lifeblood of the Corps, so we have held the line! In this regard, what individual Marines are doing every day counts far more than anything that is done in Washington. The standards of our Corps are not simply maintained by generals, colonels, and sergeants major, but, far more importantly, by leaders throughout the Corps, at every level. The Marine conviction that Semper Fidelis is a way of life, not just a motto, speaks powerfully to the citizens whom we serve. It also unites us with our fellow Marines, past and present—inspiring us to push harder, to reach further, and to reject the very notion of failure or compromise.

Sustained and strengthened by the ethos of our Corps, you have accomplished a great deal during the past 4 years. I have been humbled to be part of your achievements and witness to your selfless devotion. Time and again, Marines distinguished themselves in contingencies around the world, across the spectrum of conflict. Marines from across the Total Force were the first to fight, the first to help, and the first to show America's flag—consistently demonstrating our resolve and readiness to win when called to action. With the involvement of the Fleet Marine Force and input from the entire Corps, the Warfighting Laboratory has looked hard at the 21st century strategic environment. Marines ''stole a march'' on change by testing new concepts and emerging technologies, exploring new tools for developing leaders and decisionmakers, and experimenting in the ''Three Block War.'' Our recruiters, drill instructors, and small unit leaders have implemented the Transformation Process and are recruiting, refining, and developing the ''Strategic Corporals'' for tomorrow's conflicts. Led by Marines at the Combat Development Command, we have deepened our understanding of operational maneuver from the sea (OMFTS), its enabling concepts and technologies, as well as its many challenges. The men and women serving in the many thankless billets at Headquarters Marine Corps and in the joint arena have developed and articulated our requirements for the future and have secured the resources to translate OMFTS into a reality. Our supporting establishment, at every post and station, has epitomized selflessness and dedication while providing for our readiness requirements. All these things are important—and they are the accomplishments of every Marine. None of them, however, are as significant as maintaining our hands on the twin touchstones of our Corps.

The words of my father rings as true today as when he first wrote them over 50 years ago:

We exist today—we flourish today—not because of what we know we are, or what we know we can do, but because of what the grassroots of our country believes we are and believes we can do . . . The American people believe that Marines are downright good for the country; that the Marines are masters of a form of unfailing alchemy which converts unoriented youths into proud, self-reliant stable citizens—citizens into whose hands the nation's affairs may safely be entrusted. . . And, likewise, should the people ever lose that conviction—as a result of our failure to meet their high—almost spiritual—standards, the Marine Corps will quickly disappear.

May God bless each and every one of you and may God bless our Corps!.

[Remarks for Pepperdine University Convocation Series, October 14, 1998]

COMMENTS ON CHARACTER

By Gen. Charles C. Krulak Commandant of the Marine Corps

I am happy to be here this morning—to have an opportunity to talk to the leaders and thinkers of tomorrow and, more importantly, the day after tomorrow.

I considered a few different topics to talk to you about this morning: The importance of my Christian faith in guiding my personal and professional life, the Marine Corps' intensive efforts to develop values in our newest Marines, or even my thoughts about our Nation's role in humanitarian missions around the globe . . . I will do that if you would like—but during the Q&As.

There is another topic that I would like to talk about today—one that is critical to each of us, our Nation, and our world—as we move toward the 21st Century . . . A topic that rarely gets talked about in forums such as this, which makes it all the more important to discuss. It serves as the foundation for all that we are, all that we do, and all that we will be . . . I will talk about the importance of character.

I can tell you from personal experience that combat is the most traumatic human event. It strips away an individual's veneer, exposing his true character. If a character flaw exists, it will appear in combat—guaranteed.

This morning, I will tell the story of an American whose true character was tested and exposed in the crucible of war. I will then draw some conclusions that are applicable to how the rest of us should live our lives . . . lives where combat will hopefully never play a role. He was a 19 year old Marine-about the same age as most of you in the audience this morning. His name was LCPL Grable. He was a man of courage . . . a man of character . . . and this is his story . . . Vietnam . . . It was 0600, the third of June, 1966. I was in command of ''G'' Company, Second Battalion, First Marine Regiment. I was a First Lieutenant at the time, and had been given this command because the previous commander had been killed about one week earlier. My company had been given a simple mission that began with a helicopter assault. We would land in a * * *

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of lesser character. Moral cowards never win in war—moral cowards never win in life. They might believe that they are winning a few battles here and there, but their victories are never sweet, they never stand the test of time, and they never serve to inspire others. In fact, each and every one of a moral coward's ''supposed victories'' ultimately leads them to failure.

