

the Senate today, I hope Senators will be able to support the petition to invoke cloture so we can have a vote on the merits of amendments to and the farm bill itself, that will put in place a farm program for this and later years. This farm bill that is being presented to the Senate, and which we will reach if we are able to invoke cloture today, is a compromise that has been developed to resolve the current impasse between the Congress and the administration about the content of farm legislation.

As Senators remember, we included in the Balanced Budget Act the provisions of farm legislation that would be in effect over the 7-year period that was covered by the Balanced Budget Act of 1995. The Congress passed that and sent it to the President and he vetoed it.

Because of that veto, we are now forced to go back and reexamine those provisions relating to agriculture and to pull them out and put them together in a freestanding bill so we can pass that legislation. If we do not, laws that have been on the books since 1938—and 1949, in some cases—will govern the agriculture programs that would be in place for this crop year. These provisions are so out of date it is ludicrous. The price support for wheat farmers would go up to about \$7-something a bushel. In order to qualify, you would have had to have had allotments that were based on your planting experience prior to 1950.

It is unthinkable that this Congress is dragging its feet and making it difficult to enact farm legislation that would give producers of American agriculture products the certainty of the laws that govern the planting and the production of those crops. But that is what is happening. It is a disgrace. We need to put a stop to it, and to put a stop to it we are going to have to vote for cloture to limit debate of this issue so we can get to votes on the merits of amendments and the bill itself, and to pass the legislation, send it to the House, meet in conference, and get a bill to the President. This has to be done as soon as possible.

Farmers are confronted right now with the inevitability of a planting season that is here, whether we legislate it or not. We cannot slow down the planting season by simply not enacting farm legislation. Lenders are going to have to extend credit based on some idea of what the returns will be in this production year for wheat and corn farmers and others who are covered by these laws.

I am hopeful that the Senate will recognize our solemn responsibility to be fair with farmers and to undertake our obligation to legislate in a serious manner and stop the partisan squabbling back and forth on who has the better program, the Democrats or the Republicans. Forget it. This bill before the Senate is a bipartisan substitute for the previous provisions that were before the Senate last week when the

Senate failed to invoke cloture, when only 53 Senators voted for cloture.

Now we have another chance. We need 60 Senators to vote to permit us to reach the amendments and then the merits of this bill. I urge Senators to look at the fact that we have made some fundamental changes to attract a large majority of support here in the Senate. There is a reauthorization of food and nutrition programs in this bill. There is a reauthorization of the Conservation Reserve Program in this bill. There are revisions and a reauthorization of a wetlands reserve program that has support from many sectors of this country. And there are other provisions—an authorization for a compact of New England States to join together to provide for themselves a new dairy program. There are other items in this bill that reflect an effort to reach out and broaden the base of support for this legislation. I hope Senators will vote for cloture so we can get on with the discussion of amendments and the vote on final passage.

If Senators do not like some of these provisions, they can offer amendments to them to strike them, and we can have up-or-down votes on them. But let us get past this point in the debate and vote for cloture on this bill.

Mr. GREGG addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 5 minutes as if in morning business.

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

THE MEDICARE TRUST FUND

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I want to continue part of the discussion that occurred earlier which was carried forward by the fine Senator from Iowa, Senator GRASSLEY, and to a certain extent by Senator DOMENICI, the chairman of the Budget Committee, which involves the issue of where we stand in this whole budget process, because a very important fact has been confirmed.

About 6 months ago we on the Republican side said that the Medicare trust fund was in serious trouble, that the senior citizens of this country were at risk for their health insurance because the Medicare trust fund was going broke. Now, we did not arbitrarily come up with that statement. We took that statement from the fact that the Medicare trustees, three of whom are appointed by the President and serve in his Cabinet, stated in their report of April 3, 1995, that the Medicare trust fund was going to go broke in the year 2002 if something was not done to fundamentally repair it. So we made the tough decisions of the party. We stepped forward, and we made proposals which made the Medicare trust fund solvent. Our proposals were included in the Balanced Budget Act, which gave this country for the first time in 25

years a balanced budget and which gave our senior citizens a solvent Medicare system.

