

24 I introduced the Guam Commonwealth Act, H.R. 1056, which would create a commonwealth that would carry Guam into the next century and give Guam the tools to prosper economically in the global marketplace. Guam is confident of its future and Guam has achieved in recent years, through remarkable growth in its private sector, the self-sufficiency to make the new Commonwealth a viable political entity.

The people of Guam voted in plebiscites to improve their relationship with the United States by establishing a commonwealth based on mutual consent and that protects the right to self-determination for the indigenous people of Guam. It will ultimately be Congress' responsibility to respond to Guam's political aspirations. However, before Congress holds hearings on the draft Commonwealth Act, the administration should conclude its discussions with the Guam Commission on Self-Determination that have been ongoing for over a year. The result of these discussions would be useful to Congress in its deliberations on the many issues that the Commonwealth Act addresses.

And there is good reason to believe that these discussions will be helpful to the Commonwealth process. Last year, under the guidance of then-Governor, Joseph Ada, who chaired the Commission, the Guam Commission on Self-Determination had a significant breakthrough on mutual consent to the Commonwealth agreement—meaning, that any agreement between Guam and the United States cannot be changed without the mutual consent of both parties. With the recent elections on Guam, there is renewed optimism in the future. Gov. Carl Gutierrez and the newly reconstituted Commission, consisting of Judge Alberto Lamorena, Former Lt. Gov. Rudy Sablan, Mayor Frank Lizama, Senator Hope Cristobal, Senator Mark Forbes, Senator Francis Santos, Attorney David Lujan, and Youth Congress Speaker Roy Respicio, bring to the table a team committed to Guam and to our island's future.

These Commonwealth discussions have been recently put on hold because of the announced resignation of the President's Special Representative, Mr. I. Michael Heyman in February of this year. I had hoped that the administration would have moved expeditiously to find a replacement for Mr. Heyman.

Recently, I have been given assurances that this appointment would be given priority in the White House with the strong support of Secretary Babbitt, and that the nominee may be going through the necessary background checks. While I certainly appreciate the efforts of the administration, I must also point out our frustration with the valuable time that has been lost in the past 65 days.

Therefore, I call on the administration to redouble its efforts to finalize the appointment of a special representative. We have made important progress in these talks. But we must be

careful not to squander the opportunity that lies before us in resolving Guam's political status, and we must not lose the momentum that we once had.

The Guam Commission on Self-Determination and I are eager to see this process reach its conclusion. The people of Guam are ready to take their rightful place in the American community. We can only hope that the administration and the Congress share our commitment to improve the lives of the American citizens who live on our island.

□ 1845

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RADANOVICH). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. TALENT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. TALENT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas [Ms. JACKSON-LEE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. JACKSON-LEE addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

INTRODUCTION OF AGRICULTURE DISASTER ASSISTANCE BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. FARR] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FARR. Mr. Speaker, today, I am introducing a bill to provide disaster assistance to farmers who have no other access to disaster assistance. I am joined in this effort by my colleagues, Mr. DOOLITTLE, Ms. PELOSI, Mr. POMBO, Ms. ESHOO, Mr. HERGER, Mr. FAZIO, Mrs. SEASTRAND, Mr. RADANOVICH, Mr. CALVERT, Mr. BROWN of California, Mr. ROSE, and Mr. DOOLEY.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the central coast and northern California have been racked with flooding. My own district around the Monterey Bay area has been the worst hit with more than \$240 million in agriculture damage alone.

But whereas small businesses and individuals have recourse to private flood insurance, to FEMA emergency assistance, and to low-interest loans from the SBA, most of the agriculture in my district has access to none of this help.

Farmers who grow specialty crops—items like strawberries, artichokes, lettuce, and broccoli or flowers—are not eligible for Federal crop insurance. They are not eligible for FEMA assistance. They are not eligible for SBA loans.

This situation is inherently unfair. A businessman whose business is washed out can apply for emergency grants and loans. A farmer with the same in-

vestment cannot, simply because his business is agriculture.