Those who have the courage to face up to ethical challenges in their daily lives will find that same courage can be drawn upon in times of great stress, in times of great controversy, in times of the never ending battle between good and evil . . .

All around our society you see immoral behavior . . . lying, cheating, stealing, drug and alcohol abuse, prejudice, and a lack of respect for human dignity and the law. In the not too distant future, each of you is going to be confronted with situations where you will have to deal straight-up with issues such as these. The question is, what will you do when you are? What action will you take? You will know what to do—the challenge is—will you DO what you know is right? It takes moral courage to hold your ideals above yourself. It is the DEFINING aspect . . . When the test of your character and moral courage comes—regardless of the noise and confusion around you—there will be a moment of inner silence in which you must decide what to do. Your character will be defined by your decision and it is yours and yours alone to make. I am confident you will each make the right one. When that moment of silence comes and you are wrestling with your decision, consider this poem:

THE EAGLE AND THE WOLF

There is a great battle
that rages inside me.

One side is a soaring eagle
Everything the eagle stands for
is good and true and beautiful.

It soars above the clouds.
Even though it dips down into the valleys,
it lays its eggs on the mountain tops.

The other side of me is a howling wolf.
And that raging, howling wolf
represents the worst that is in me.

He eats upon my downfalls and
justifies himself by his presence
in the pact.

Who wins this great battle? . . .
The one I feed.

May God bless you and Semper Fidelis!

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, in those remarks, Chuck Krulak talked about character and individual responsibility as it applies to today's America and all of the obligations and challenges that we face today. Character; character—as usual, General Charles C. Krulak simply told the truth. We will be a better nation if we but heed his advice.

Semper Fidelis Commandant Krulak and thank you.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, am I correct in assuming that this is the time, under a previous order, to proceed to the consideration of the agriculture appropriations bill for fiscal year 2000?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct. Morning business is now closed.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to the consideration of S. 1233, which the clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

A bill (S. 1233) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Appropriations Committee staff members and intern be granted floor privilege during consideration of this bill and any votes that may occur in relation thereto: Rebecca Davies, Martha Scott Poindexter, Hunt Shipman, Les Spivey and Buddy Allen.

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

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to present for the Senate's consideration, S. 1233, the fiscal year 2000 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food

and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. This bill provides fiscal year 2000 funding for all programs and activities of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. The Forest Service is not included. It is funded in the Interior appropriations bill.

As reported, the bill recommends total new budget authority for fiscal year 2000 of $60.7 billion. This is $6.2 billion more than the fiscal year 1999 enacted level and $1.2 billion less than the President's fiscal year 2000 budget request.

Changes in mandatory funding requirements account for the overall increase from the fiscal year 1999 enacted level primarily due to a $5.9 billion estimated increase in the required payment to reimburse the Commodity Credit Corporation for net realized losses. In fact, I point out that just over three-quarters of the total $60.7 billion recommended by this bill is for mandatory appropriations, over which the Appropriations Committee has no effective control.

The spending levels for these programs are governed by authorizing statutes. The mandatory programs funded by the bill include not only the payment to reimburse the Commodity Credit Corporation for net realized losses which I just mentioned, but the food stamp and child nutrition programs, and the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation. Less than one-fourth of the total funding recommended by this bill is for discretionary programs and activities.

Including congressional budget scorekeeping adjustments and prior year spending actions, this bill recommends total discretionary spending of $13.983 billion in budget authority and $14.254 billion in outlays for fiscal year 2000. These amounts are consistent with the subcommittee's discretionary spending allocations.

I will take a few minutes to summarize the bill's major funding recommendations. For the Food Safety and Inspection Service, appropriations of $638 million are recommended, $21 million more than the fiscal year 1999 level. For the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, $445 million is recommended, $11 million more than the 1999 level. Appropriations of USDA headquarters operations and for other agriculture marketing and regulatory programs are approximately the same as the 1999 appropriations levels, with the exception of a $7 million increase in the mandatory USDA rental payment to the General Services Administration, a $7 million reduction in funding for the census of agriculture, and increased funding for programs and activities included in the President's food safety initiative.