What happened? The President of the United States and his legions demagogued that act, claimed that we were attacking senior citizens, and used every scare tactic they could on senior citizens. The fundraising powerhouses here in Washington who scare seniors regularly got their machines of paper cranked up and sent out letters to seniors across this country representing that the Republicans were misrepresenting what was happening with the Medicare trust fund and were trying arbitrarily and inappropriately to take on the Medicare trust fund, when, in fact, what we were proposing would bring solvency to the trust fund.

A couple of days ago, the chickens came home to roost for this administration because now, not only do their trustees have a report filed which says that the trust fund is going to go broke, we find that the track for the trust fund to go broke, to go bankrupt, has been accelerated, and that it is unfortunately ahead of schedule.

A report by the Medicare trust fund actuary states, "Things turned out a little worse than we expected. We had projected that 1997 would be the first fiscal year with a deficit when, in fact, this year becomes the first fiscal year with a deficit."

What does that mean? That means, for the first time in the history of the Medicare trust fund, since 1972, this will be the first year when more money goes out of the trust fund than comes into the trust fund. That is a bankruptcy spiral that we have begun.

I have a chart here which we have used before. It looks like a plane crash. In fact, it is called the plane crash chart, which shows what is happening with the Medicare trust fund. This chart assumed what the trustees originally told us, which was the trust fund would go broke in the year 2002, that it would start to run a deficit in the year 1997. We have to change this chart now. The trust fund now has a track that is something like this. It goes to the negative this year, and somewhere out here before the year 2002 it goes broke.

If this administration does not step up and stop demagoging the issue and scaring seniors, what they are going to deliver to seniors is a trust fund that is broke.

What right does this administration have to abuse the senior citizens in this manner? What right do they have to stand in one room at one microphone and say, "Republicans are harassing and inappropriately attacking the trust fund and Medicare," while at the same time the facts show that, if a correction does not occur, the trust fund goes broke?

A higher level of irresponsibility in managing this country and managing the finances and managing the future of our seniors probably has not been seen in recent times than what has

happened over the issue of Medicare over the past 6 months as this administration and this President specifically have consistently misrepresented the Republican position and have failed to step up to the plate to address what is a critical issue for seniors. Basically this administration can no longer hide on the issue. The fact is their trustees have said it is going to happen, and now their actuary has said it is not only going to happen, but it is happening. It is happening in reality. We are now into a bankruptcy spiral in the Medicare trust fund.

So, Mr. President, I suggest you stop running for reelection and that you sit down and do the job you are paid for, which is to come forward with a proposal which puts the Medicare trust fund back in balance or, alternatively, accept ours.

Mr. President, I thank you for your time.

Mr. BURNS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I might be yielded 5 minutes as if in morning business.

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

Mr. BURNS. I thank the Chair.

THE RETIREMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE PAT WILLIAMS

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I rise today to salute my colleague from Montana, Congressman PAT WILLIAMS.

PAT surprised all of us last month when he announced he would not seek his 10th term in the U.S. House of Representatives. PAT says he wants to get back to Montana to do a little fishing and hiking. Well, few people know better than me what it is like to miss Montana, so his announcement—although unexpected—was understandable.

Mr. President, it is no secret that PAT WILLIAMS and I come down on opposite sides of just about every issue. He is a New Deal liberal and proud of it. While I may not always like where he stands, at least I know where he stands. I respect him for that and I think the people of Montana do too.

Despite the differences between us, I think there is a unique civility in the Montana congressional delegation. Our debates over the years have been passionate and heated, but I believe they have never been personal. PAT has been a worthy adversary during my 7 years in the U.S. Senate, and I will miss that relationship.

This does not mean that PAT and I were not able to come together on some issues. In fact, when outsiders tried to impose there will on Montana, I would bet that PAT and I were on the same side more often than not.

We both agree that fair trade does not always mean that our neighbors to the north can run roughshod over the Montana farmers and businesses. We

both agree that NAFTA and GATT are bad news for Montana. Any State that is on the border feels the effect of that. We both agree that our Nation's job-training programs need to be streamlined and consolidated. We both agree in the need to repeal a federally mandated speed limit, of which my State caught a little criticism. And even though he supported his President, he broke ranks with his Democrat colleagues by opposing the Brady bill and the President's crime bill.

