

last year. They pleaded with Congress. They pleaded with the Republican Congress: "Take action right now because it is going to be easier to do it now than it will be in the year 2001 or 2002 when it is just about ready to go under." This had not been anticipated to occur until 1997.

What we learn now through the newspapers, the chief actuary giving this report last year, is the Medicare hospital trust fund lost \$35.7 million. In other words, it took in that much less than we had anticipated.

He was not sure when part A would be depleted, but he did say that it could be earlier than 2002.

In any case, according to the actuary, this recent finding does not help the trust fund. It gives more insecurity to the people on Social Security and it, of course, emphasizes what we were trying to say when we passed this Balanced Budget Act of 1995 which saved Medicare.

So I hope that the President comes around to a point of view of cooperating with the Congress to a greater extent than he has on the saving of Medicare, because this is one time the Republican Congress is way ahead of the White House.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Oregon.

FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM

Mr. HATFIELD. Mr. President, 2 weeks ago, the Senate was compelled to pass H.R. 2880, the Balanced Budget and Downpayment Act, to avert another Governmental shutdown. As I observed on the day of consideration, we did so under great duress, being forced to set aside our right and duty to amend the legislation.

Of particular concern to me remains the harsh treatment given to the Agency for International Development's family planning program. Though it was known at the time that the formulation of this account was nearly calamitous, closer examination of the provision has revealed that the situation is far worse than had been imagined at that time.

The provisions that passed the Senate and the House halts family planning assistance programs until July 1 of this year. Following July 1, funding may be provided at 65 percent of the fiscal year 1995 level, apportioned on a monthly basis for 15 months.

What this means is that only 14 percent of what was available for obligation in fiscal year 1995 for family planning will be available for obligation this entire fiscal year—14 percent.

None of us would normally tolerate a cut of this magnitude, made without the benefit of any debate, particularly on a program which enjoys such strong bipartisan support. And yet we did it.

Stated differently, and more important, what we did is bar access to family planning services to approximately 17 million couples, most of them living in unimaginable poverty. We opened the door to the probability of at least 14 million unintended pregnancies every year, tens of thousands of deaths among women and nearly a million deaths among infants and young children annually. Indeed, we embrace the probability of at least 4 million more abortions that could have been averted if access to voluntary family planning services had been maintained. This is what we did.

These numbers, which are calculated through statistics from organizations like UNICEF and the World Health Organization are as disturbing as they are astounding, particularly to those of us who are faithfully and assertively pro-life. To doubt these numbers may bring temporary relief to people of conscience, but doubters should consider the experience of families in the former Soviet Union where family planning services have been unavailable for decades.

The abortion rate in Russia spans from a conservative estimate of 4 abortions per woman to a shocking high of 12 abortions for some women over their reproductive years. Since there have been virtually no, and I suggest that you underscore when you are listening as well as when I speak, no planning services available in Russia, abortion has become the chief method of birth control.

The framers of the family planning language in H.R. 2880 ensured, perhaps unintentionally, that the gruesome experience of Russian women and families will be replicated throughout the world starting now.

In each of the last two foreign operations appropriations bills, I have made sure that adequate money has been devoted to starting family planning programs in Russia. Similar programs in Hungary have shown a 60-percent reduction in the abortion rate there, 8 years after the introduction of family planning. We had hoped for such success in Russia, but now the future is uncertain.

The family planning language in H.R. 2880 is not prolife, it is not prowoman, it is not prochild, it is not prohealth, and it is not profamily planning. It inflicts the harm of a profound misconception on very poor families overseas who only ask for help in spacing their children through contraception, not abortion.

Some of our colleagues appear unaware that the prohibition on funding abortions with U.S. foreign aid money has been in place since 1973. AID's excellent family planning program, widely recognized as the most efficiently run in the world, has taken a strict and

conservative interpretation of this prohibition, and seeks instead to prevent abortions by offering alternatives. Demand has always exceeded supply, and unmet needs continue to grow.