For farm credit programs, the bill funds an estimated $3.1 billion total loan program level, $798 million more than the fiscal year 1999 level, excluding additional loans funded through fiscal 1999 emergency appropriations. The amount recommended includes $559 million for farm ownership loans and $2.4 billion for farm operating loans.

Total appropriations of $795 million are recommended for salaries and expenses of the Farm Service Agency. This is $80 million more than the 1999 level and the same as the President's budget request.

For agriculture research, education, and extension activities, the bill provides total appropriations of $1.8 billion. Included in this amount is a reduction from fiscal year 1999 of $3.4 million for Agricultural Research Service, ARS, buildings and facilities, a $24 million increase for research activities of the ARS; and a $12 million increase in total funding for the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

For USDA conservation programs, total funding of $807 million is provided, $15 million more than the 1999 level. This includes $656 million for conservation operations, $99 million for watershed and flood prevention operations, and $35 million for the resource conservation and development program.

USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service is funded at a level of $140 million. In addition, a total program level of $946 million is recommended for the Public Law 480 program, including $159 million for Title I and $787 million for Title II of the program. These amounts, together with projected carryover balances, will, at minimum, be sufficient to maintain the fiscal year 1999 funded P.L. 480 Titles I and II levels of $220 million and $837 million, respectively, in fiscal year 2000.

The bill also provides a total program level of $2.2 billion for rural economic and community development programs. Included in this amount is $718 million for the Rural Community Advancement Program, $55 million for the Rural Business-Cooperative Service, and a total of $1.6 billion program level for rural electric and telecommunications loans.

In addition, the bill devotes additional resources to those programs which provide affordable, safe, and decent housing for low-income individuals and families living in rural America.

Estimated rural housing loan authorizations funded by this bill total $4.6 billion, a $343 million increase from the fiscal year 1999 level. Included in this amount is $4.3 billion in section 502 low-income housing direct and guaranteed loans and $114 million in section 515 rental housing loans.

In addition, $640 million is included for rental assistance program. This is the $200 million more than the budget request and $57 million more than the 1999 appropriations level.

Over 58 percent of the bill's total funding, $36 billion, is provided for USDA's domestic food assistance programs. This includes $9.6 billion for child nutrition programs, including $13 million for the newly-authorized school breakfast pilot projects and evaluation; $4 billion for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, WIC; $131 million for the commodity assistance program; and $21.6 billion for the food stamp program. The bill also provides first-time funding of $3 billion for Bill Emerson and Mickey Leland Hunger Fellowships through the Congressional Hunger Center.

For those independent agencies funded by the bill, the Committee provides total appropriations of $1.1 billion. Included in this amount is $61 million for the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, and $1 billion for the Food and Drug Administration, FDA.

Total appropriations recommended for salaries and expenses of the FDA are $65 million more than the 1999 level, and reflect the full increase requested in the budget for FDA rental payments to the General Services Administration, an additional $25 million for FDA food safety initiatives, and an increase of $28 million for premarket application review.

In addition, the bill makes available $145 million in Prescription Drug User Fee Act collections, $13 million more than the fiscal year 1999 level.

The increase provided for premarket application review is the full amount requested by the President for these activities through a combination of direct appropriations and collections from proposed new user fees. By FDA's own admission, new blood products, animal and generic drugs, medical devices, and food additives all suffer from lengthy review time, far short of meeting the statutory performance requirements. This increase is essential to enable FDA to perform its core statutory mission of reviewing drugs, foods, medical devices and products within statutory time frames and to ensure patients' speedy access to new products and the latest technology.

I point out to my colleagues that the discretionary budget authority allocation for this bill is nearly the same as the CBO baseline level, or a ''freeze'' at the 1999 enacted appropriations level. To provide the selected increases I just cited and to maintain funding for essential farm, housing, and rural development programs, several mandatory funding restrictions are included in the bill. Modest limitations are imposed on Food Stamp program commodity purchases, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and on new acreage enrollments in the Wetlands Reserve Program. Funding for the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems is limited to $50 million, and restrictions are imposed on fiscal year 2000 funding for the Conservation Farm Option Program and the Fund for Rural America.

