

changes, whole regions of countries, when they have economic problems, it has affected our producers in ways in which no one in this body anticipated in the 1995-1996 area when we were passing this legislation.

So I use this opportunity today to say that this particular bill and the need for this bill today was caused inadvertently by a misinterpretation, misapplication of what some believe was current law. What we now have, the task for us, ahead of us, is to see that we do provide a crop insurance, revenue assurance program that will be adequate for our producers, whether they be crop, livestock or anyone in between. That is the challenge, and we hope later this year or certainly early next year it would be my hope that we would be able to bring comprehensive legislation to the floor of the House dealing with this particular problem.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. JOHN).

Mr. JOHN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to also extend my thanks to the ranking member, the gentleman from Texas, and also the chairman of the Committee on Agriculture who have brought this measure in an expeditious manner to us. This is a very important piece of legislation for the district of south Louisiana of which I represent, the rice capital of the world.

This is a situation that has cropped up and that has occurred by no fault of any of the producers, where they have acted in good faith to try to obtain the kinds of coverage they need, to make sure that they are covered for the problems that may incur similar to what happened last year. What this bill does, very simply, is open the time in which the farmers could actually reapply for some insurance and some other federally-covered insurance to protect them in this crop zone, so I urge final passage of this piece of legislation that is so important and was not brought upon by any of the producers' fault at any point in time.

So I commend the gentleman from Texas for bringing this legislation, again, and I urge strong support.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support for HR 1212. I am a co-sponsor of this legislation and I have worked constantly on this problem since it surfaced approximately one month ago.

Mr. Speaker, before discussing the merits of this particular legislation, I would like to commend the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member on the House Committee on Agriculture, Mr. COMBEST and Mr. STENHOLM, for their leadership in ensuring that this issue received the prompt attention that it deserves.

We are here today, Mr. Speaker, because of a recent development concerning a private crop insurance policy provided primarily for rice. Namely, "CRCPlus" is a supplemental insurance product available only from America Agrinsurance (AmAg). This policy allowed producers to increase their Crop Revenue Coverage (CRC) revenue guarantee to provide a higher level of protection against major crop

loss or a decline in market price. After the sales closing date for federal crop insurance policies had passed, AmAg changed the terms of the CRCPlus plan for producers that had applied for the supplemental coverage.

This situation, and the events that followed, has called into question the integrity of the Federal crop insurance program. The good faith efforts made by farmers to hedge their risk by participating in the crop insurance program, combined with the actions of AmAg, placed my rice farmers in a bad position—leaving them heavily and unnecessarily exposed or having them pay higher premiums for coverage they could have received elsewhere. Allowing this situation to proceed is the wrong message to send, especially at a time when many of us in Congress are attempting to strengthen the crop insurance programs.

Passage of this legislation will reopen the time period during which farmers who applied for CRCPlus insurance may buy additional federal crop insurance. This is intended to allow farmers who were affected by the decisions of AmAg concerning CRCPlus to adjust their crop insurance policies and obtain substitute insurance. Under this measure, these farmers would be eligible to buy federal crop insurance from other federally-approved insurers, with coverage up to the level of protection they would have had under the original CRCPlus policy in which they had applied.

These farmers would also be allowed to transfer to other insurers any basic federal crop insurance they have obtained through AmAg for other crops.

Without this legislation, farmers would not only remain heavily exposed, but would also be less trustful of crop insurance reform in the future. With this in mind, I urge Members to support HR 1212 and give the farmers the legislative fix that they need to address their risk concerns.

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. PICKERING).

□ 1515

Mr. PICKERING. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1212, offered by my good friend, the chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, and I commend him for his leadership on this issue. I also want to recognize the ranking member, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM), as this is a bipartisan effort to address a very critical need for our American farmers.

Today, through no fault of their own, many hard-working Mississippi farmers are left with crop insurance that does not meet the needs of their farming operations or, even worse, they are left with no crop insurance at all. I share the chairman's view that leaving farmers in this predicament is unacceptable, and gladly, H.R. 1212 fixes that problem.

H.R. 1212 gives Mississippi farmers, and farmers throughout the country who have already been adversely affected by this ordeal, a new window of opportunity to buy the insurance coverage they need.

Mr. Speaker, American farmers borrow more money each year and every year than most of us borrow in a life-

time, to plant a crop so that we can all enjoy low prices at the grocery store and so that the whole world can eat. Each and every year this is an incredible gamble for each of the farmers, because markets may not even provide these farmers enough to pay back their loans or cover their costs of production. Worse yet, the weather could rob them of their crop completely.

H.R. 1212 offers our Nation's farmers the chance they need to protect this huge investment and gives them just a little peace of mind.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote for this very timely and important piece of legislation.

I also want to join with my colleagues to say that this is just an interim fix, that the long-term crop insurance reform for a comprehensive solution is coming, and we need to all work with the same type of bipartisan consensus and effort to fix the underlying problem of an inadequate crop insurance program. I look forward to working with my colleagues on this and the long-term solution in the days to come.

Mr. MINGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1212, a bill to protect producers of agricultural commodities who apply for Crop Revenue Coverage PLUS supplemental endorsement of 1999 crop year.

This legislation will provide relief to farmers throughout the United States, including farmers in Minnesota, who had applied for a specific non-federal crop insurance policy whose coverage level changed or was expected to change after the sales closing date had passed. Without congressional intervention, these farmers would be forced to remain in financially detrimental crop insurance policies for the 1999 crop year with little possibility for recourse. In the current poor economic climate for farmers, it is vitally important that we in Congress do everything possible to provide farmers with opportunities to maximize their operations' profitability. H.R. 1212 will, at no cost to the Federal Government, allow producers to change their crop insurance coverage to products which will better serve their needs.

