

CRISIS IN AGRICULTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, in Kansas, combines and harvesting crews have just finished another annual wheat harvest. While many farmers have seen harvests come and go, this one will certainly be one to remember.

Unfortunately, it is the low wheat prices that will not be forgotten. Wheat prices recently closed in Goodland, Kansas at \$1.96 a bushel, the lowest price in over 30 years.

Let me put this disaster in perspective. In my State of Kansas alone, the loss in market value of the wheat crop will be over \$500 million below last year's dismal level. Let me restate that. In one State, in one crop, the lost value is a half a billion dollars when compared to last year's income. Nationwide, the losses will be tremendous. In Kansas, that is \$500 million less that farmers have to pay bills and to take care of their families.

I do not know exactly what disaster relief legislation this year will look like, but I must impress upon my fellow Members of Congress the seriousness of the circumstance and the ongoing damage to the agricultural economy.

This year, there will be no crop with higher prices that comes to the rescue of the wheat farmer. United States Department of Agriculture indicates that corn prices are at a 10-year low and soybean prices are at a 27-year low, with both prices to decline further by the time of their fall harvest.

This problem, however, is not about numbers, estimates, or projections. It is about people. It is about the future of rural America and the survival of a generation of our farmers and ranchers.

Mr. Speaker, I received a letter, for example, from my constituents that is pretty typical. "Dear sir: We are now beginning the 1999 wheat harvest in Kansas. The price of wheat here in Ness County is \$2.22," this is back in June, "as of close of markets on June 19, lower than we could sell wheat for in the troubled 80's.

"Prices of all our supplies, seeds, fertilizer, et cetera, have rose steadily since then and are still going up. Are farmers not supposed to have a decent living for all their hard work? We as farmers have every right to just as good a living as most blue collar workers in this country. Someone, Senators, Representatives, administration, and Agriculture Secretary need to spend a little more time and effort to improve our circumstances.

"Most farmers have land payments coming due in August. Interest on them went up again. Payments of harvest expenses, fuel, repairs and labor all have to be paid; \$2.22 a bushel of wheat does not go very far to pay an \$8,000 land payment and expect a living

expense the rest of the year. Farmers cannot be put on hold much longer. Something needs to be done now, not 6 months from now.

"I have farming interests in Ness and Hodgeman Counties in Kansas. My husband passed away in 1992 and my son is trying to hold things together. We are just a medium-sized family farm of which there are a great many here in the Midwest."

As the writer of this letter says, something needs to be done now, not 6 months from now.

Mr. Speaker, on July 1, I joined other Members interested in agriculture, Members of this Congress, in a letter to President Clinton. In that letter, we outlined our request to work with the President and the administration in providing assistance to agriculture producers this year.

Today, I rise to urge all my colleagues in Congress to join in the efforts as we work together to try to make certain that we do not lose another generation of the American farmer and rancher.

OLDER AMERICANS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REYNOLDS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to talk about an issue that is critical to the older Americans in this country and especially to those in my home State of Florida, the Older Americans Act.

Since its enactment in 1965, the Older Americans Act has provided for the delivery and support of nutritious service to our elderly population. The support services and centers program provide funds to States for a wide variety of social services and activities including community service employment programs, home delivered meals, transportation assistance, home care, recreation activities, elderly rights protection, and research, training and demonstration programs.

The Title III Nutrition Program is the Older Americans Act's largest program representing 43 percent of the total funds. It provides 240 million meals to over 3 million elderly persons who are traditionally more likely to be poor, to live alone, and to be members of minority groups. They are also more likely to have health and functional limitations that place them at nutritional risk. For most of the participants in the program, these meals are the primary source of daily nutrition.

The Older Americans Act also authorizes the Senior Community Service Employment Program that provides opportunities for part-time employment in community service activities for unemployed, low-income older persons. This program is administered by elderly advocacy groups, including Green Thumb, National Center on Black Aged, and the American Association of Retired Persons.

This program has three goals: provide employment opportunities for older persons, create a pool to provide community service, and supplement the income of low-income older persons.