I also point out to my colleagues that although the total discretionary spending recommended by this bill is approximately $190 million in budget

authority below the President's request level, the President's proposed budget relies on additional revenues and savings to accommodate much higher levels of discretionary spending. The President's budget proposes to generate a net total of $532 million in collections from new user fees proposals; to make an additional $180 million available by double-counting savings used to offset 1999 appropriations; to shift the Foreign Market Development Cooperator program from the discretionary to the mandatory side of the ledger, saving $28 million; to defer until fiscal year 2001 a portion of the funds needed to meet rental assistance requirements, saving $200 million; and to redirect funds from ongoing projects and Congressional initiatives to pay for Presidential initiatives.

We do not propose savings from scorekeeping tactics, or have the luxury of being able to rely on revenues and savings from legislative proposals that have not been acted on by the Congress or signed into law. Consequently, within the discretionary spending limitations established for this bill, we have not been able to afford many of the discretionary spending increases and new initiatives proposed by the administration.

I am going to highlight what I think to be some of the important provisions of this bill and discuss how the subcommittee reached its decisions as to the priorities we felt were important enough to include for increases in spending and how we generally approached developing this legislation.

As the occupant of the Chair may well remember, we decided this year to conduct our hearings based on subject matter categories. We defined food safety as one of the highest priority interests in the country today, and one of the most challenging issues.

After hearing the Secretary of Agriculture present the overall budget request for the Department of Agriculture this year, we then began concentrating on the issue areas we thought to be considered high priority areas of interest. Food safety was the first one we considered, with witnesses being the highest ranking officials in the administration with responsibilities over those areas of the President's budget. Testifying were the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, for example; the Director of the Food Safety and Inspection Service and the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta was represented at this hearing as well. Based on our findings and the information we were able to obtain, this committee has recommended increases for funding of programs and activities that come under this general issue area.

We also want to point out that it was clear to us, because of the programs and activities and hard work in the past, we are able to enjoy the safest food supply in the world, the most abundant food supply, the most affordable food supply. The fact of the matter is, Americans ought to feel very confident and comfortable with the inspection programs, with the recent initiatives that have been developed to make them better, more effective, and the funding levels that are contained in this legislation to help assure that we continue to improve upon the record of the past.

There have been problems, and we are frightened when we hear about contaminated food products. We think more needs to be done in terms of educating the public in the handling of food and in the preparation of foodstuffs.

At the same time, there are some responsibilities that peculiarly belong in the hands of the Federal Government. Our challenge is to make sure those programs are being administered in the way they should be, in the way Congress provided the authority for them to be administered, and that they are using the funds effectively.

I believe we can be confident in the expression of support we have for the food safety initiative. We have added funds for that and in other ways we think we have strengthened the activities of the Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration and others as they relate to food safety.

I am also happy to report that we were able to recommend funding for important nutrition programs. People may not realize it, but almost 60 percent of the funding in this bill is allocated to food and nutrition programs. Of the total amount of $60.7 billion, almost 60 percent of it will be spent in the year 2000 to help provide food that is needed by those who cannot afford to adequately meet their own needs and the needs of their families, and for other programs, like the School Lunch Program which we know is tied directly to child health and learning and school performance.

There are other programs, as well, for those who are out of work and disabled. The Food Stamp Program is one of the best known and also is funded at a high level, although the trend has been going down. That is an indication of the strength of the economy and the fact that when we do have a good economic growth program and jobs are being provided, less money is needed for the Food Stamp Program. That is one reason we were able to hold down the increase in the mandatory programs, because there is a reduction of about $1 billion in the expected cost of the Food Stamp Program for next year as compared to last year. That is good news.

We are increasing the funds for the WIC Program, the Special Supplemental Feeding Program for Women, Infants, and Children. This is the special program that deals with those women who are pregnant, and young children who need special assistance. We are increasing the funds so that those needs will be met as a result of the spending in this bill.

There was a pilot program authorized last year by the agriculture committees that have legislative jurisdiction over these programs for a school breakfast program. This will be a demonstration program that would provide free breakfasts to all children in a school to find out what effect that would have, whether the need is there, whether the demand is there. We provided funds to start up and evaluate a pilot breakfast program in this legislation.