We urgently need to correct the mistake we made in H.R. 2880. We need to restore, with rhetoric and with resources, support to AID's family planning program. For those of us who take a prolife position, this is the most effective way to reiterate our profound opposition to the practice of abortion. All the antiabortion speech this Chamber can tolerate will not reduce the number of unintended pregnancies as swiftly or as surely as our support for voluntary family planning.

I intend to do what I can to rectify this situation as soon as possible, and urge my colleagues to join in this effort.

AGRICULTURAL MARKET TRANSITION ACT

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, as the Nation's farmers look ahead to the new planting season, I rise today in support of moving forward on much-needed farm bill legislation.

Over the past year, I have met with farmers, businesses, bankers, and community leaders across Minnesota. They have told me of the urgent need to develop a farm bill which will show them the direction farm policy will move over the next couple of years.

Clearly, our farmers and agribusinesses deserve a reasonable and responsible roadmap of the Nation's long-term agricultural policy. If Washington continues to delay action, decisions about planting, equipment purchases, fertilizer and seed sales, and credit hang in the balance. And as a result, our agricultural economy will suffer.

This current predicament is a perfect example of how Government interference in the area of agriculture has taken its toll on the productivity of our farmers, agribusinesses, and the other sectors of our economy which depend on them.

By expanding the role of Government so deeply into the business of farming, Washington has taken much of the decisionmaking authority away from the real experts—those who have planted, plowed, and harvested for generations—and handed it over to bureaucrats, some of whom are thousands of miles away from America's heartland.

I have always said with pride that Minnesota's farmers are among the most productive in the world. Historically, Minnesota agriculture has ranked first in sugarbeet production, third in spring wheat and sunflower production, fourth in barley and oat production, sixth in corn production, third in swine products, and second in turkey processing. Of course, Minnesota has always been among the Nation's leaders in milk and cheese production. It is also quickly becoming a leading exporter of raw and value-added products.

But there is so much more that our farmers can do, if only we would free them from the burdens of inflexible regulations, high taxes, and the over-reaching arm of Government. Government should not get in the way of farmers. It should set a level playing field so that farmers from across the country can compete fairly with each other, regardless of geographic region or commodity item. We owe it to our farmers to do nothing less—and nothing more.

We also owe it to the American taxpayers—the people who pay for the jumbled agricultural policy Washington has created—to fix the failed policies of the past and ensure that their tax dollars are put to work most efficiently.

First and foremost, we must provide greater flexibility for our farmers. Current Federal policies dictate decades-old planting patterns set by Washington and require every farmer to visit USDA annually to comply with its seemingly endless paperwork requirements.

Today, the Senate can help alleviate some of those burdens by passing a bold, new approach called the Agricultural Market Transition Act.

This innovative plan, initially crafted by Majority Leader DOLE, Agriculture Committee Chairman LUGAR and other members of the Agriculture Committee, offers farmers the flexibility they will need to remain strong into the next century.

Under this proposal, farmers can plant for what the marketplace demands, not what traditional Government crop subsidies have dictated. It would give farmers in Minnesota additional flexibility in meeting the needs of value-added cooperatives and their customers who use products like ethanol.

This bill also simplifies paperwork requirements for farmers. Instead of the current annual paperwork load they face today, passage of this legislation means many farmers may only need to visit the local CFSA once as part of a 7-year contract.

The Agricultural Marketing Transition Act also gives farmers the needed certainty of a fixed, 7-year payment with fixed parameters. Many farmers in Minnesota, especially in the younger generation, need this certainty for long-term loans and other financial decisions.

For these and other reasons, farm groups in Minnesota, such as the wheat growers, barley growers, corn growers, bean growers, the Minnesota Farm Bureau, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture have endorsed passage of this bill. They know it will give them the flexibility and the opportunity for long-term growth potential in farm income.

But while I enthusiastically support much of this bill because it helps both Minnesota's farm community and the American taxpayer, I must raise my strong concerns about its failure to

enact substantial progress in the area of dairy reform.