Given the increased importance of risk management tools under the 1996 farm bill, I commend the chairman and ranking member of the Agriculture Committee for bringing this matter before the House of Representatives for a timely resolution.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1212, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.R. 1212, the bill just passed.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

AFFIRMING THE CONGRESS' OPPOSITION TO ALL FORMS OF RACISM AND BIGOTRY

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H.Res. 121) affirming the Congress' opposition to all forms of racism and bigotry.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 121

Whereas the United States of America has been enriched and strengthened by the diversity and mutual respect of its people;

Whereas the injustices and inequities of the past continue to demand our forceful commitment, both as individuals and as an institution, to equal justice under law and full opportunity for every American;

Whereas a racist attack upon any group of Americans is an affront to every one who cherishes the promise of America and the values that sustain our democracy; and

Whereas every Member of Congress has a responsibility to foster the best traditions and highest values of this nation: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) insists that no individual's rights are negotiable or open to compromise; and

(2) reaffirms the determination of all its Members to oppose any individuals or organizations which seek to divide Americans on the grounds of race, religion, or ethnic origin; and

(3) denounces all those who practice or promote racism, anti-Semitism, ethnic prejudice, or religious intolerance; and

(4) calls upon all Americans of good will to reject the forces of hatred and bigotry wherever and in whatever form they may be found.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H.Res. 121, the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. CONYERS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, this is an important matter before us. I want to commend the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER) for causing this embarrassing substitute to be brought to

bear. The scheduling and the substance of this resolution is an utter affront to all believers of civil rights and regular order in the House of Representatives. I appeal to every Member to vote against the underhanded processes involved in bringing H. Res. 121 to the floor this afternoon.

First, a word about bipartisan cooperation, since we have all come back from Hershey over the weekend. Without the courtesy of a simple phone call from the chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HYDE), this bill was discharged from the committee with no hearing, no markup; another example of how Committee on the Judiciary Democrats are still being treated unfairly at every turn of the process, not even a single phone call. The leadership continues to mistreat what is almost an equal number of Democrats as Republicans in the House.

Secondly, this bill, I think, is intended to be serious but it is really just a joke. A generalized, amorphous, meaningless resolution is an idea taken from the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER) and is now so watered down as to be insulting.

It is a cover for those Republicans who do not want to condemn the Council of Conservative Citizens because so many Republican leaders have been associated with this racist group. They have cloaked themselves in mainstream conservatism, but it is masking an underlying racist agenda. Its leader is the former Midwest director of the White Citizens Council. Their web site reads like something out of the Third Reich.

What are we doing here today? I urge that the Members vote "no" on this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

The Speaker pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. CANADY) will control the 20 minutes on the majority side.

There was no objection.

Mr. CANADY of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. WATTS).

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. Mr. Speaker, hatred expressed through racial, religious or ethnic prejudice is an affront to the institutions of freedom, equal justice and individual rights that together form the bedrock of the American republic.

We need no reminder that bigotry lives on in America. The heinous murder of James Byrd, Jr., shocked us all with the graphic portrait of racism in its most vile form. So this resolution before us is not meant to be a mere reminder, nor is it meant to single out for condemnation any one organization or individual.

To be so particular would be to commit a crime of omission by giving a pass to other groups that espouse prejudiced, racist views, in effect saying that their bigotry is not so offensive as to be worthy of our condemnation. The

Southern Poverty Law Center says that 537 hate groups exist in the United States. We cannot possibly condemn each bigoted organization, person or act individually.

In any event, there is a better course to take. Today we can make one sweeping statement of principle that acknowledges the existence of bigotry, condemns those who promote or practice it, and affirms the rights of individuals of all races, religions and ethnic backgrounds.

Passing this resolution will not reverse the horrible tragedy of James Byrd's death, nor will it directly prevent future tragedies of the same sort. It will not eliminate the more subtle but more common kind of bigotry that rears its ugly head every single day, like when a man gets on a subway, when a man of a certain color gets on a subway car and instinctively sits next to the person of his color instead of a person of another color; or when a Jewish family on the block is not fully accepted by some of their Protestant neighbors; or when a Hispanic kid walks into a store and is watched under a suspicious eye.

Let us also celebrate the great strides we have made as a Nation and as a people in moving toward a more unified America. Let us salute great men and women like Frederick Douglas and Rosa Parks and John Lewis and Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as the millions of others whose names we do not know but whose efforts have torn down many of the walls that far too long divided us.

Every American must keep working toward that goal of a hate-free America. So today, in this Chamber, let us stand and be counted. Today let us condemn all forms of racial, religious and ethnic prejudice.

Some will say this afternoon that because this resolution did not name a certain group, did not specifically name certain groups, that this resolution has no bearing. Why do we make racism and bigotry that small? What happens is that if someone names a certain group? Then someone else will offer a resolution to name another group, and then somebody will organize another resolution to name another group. What we get, Mr. Speaker, we get a tit for tat, we get an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth.

Let me remind my colleagues what Dr. King said. He said when we have an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, it leaves America toothless and blind.

Let us carry on the fight for an America where Dr. King's dream can become a reality, an America where freedom rings crisply in the ears of every member of our national family, and an America where equal justice and equal opportunity are no longer mere goals but instead true hallmarks of our Nation's character. Please support this resolution.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 10 seconds.