We have added funds for a fellowship program for the Congressional Hunger Center. These fellowships will be named for Bill Emerson, a former Congressman from Missouri, and Mickey Leland, former Congressman from Texas, both of whom have been instrumental in their careers when they served in the Congress on hunger issues and in dealing with problems of those who do not have enough to eat.

We are hopeful the entire nutrition area will meet with favor in the Senate because of the way we analyzed and went about trying to identify the priority needs, looking at the available funding and trying to match those in a reasonable and thoughtful way in the bill, and I think we have done that.

Research is an area a lot of people do not think about too much unless they are involved in it or benefit directly from it. But it is a part of this Department's activities where we have recommended additional spending, additional spending compared with last year and, in many cases, additional spending as compared with the President's budget request.

We think these are wise investments in making sure we identify the emerging technologies that can benefit production agriculture, farmers who are out there trying to deal with the big problem of prospective low income because of low commodity prices.

One way you can make that up or help deal with that challenge is to improve yields of crops, to develop ways to operate a farm more efficiently, to cut down the costs of the so-called inputs into production agriculture, the costs of pesticides, herbicides, fertilizer, and other variable costs of production.

One way to get at this is develop new techniques. Biotechnology is one example. Seed genetics is another. Private industry is contributing an enormous amount of research and development in these areas, but the Federal Government has a role to play, too.

In many cases, what the Federal Government starts in the way of research in some of these areas is carried on by others in the private sector. Colleges and universities have laboratories and students and scientists involved in many of these research projects. So across the country, we see very important work being done in agriculture-related research that will help farmers achieve profits in agriculture in the future and help make our food supply safer, help make production agriculture more compatible with the environment through more effective pesticides, and other inputs in production

agriculture that are very costly to the farmer but also contain some inherent environmental risk as well and have to be closely monitored. So I think agriculture research, particularly ARS research activities, as they are increased in this bill, are justified because of the end results that we think will flow from these activities.

Another area that we emphasized in this legislation is conservation, not just protecting our land and water resources from erosion or contamination but also using incentives in this legislation to encourage farmers to manage their lands, to enhance wildlife habitat, and to be more sensitive to the needs of those who enjoy the outdoors for hiking along the beautiful rivers and streams we have in our country. All of these are very important national assets.

So this legislation funds programs that are designed to achieve the goal of protecting our environment, protecting our land from erosion, protecting our water from contamination.

One example of a fairly new program that farmers are beginning to appreciate more and more is the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. Funds are made available directly through the Commodity Credit Corporation to encourage farmers who participate in and who want to be involved in this program with new techniques in ways of improving wildlife habitat on their land, devoting certain acreage to wildlife plantings or conservation techniques. We are finding that is a very important new program.

We are also providing more funds for wetlands conservation program activity than ever before in this bill. The Conservation Reserve Program is another important program. It has led to a lot of tree planting, a lot of conservation practices, idling acres that had been in production agriculture that probably should not have been in production agriculture from the beginning and defined by those at the Department of Agriculture, who have responsibilities for soil conservation programs, as erodible, highly erodible lands. So we have provided the continuation of funding for that program as well.

So this is an effort to establish priorities and to see that within the limitations that we have for discretionary spending, that we target the funds where we think they are very definitely needed. We think this is one of those areas.

Let me just say something about farm income support. We had an entire hearing looking at the prospects for farm income. The chief economist at the Department was there. Other high-ranking officials of the Department of Agriculture came and testified as well. We learned what a lot of people already know who watch this situation very closely; that farm income is going to be down, net farm income, by over $3 billion in this next crop year, which has already begun.

You compare that with last year's level of income which was substantially lower than the year before, that triggered a $6 billion disaster assistance program, and you understand how serious the income situation is for those involved in farming in America today.

We talked about what could be done, what programs are in place that we could fund or continue or improve that would improve the likelihood that farmers could achieve a better result than projected.

Some things came to mind: Doing a better job in the promotion of American agriculture products overseas, trying to make sure that our trade relations are good, getting the Government more actively involved in taking up for farmers in the sale of what they produced in overseas markets.

If they are denied access to a market or if American commodities are being discriminated against in some way, the Government has an obligation to get actively involved and not just say: farmers, sorry; exporters, sorry. You are on your own. This is a business country, and free enterprise means that you have to get out there and do this on your own.

We do not agree with that hands-off attitude in this committee. We are funding programs that will help ensure that farmers get a better chance of selling what they produce in overseas markets.

