue after issue, Mr. Kennedy has demonstrated a profound lack of knowledge, at best, and deeply dangerous views, at worst.

Mr. Kennedy has refused to tell Americans how we would manage healthcare issues that they are deeply worried about: vaccine safety, women's reproductive health, drug pricing, and affordable healthcare, to name a few. This leaves millions of Americans alarmed about the future of health and science in America.

Last week, two Oregon medical students approached me to talk about Mr. Kennedy's nomination. These medical students told me they were less concerned about the damage Mr. Kennedy would do as HHS Secretary in the weeks and months to come. These medical students are not only worried