These programs are so vitally important to the health and well-being of our senior citizens, those who work all their lives to make America what it is today. We need to do the right thing for our seniors and reauthorize the Older Americans Act.

Mr. Speaker, this program is also one that I have visited in Jacksonville, Orlando, Daytona, Palatka in Florida. But I was recently in Millen, Georgia, and I would like to submit this article to the RECORD. It indicates "Meals on Wheels is about more than just food.

"The volunteers are great. They are nice as they can be and they help me get things if I need them."

I want to read one brief remark about the program. "Presently, the program cost \$7,000 a month to feed all of the clients." However, the funds is currently at a serious low point. In other words, these programs around the country are being shut down or terminated because we have not reauthorized this program, the Older Americans Act.

I do not understand what is more important than taking care of our seniors when they need us. I am hoping that this is one program that we will put on our agenda to fund and reauthorize before we leave for the August recess.

Mr. Speaker, the article I referred to is as follows:

MEALS ON WHEELS IS ABOUT MORE THAN FOOD

(By Karen Ludwig)

Monday through Friday, five days a week, 250 days per year. That's how often Houston County residents who qualify for Meals on Wheels can depend on the organization to deliver nutritious, hot and tasty noon meals with a smile.

Meals on Wheels, incorporated in the fall of 1974, is a private, nonprofit organization that provides programs and services to the elderly of Houston County, according to Donna James, executive director.

"Our highest bracket of clients are people who are 80 years old and above," said James.

Sixty-five volunteer drivers deliver meals to 143 clients. A wide variety of people, including retirees, a base squadron and even home-schooled children who deliver meals with their parents as an exercise in community service volunteer to deliver meals.

"Many of the drivers do more than just deliver meals," said James. "They are great with the clients. Some drivers presently and in the past have gone over to clients' houses and helped them with odd jobs around the house."

Velda Paquet, Warner Robins site aid, not only packs meals for the clients and does secretarial work, but she also bakes cookies and visits clients even when she's not working.

"Velda is my right-hand man," said James. "She's efficient, packs the meals, works at the office and keeps me hopping. It's hard to find people like her."

Many of the drivers also cheer up clients. James said. Marjorie Moore, a client for eight years, said she loves it when the home-schooled children deliver meals with their parents.

"I miss the children when they don't come to visit," said Moore. "They are just like my great-grandchildren. They hop up here next to me and love me like mine. They have very good manners."

Irene Colquit, another Meals on Wheels client, is also fond of the program and its volunteers.

"The volunteers are great," said Colquit. "They are as nice as they can be and they help me get things if I need them. They are a great crew."

Presently, the program cost \$7,000 a month to feed all of the clients. James said the program's funding is currently at a serious low point, but here are yearlong fund-raisers the community can participate in. One such program is the adopt-a-client service, a \$60-per-client program that funds 20 meals at \$3 per person. If money can't be raised to support the program, some clients' services will be terminated.

"Many of the clients are in a low-income bracket," said James. "Their Social Security checks are eaten up by medication costs. Meals on Wheels provides them with a meal when they are unable to provide one or prepare one themselves."

But all is not bad. Recently, James submitted an essay to the Meals on Wheels of America to nominate a member for member of the year. Thelma McCoy, a Meals on Wheels volunteer and last year's president, won the award.

"The program will receive a much-needed \$1,000 grant from the Reynolds Aluminum Co. It's the second time in two years that we have received this award," said James.

WHO IS GOING TO CONTROL AN AMERICAN'S LIFE: THE AMERICAN OR GOVERNMENT?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. DEMINT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. Speaker, some in Washington and some in the media say disagreements in Congress are between the right and the left, liberals versus conservatives, Republicans versus Democrats. They say the debates are about which party is for Social Security, Medicare, education, or the environment. But we know that we are all committed to find the best solutions to these important issues.

The real debate on the floor of the House and the Senate and in all of our committees is about who is going to control one's life, one or the government.