Breaking down barriers to trade, sometimes Congress does itself in on this issue. I hear that we are considering taking up a bill to put imports on steel. Somebody may say: Who cares? What does that have to do with farming? If you do something like that, immediately you reap the whirlwind, because those that you put a quota on, who are trying to sell you something, put a quota on you. And what do we sell most of? We have a surplus of trade in agriculture commodities.

We have a deficit in trade on most other things. We have an overall trade deficit. Agriculture is one of the few sectors of our economy with a positive trade balance. But we are going to undo that if we are not careful as we take on some of these issues that may sound good for the moment or please some organized labor union. We are going to find out that is not very smart. I hope the Senate will be careful as it approaches issues like that.

But one thing we are doing, legislation reported by the Agriculture Committee, which I hope the Senate will pass, which does something about rationalizing the attitudes of how to use sanctions and imposing sanctions on trade when we are mad at some country because they do not behave in a way that we think they ought to.

In the past, we have seen administrations—including this one; others, too—impose sanctions to try to punish that country. What happens is we end up punishing our farmers because we cannot export our agriculture commodities.

We are exempting, as the Senate has recently acted on, food in trade relations. We know that food should not be used as a weapon. We are learning that. There are a few clear examples where we are going to continue to do it, I suppose—Cuba, some other countries that are in that category—but generally speaking, we are changing the policy so that farmers will not have to pay the price and bear the brunt of American foreign policy by giving up trading opportunities and the opportunity to export and sell farm commodities in the international market. But nonetheless, there are going to be problems, even though we are trying to do the right thing on trade sanctions reform, on fair and reciprocal trade relations.

Tax reform is another jurisdictional committee responsibility, but we are seeing progress being made there. Interest rates are a big factor because that is a major input into the costs of production agriculture in some areas of the country, particularly in the South. We are hopeful that the interest rates can remain low and will not be increased. That can be a very serious detriment to the effort to try to improve farm income.

There are some in our committee who wanted to attach to this bill a $6.5 billion amendment for disaster assistance. It was offered in our committee, but I made a motion to table the amendment. That motion carried. Then in the full committee, while it was mentioned as a possibility for debate in the full committee, it was not offered in the full committee. But we have been told there will be an amendment offered to add $6.5 billion or thereabouts to this bill for disaster assistance for farmers.

I do not think there is any question that farmers are in trouble this year because of low commodity prices, and other factors, some of which I have mentioned. We do not know what the weather situation is going to be. This is the beginning of the crop year.

To try to anticipate right now what the situation is going to be at harvest time and at the time when most farmers may be selling their crops, we know that it is likely that income is going to be down. So what we hope we will see is an administration that remains very much involved in monitoring the situation that confronts production agriculture and submit to the Congress a request for additional funding for disaster assistance as may be needed based on the circumstances. Senators will remember that this month the Department of Agriculture is just now getting around to sending to a lot of farmers benefit checks that were approved last October in the disaster bill which was passed by Congress in the total amount of about $6 billion. Some $2.4 billion of that amount was for weather-related disasters, multiyear disasters.

Arguably, the administration had a difficult time determining eligibility, settling on the regulations to implement the program. It was a big job;

there is no question about that. But it took a long time.

We responded, when we were requested to provide additional funding for staffing to process the applications from farmers who wanted to apply for benefits under that program. We provided in the initial bill about $40 million for that purpose for additional funds for the Farm Service Agency offices. Then later this year we were asked to provide more. We responded and provided more. As a matter of fact, in the supplemental that was passed in May, there was about $575 million of additional funding approved for the Department of Agriculture, a good bit of which was related to the continuing disaster program and the administration of that program that was identified last year by Congress and the administration.

One thing that stands out in my memory about this disaster assistance issue is that this bill last year, when we were on the floor presenting it to the Senate, had included an issue relating to disaster assistance. What the Senate did was try to listen to other Senators. We were here on the floor discussing alternatives for responding to the disaster. We ended up, in the course of handling this bill, developing a disaster assistance program of $4 billion for America's farmers for emergency disaster assistance. Guess what happened. The President vetoed the bill.

I am going to read you what the President said in his veto message to the Congress after vetoing the agriculture appropriations bill last year:

> I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 4101, the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999. I am vetoing this bill because it fails to address adequately the crisis now gripping our Nation's farm community.