Having sought the counsel of Minnesota's dairy industry, I am well aware of the problems caused for milk producers, taxpayers, and consumers by our archaic dairy program. For instance, Federal milk marketing orders have helped cause the loss of thousands of dairy farms in Minnesota alone over the last decade.

Under this troubled business climate, Minnesota continues to lose an average of nearly three dairy farms per day.

In addition, the Minnesota dairy industry is adamantly opposed to the Northeast Dairy Compact. I firmly believe this well-intentioned proposal will lead to a regional balkanization of the dairy industry and threatens to make our dairy program even more unwieldy for the dairy processors and producers that I represent.

Instead of letting protectionism get in the way of our dairy producers, we should begin enacting long-term, common-sense reforms that deregulate the Federal Dairy Program.

I understand that the regional politics currently tying up this bill prevent us from making these long-term dairy reforms. At the very least, however, I believe we should consolidate milk marketing orders, eliminate costly producer assessments, and reduce the price supports for dairy commodities to a reasonable level.

By establishing a level playing field for dairy producers, we can dramatically improve and preserve a vital segment of our agriculture industry as a whole. I hope to have the commitment of the chairman and the ranking member of the Agriculture Committee to work with me in the future on these and other reforms.

Enacting a more productive farm policy must be our goal, and we can begin this process by freeing farmers from Government interference, encouraging the use of market discipline in farm decision-making, while at the same time protecting the American taxpayers.

This bill makes that important first step and gives our farmers, small business owners, and lenders what they need—a roadmap to guide them in the important decisions ahead.

I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation and the cloture motion before us today.

Mrs. HUTCHISON addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, what is the regular order?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Senators can speak up to 5 minutes in morning business.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Thank you, Mr. President.

SUPPORT FOR THE CLOTURE VOTE

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise to ask my colleagues to support the cloture vote so we can enact a farm

bill not only this year, but in time for farmers to make the decision about what they are going to plant. Right now, our farmers are in a most precarious position. In my State of Texas, it is planting season, and yet they do not know if the freedom-to-farm provisions are going to be available to them, or whether they are going to have a 1949 law to comply with.

Mr. President, that is not reasonable, and it is not responsible for Members of Congress not to take up this bill and offer their amendments, but to refuse to take up the bill is irresponsible. I urge my colleagues not to do that to the farmers of America. Their lives are tough enough. The last thing they need is to make the wrong guess and have a disastrous year.

That is what is going to happen. The bill is very clear. It is a freedom-to-farm bill, so that you will have the ability to make your own decisions based on your soil and what you think is your best ability to farm the commodity that you like the best. That is new and it is very important.

It also eliminates the costly, timely paperwork required to comply with current regulations. It eliminates the need for most of the regulations now necessary to govern current programs. The freedom-to-farm portions contribute to the deficit reduction by reducing agriculture spending by more than \$12 billion over 7 years.

What happens, Mr. President, if we do not invoke cloture and pass this bill today? Reversion to the permanent law, which is what will happen if we do not enact this bill, would be disastrous. First, it would give farmers a parity price based on 1914 economic conditions. That would result in domestic prices double or triple the world price, which would, of course, erode our carefully cultivated export markets. We have just passed GATT, which is supposed to break down the barriers in our agriculture exports, and yet this bill would be a reversion. That is, if we do not pass this bill, it will be a reversion to the old ways of doing things which are not best for today.

It would mean that the USDA would have to buy all the excess wheat that was not taken up on the world market. It would obliterate our ability to have a balanced budget. Reversion to permanent law, by USDA's account, would cost taxpayers an additional \$2.3 billion in the first year alone.

I share the concerns that my colleague from Minnesota has just stated about the dairy portions of this bill. I do not like it. That Northeast compact is going to hurt other dairy markets around the country. I do not think that is right. We will have a chance to vote on that because amendments will be in order if we invoke cloture.

There is no reason that I can see that a Member of this body can responsibly vote against cloture to allow us to debate this bill and pass something that will give our farmers the ability to plant according to their own needs in