There are some in Washington who believe one is better off if many of the decisions about one's life and the lives of one's family members are made here in Washington. Their intentions are good, and many times their programs sound good, but the evidence over the last 40 years is undeniable.

When Washington takes our money and makes the important decisions about our lives, we not only lose our freedom, but we lose the security which comes from having control of our own lives.

The Republicans in Congress believe that one is most secure when one is most free. That is why we call ourselves the GOP, the government of the people. We believe our job is not to

manage one's life, but to provide a framework of freedom so one can manage one's own life and have equal access to all the opportunities this country has to offer.

We believe in securing the future for every American by returning dollars, decisions, and freedoms back to the people, back to individuals, families, communities, businesses, and back to our States.

The GOP believes, just as my colleagues do, that we can best secure the future for every child by returning dollars and decisions for education to parents and to local schools.

There are some here in Washington that think we can run our schools better from the White House. We tried that, and our test scores and the quality of our schools declined since the Federal role expanded in the 1960s.

Today, Republicans in Congress have passed legislation that allows States to use Federal money without all the red tape and to decide how the money can best be used to help their schools. We worked to give teachers and principals the flexibility to restore common-sense discipline in our children's classrooms. We are working to return 95 percent of all Federal education dollars back to the classroom, where the money belongs and is needed for new books, supplies, and school repairs.

We all know that our children get the best education when parents, teachers, and principals have the flexibility and resources they need.

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We are making progress in education.

The GOP believes that we can best secure the future for every family by letting Americans keep more of what they earn. It is not fair to ask both parents to work harder and longer and then to take up to half of everything they make. High taxes create stress in our families and make it almost impossible to save for the future, for new homes, for education.

Republicans in Congress have already passed tax reductions that include child tax credits, education savings accounts, and less taxes on savings. Tomorrow, the GOP will pass legislation that will reduce the tax penalty on married couples, eliminate the earnings limits on senior citizens, lower capital gains tax, eliminate the death tax, and begin to lower taxes for everyone.

In addition to bringing tax fairness and relief, we are going to make sure that taxpayers' hard-earned money is wisely used. We know Americans work hard for every penny that they earn, and they should expect their government not to waste or abuse their money. Americans can be sure that we are making progress on tax relief and tax fairness.

The GOP believes that we can secure the future for every senior citizen by not spending one dime of Social Security and Medicare for other programs. No matter how good these other pro-

grams sound, taxpayers have worked hard to secure a retirement for themselves, and they should expect their retirement money to be there when they retire.

To safeguard American taxpayers' money, Republicans have created a lock box that will protect Social Security and Medicare and guaranty the benefits. And unlike some proposals that come out of Washington, we are going to stick to this pledge to the end. And we are glad that the AARP and the President have endorsed our lock box plan.

But we also know that Social Security and Medicare need repair. We are working hard to make sure Social Security and Medicare are there for future generations so all Americans can rest easy in their retirement knowing they have more control of their retirement income and health care.

In 1994, the American taxpayer trusted the GOP to lead Congress and make progress towards a more free and secure America. Since then we have balanced the budget and reformed welfare, putting over 4 million people to work. We have repealed some taxes passed by the President, passed tax credits and the largest tax relief package in 16 years.

We stopped the practice of spending Social Security and Medicare funds. We have given local schools the control and resources they need to succeed. And we have begun to rebuild our military.

The American people and our economy have responded. And while we still have much work to do—we are on the right path towards securing the future for every American. In the months to come, you will see us continue to return dollars, decisions and freedoms back home—back to you, your family, your businesses and your communities. Back to where it belongs and where progress begins.

We are Republicans, the government of the people, and we believe that Americans are most secure when you are most free, when you keep more of what you earn and make your own decisions, when you are in control of your life. We are committed to secure the future for every American by giving you that control, and we hope that every American will reach out for the freedoms and opportunities that come with being an essential part of the government of the people.

Mr. Speaker, we are Republicans, and the American taxpayer can trust us to make sure they are in control of their life instead of government.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REYNOLDS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MALONEY of Connecticut addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)