Then, after four paragraphs or so, the President says this:

> I am extremely disappointed that the Congress has reacted to this agriculture emergency situation by sending me a bill that fails to provide an adequate safety net for our farmers. I have repeatedly stated that I would veto any emergency farm assistance bill if it did not adequately address our farmers' immediate needs, and this bill does not do enough.

Then at the end of the message:

> Therefore, as I return this bill, I again call on the Congress to send me a comprehensive plan before this session ends that adequately responds to the very real needs of our farmers at this difficult time. William J. Clinton, the White House, October 7, 1998.

That wasn't very long ago. Well, what happened next was, we reconsidered the agriculture appropriations bill in the Congress. The House and Senate conferees got back together with representatives of the administration. This was a bipartisan effort to try to reach some agreement as to what would be an adequate amount of disaster assistance. We had tried to get the administration involved early in the process, and we didn't have any luck. There was no active involvement in providing information, any guidance as to what the President's views were. There were differences of opinion all over Capitol Hill as to what should be done. Then we passed a $6 billion disaster assistance package in the Omnibus Appropriations Act at the end of last year's Congress. That was signed by the President.

Now we are just getting all of those benefits delivered to the farmers. This is June, and it was June when the last checks were supposed to be going out from that October disaster assistance bill last year.

What I have suggested we do, rather than doing what we did last year, which provoked a veto—Congress acted first. We went forward and tried to develop a sensitive and, we thought, thoughtful response. The President gave us the back of his hand, in my view, with an effort to win political points with a distressed agriculture community, and said: Congress was not generous enough, but I will be more generous. I will insist that they spend more.

Well, we are not going to fall for that again. I am not going to recommend to this Senate that we pick a number and try to satisfy the President and guess at what the weather situation is going to be throughout the country, what the yields are going to be in all the different commodities, who is going to have the big problems, the serious problems, and who may be able to weather it without disaster assistance this year.

I have been joined in an effort by 21 other Senators. This letter was sent to the President on June 15, which is the day we proceeded with the markup on this bill. I will read it into the RECORD:

> DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: American farmers are currently facing one of the most severe economic situations in recent history. Last year, rising world commodity supplies, coupled with weakening international demand for U.S. agricultural products, greatly reduced farm prices and the value of U.S. farm exports. Congress responded by providing emergency farm assistance totaling $5.9 billion.
>
> Many farmers who struggled with cash flow problems in 1998 will likely see their problems worsen in 1999. It is projected that net cash farm income will decline by $3.6 billion this year. Also, according to USDA, 1998 net farm income for wheat, corn, soybeans, upland cotton, and rice crops was 17 percent below the previous 5-year average. For 1999 crops, current projections indicate that income will be 27 percent below the previous 5-year average.
>
> We are writing to invite your personal attention to the statement of managers language accompanying the recent emergency supplemental appropriations bill that calls upon the Administration to monitor the agriculture situation closely and submit a request to the Congress for any additional funds needed to address this potential farm crisis.

The letter was signed by this Senator and 21 other Senators.

We have not had a response, and I did not expect one by now from the President. But the point of this is to involve the White House in the process up front, at the outset, rather than presume to be able to write a disaster assistance package at this point in this crop year that would anticipate everything that is going to happen that would affect production agriculture in this crop year.

It is just impossible. I didn't think we had a member of our subcommittee smart enough to do that. I am not sure there is a Senator serving today smart enough to do that. There is nothing wrong with working, though, with the administration to prepare and to think about the options.

That is a good idea. Farm groups have met with the President. We have invited representatives of farm organizations to meet with Senators. I am sure that has been happening on the House side, too. We have had hearings in our Agriculture Committee with representatives of producers and other associations who are familiar with this situation. And the outlook is not good. It is serious.

I want to be sure that everybody understands we are aware of the problem. We want to be actively involved in helping to deal with it in a fair and thoughtful way. We also recognize the limitations we have under the Budget Act that was passed and signed by the President under the budget resolution adopted by the Congress. So this subcommittee isn't going to presume to do anything that violates the provisions of those legislative enactments. But we are prepared to work in a cooperative way with all concerned to reach a just and fair solution and a response that is sensitive to the problems as they exist in agriculture.