Congress attempted to correct this hole in the safety net when in enacted the Non-Insured Assistance Program, or NAP. The purpose of NAP was to provide some assistance where none other was available. Unfortunately, even under this failsafe program, nearly 85 percent of affected farmers in my district are still not eligible for assistance.

The problem arises in three areas: the definition of family farm; the threshold on income that determines eligibility; and, the amount of planted area that must be affected.

In all these three cases, the criteria established looks reasonable on its face. But in real life, they deny access to aid to farmers who have suffered terrible crop losses.

For example, the farms in my district—like most other districts—are run like businesses. The product is produce. Farms that are held by and operated by a single family are considered family farms in the traditional sense. But the NAP definition is unclear on this point and implementation of programs that use this definition have erred on the side of not including these family farmers simply because not every member of the family works on the farm, even though the chief operating officer is a family member.

Another problem is that the NAP program disallows any farmer who has a gross income of \$2 million. Many, many farmers have much more than this tied up in their farms. But after all is said and done, their net income is far, far lower than \$2 million. But because the program looks at gross income and not net, these farmers are left uncovered.

Finally, there is confusion over how much land and crop must be affected before a farmer becomes eligible for assistance under NAP. As I understand it, 35 percent of the area must be affected by the disaster. But area is not clearly defined. Is it county? Is it acres? Is it statewide? Also, NAP requires that a producer lose 50 percent of his crop before he can be eligible for aid. But what if a farmer loses 100 percent of his first crop but not of the two or three others he would have planted later? Has he lost 100 percent of his crop or only 33? If the decision is that he has lost only 33 percent of his crop, he cannot receive aid under NAP, but again, without assistance, he will have no funds with which to rebuild his farm or plant the other crops.

Mr. Speaker, this is unfair. During times of emergency and disaster, this country has always risen to the occasion and provided relief to hurricane, flood, earthquake, drought, and fire victims, with one exception: farmers of specialty crops.

Well, the livelihood of a strawberry farmer who gets flooded out is just as disrupted as the livelihood of a restaurant owner who gets flooded out.

There shouldn't be a distinction between the two just because one happens to make his living off the land.

So today I and my colleagues are introducing legislation to correct this oversight. Very simply, this bill states that the Secretary of Agriculture shall be authorized to provide assistance from funds appropriated for disaster relief to farmers whose crops are otherwise not eligible for crop insurance coverage under existing department programs; and whose farm does not otherwise qualify for loans, grants, or disaster assistance from other Federal sources.

What does this mean? This means, under those emergency situations where no other Federal programs are available for aid, the Secretary of Agriculture may—and I emphasize may; he isn't required to do so—open up existing agriculture relief programs to farmers who have no other recourse to assistance. This bill does not authorize additional funds but allows the Secretary to use already authorized funds in existing programs.

Mr. Speaker, specialty crop farmers deserve no more than other farmers who suffer natural disasters. But they deserve no less, either. I thank my colleagues for joining me in introducing this bill and urge other Members of the House to support us in helping America's farmers.

UPDATE ON THE CONTRACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. FOX] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, you can see now after 12 weeks that this bipartisan House, under Republican leadership, has passed 9 out of 10 items in the Contract With America.

First the balanced budget amendment which only awaits one vote in the Senate.

Stop violent criminals. Here we have a law which changed the habeas corpus reform by making sure that there is finality to death sentences where we are dealing with violent criminals for which there is a first degree sentence.

Welfare reform. Here we are trying to make sure that able-bodied people will have every right and every incentive to be off welfare within 2 years by giving them job counseling, job training, job placement, and day care, if necessary, and also make sure that we do get healthy meals for our kids with WIC and with the school nutrition programs.

Under the Republican proposal which has been passed with a 4.5-percent increase over this year, that is higher than 3.1 percent recommended by the President and the 3.6 percent recommended by the Democrat minority. The fact is that with the 15-percent middleman eliminated by the Federal bureaucrats and the States taking over the program, we are going to have a 5-percent cap on administrative expense,

and we will feed more children more meals.