So, Mr. President, I commend PAT for his service to my home State of Montana. In addition to his legislative duties, he has been a servant of our constituents. Montanans of all stripes could count on PAT to answer their questions. They might not have liked the answers all of the time, but he always answered them. And when they had problems with the Federal Government, he was there, too. So for 18 years he has traveled one of the largest congressional districts—both the western district when he first came to Congress, and then, of course, the full State in the last two terms. So I think he will be missed by the State of Montana.

This kind of public service can take its toll on a person. PAT would show up at countless meetings, and I can remember them. There might be 5 or 500; it did not make any difference, PAT was always there.

So I wish him the best as he chooses retirement. If you come across him fishing in one of our prized trout streams in Montana or hiking a scenic trail, I hope you tip your hat and say, "Thanks, PAT, for a job well done here in the House of Representatives of the U.S. Congress."

THE FARM BILL

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I want to talk a little bit about the problem before us; that is, trying to get a farm bill through this Congress. We are not very far away, even though the snowflakes are flying around us in the northern part of the hemisphere, it will be soon that we will see the combines starting to roll in Texas. We are just finishing planting our spring wheat in Montana when the combines start in Texas. We still do not have a farm bill or a farm policy.

A lot more people live in urban areas than farm, but it is pretty important to us in this country because the first obligation of any society is to feed itself. I have always made the speech that the second thing we do every day is eat. I do not know the first thing you do. You have a lot of options the first thing in the morning, but the second thing is you eat. We do a pretty good job of it in this country, but the main challenge for all of us, both in Government and in our commodity groups that represent the livestock industry or the grain industry or the fresh vegetable industry or the nut industry or the fruits and vegetables that are

grown in this great and plentiful Nation is to make sure that we get at least a fair share of the consumer dollar back on the land.

Would it surprise you to know that only 3 cents out of every consumer dollar spent for food is all that gets back to the farmer? We are to the point where we cannot hardly make it on 3 cents out of every dollar. There is a little imbalance here—\$3.46 a pound for Wheaties in the grocery store, and up until this year we were having a hard time getting \$3.46 for a bushel of wheat of which there is 60 pounds. I have a hard time relating \$5 T-bone steaks to \$60 fat cattle. Maybe I am in the wrong business, or I understand the other business, but it is about time our processors, purveyors, our distributors, and our retailers understand that we have to give something back to the man who produces the raw product.

There are a lot of automobiles and a lot of boats and a lot of vacations that are paid for because we only expend about 16 percent of our expendable income on food in our homes to feed this society. We are truly a blessed Nation, but we still need policy for food and fiber in this country. And, of course, with 1 farmer feeding 120 other folks both in this country and abroad, it makes it a very large industry. This bill changes the direction and the culture of farm programs.

In the Freedom to Farm Act, yes, there are some areas I would like to change. Nobody ever gets a perfect bill. But nonetheless, we have to take a look at it and see what it really does, if it gives our business people who live on our farms and ranches the flexibility to operate their farms and ranches the way they think they should and also at a profitable level.

I know if I had to go back to agriculture, where I was raised—on 160 acres of 2 parts rock and 1 part dirt in northwest Missouri—I probably could not make a living now, but I know some people are trying to and it is a struggle. This particular bill helps out those folks. It moves us into a marketing mode and takes us away from a program that is dependent on the Government. We are not going to take the full step all at once. And to my critics who say this does not go far enough to eliminate guaranteed subsidies to agriculture, I say we have to take it maybe one step at a time. At least let us change the structure. Let us change the structure in which our farmers and ranches can operate and still provide food and fiber for this Nation.

Foreign market development is a good investment just like education is a good investment. As for ARS, the Agriculture Research Service, I happen to think we must never stop doing research in food production. Maybe a lot of folks do not know this either, but for the first time in the history of agriculture production in this country yields of wheat are declining just a little bit. Why? Because we do not have the plant breeders and the scientists