We are going to have in the tax cuts for families a very important program. Here we have the tax bill historically passed last night. I might say that almost every single bill passed in the Contract With America; there has been bipartisan support, well over the 218 votes necessary, votes approximating 300 on almost all occasions.

In the tax credit bill, we are going to have \$500 tax credit for each child in the family. New IRA deductions for health insurance, for first-time home purchases, and for retirement income. We repealed last night the 1993 tax increase on Social Security benefits over 5 years. We provide tax incentives for the purchase of long-term-care health insurance. We provide a 50-percent capital gains exclusion from taxes which will help investments, savings, and create new jobs. We will help small businesses be able to deduct more of the expenses of their business and, therefore, encourage more employment. We will provide a refundable tax credit for families of \$5,000 for those families who adopt children, a \$500 tax credit for families caring for a dependent elderly parent or grandparent. We will raise the earnings limit for senior citizens up to \$30,000, up from the \$11,280 we have today.

By working together we have passed almost every single item here in the Contract With America. The only item we have left to pass finally will be congressional term limits. While I supported all four bills, we needed 290 votes to pass it in the House. We had as much as 227.

Speaker GINGRICH has guaranteed that in the beginning session for the next session, 1997, he would make that bill No. 1, if we do not have another opportunity to vote on it again.

We have rolled back Government regulations. We have had commonsense legal reform. We want to make sure people have the legal right to redress their grievances in court, but we also want to make sure that frivolous, fraudulent, and inflated suits would not be encouraged in the courts of the United States.

We are also going to make sure that we have a strong national defense by making sure that our military are properly armed and properly trained, but our U.S. troops will not be under UN command, because we will be making sure that we take care of the United States first.

Now, what is going to happen in the post-100 days? We are going to work on health care reform. We are going to work on FDA reform. We are going to make sure the Food and Drug Administration moves the process along more quickly so that drugs that are life extending and those that are life saving are approved more quickly so we can help our constituents, create jobs and also help people live longer.

Going to work with Mrs. MORELLA, Mrs. LOWEY, and Ms. PELOSI on the

women's health care initiatives, very important programs here in the Congress.

We are also going to work on a bill that I have, within 7 years, sunset Federal agencies to make sure that those agencies that have outlived their usefulness or are spending too much money or duplicate what we are doing in the States, that they are eliminated.

We also need to expand the investment tax credit and research and development tax credits to help our small businesses be able to make sure that they keep their employment going to keep their services going and to make sure the engine of America moves forward with new jobs, with expansion, and to make sure we have every family enjoy the American dream.

So the Contract With America is only the beginning. We see a bipartisan effort moving forward in this 104th Congress. We do not see Republicans or Democrats fighting. We do not see conservatives and liberals fighting. We see the end of gridlock. We see the end of finger pointing. We see an America moving forward together to help its people.

We will restore the confidence in the Congress because not only will we get more reforms which helps individuals and families and seniors, but we are going to make sure we have the kind of reforms in this Congress that will have gift ban reform, that we are going to make sure we have campaign reform. And we also are going to make sure we have pension reform. That was part of this last legislation to make sure that Congressmen in fact have the same pensions as other Federal workers.

So, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to give this recap and look forward to working with the American people and the Congress and Senate to make sure we have valuable legislation adopted in the next 100 days.

STUDENT LOANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. BROWN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, Republicans have taken aim at middle-class families with proposals to cut student loans. They want to cut student loan programs to pay for tax cuts for the wealthy.

Student loans in this country today have made it possible for 4.5 million middle-class students to go to college. These Republican cuts will mean fewer students going to college and for those students that do go to college that are now receiving student loans, it will mean higher costs to them.

In my State of Ohio, the average debt per student on student loans will increase nearly \$3,100.

Mr. Speaker, I wear a tie today from Lorraine County Community College in northeast Ohio. In the county which I live, in Lorraine County, 67 percent of