So I invite Senators to review this legislation. I am hopeful it will meet with the approval of the Senate, and that we can proceed with considering any suggestions that Senators have for changes in the bill.

The programs and activities included in this bill are, for the most part, funded at or near the 1999 levels. There are some increases recommended. These include $80 million to meet the President's requested level for salaries and expenses of the Farm Service Agency, which administers the farm programs; $53 million for agricultural research; $15 billion for conservation operations; $21 million for the Food Safety and Inspection Service; $114 million for the WIC Program, to maintain an average monthly program participation level of $7.4 million in fiscal year 2000; and $65 million for food safety and premarket application review activities of the Food and Drug Administration.

Food safety, as I pointed out, continues to be a high priority of this committee. The bill provides the funds necessary to ensure that American consumers continue to have the safest food supply in the world. Not only does the bill provide increased funds required for meat and poultry inspection activities for the Food Safety and Inspection Service, it provides total

funding of $321 million, which is a $46 million increase from the 1999 level, for Department of Agriculture and Food and Drug Administration programs and activities included in the President's food safety initiative.

I also want to thank the distinguished ranking member of the subcommittee, the Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. KOHL, as well as all of the other members of the subcommittee for their support and cooperation in putting this bill together. I believe the bill represents a balanced and responsible set of funding recommendations within the limited resources available to the subcommittee. I hope the Senate will support it.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a copy of the letter I read and addressed to the President be printed in the RECORD, with the signatures of all Senators who signed it.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, June 15, 1999.

Hon. WILLIAM J. CLINTON,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: American farmers are currently facing one of the most severe economic situations in recent history. Last year, rising world commodity supplies, coupled with weakening international demand for U.S. agricultural products, greatly reduced farm prices and the value of U.S. farm exports. Congress responded by providing emergency farm assistance totaling $5.9 billion.

Many farmers who struggled with cash flow problems in 1998 will likely see their problems worsen in 1999. It is projected that net cash farm income will decline by $3.6 billion this year. Also, according to USDA, 1998 net farm income for wheat, corn, soybeans, upland cotton, and rice crops was 17 percent below the previous 5-year average. For 1999 crops, current projections indicate that income will be 27 percent below the previous 5-year average.

We are writing to invite your personal attention to the statement of managers language accompanying the recent emergency supplemental appropriations bill that calls upon the Administration to monitor the agriculture situation closely and submit a request to the Congress for any additional funds needed to address this potential farm crisis.

Sincerely,

Thad Cochran, Conrad Burns, Craig Thomas, Wayne Allard, Slade Gorton, Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Ted Stevens, Larry E. Craig, Trent Lott, Chuck Grassley, Mike Crapo, Paul Coverdell, Kay Bailey Hutchison, Kit Bond, Pat Roberts, Orrin Hatch, Mitch McConnell, Jeff Sessions, Michael B. Enzi, Peter Fitzgerald, Sam Brownback, Chuck Hagel.

Mr. KOHL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin is recognized.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, I am very glad to join my friend from Mississippi, Senator COCHRAN, in bringing to the floor S. 1233, the fiscal year 2000 appropriations bill for Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies. I am grateful to Senator COCHRAN, the Chairman of the subcommittee, for his gracious approach to crafting this bill and for the fair and reasonable manner in which the interests of all Senators have been given consideration.

Senator COCHRAN has outlined the general spending levels for items included in this bill. I would like to emphasize to all Senators the importance of the programs funded by this bill, and the need to ensure its passage. This bill provides funding for programs vital for our nation's continued leadership in agricultural production through research, implementation of farming practices, and marketing. This bill also includes funding to protect the environment, to restore economic prosperity to rural America, and to improve the standard of living there. This bill provides funds to help feed the most vulnerable of our populations at home and abroad, and this bill helps American farmers maintain a strong presence in foreign markets while, at the same time, combating the destructive consequences of unfair foreign trade. Also, this bill provides funds important to protect the public health of this nation in the areas of food safety, medical drugs and devices, and oversight of our blood supply.

There will likely be some Senators who will question whether the levels of spending in this bill are adequate. When our subcommittee received its initial allocation for discretionary spending, I had grave concerns that we would not be able to craft a bill that I could support. I was prepared to vote against the allocations at that time, but Chairman STEVENS persuaded me that we needed to move forward in order for the full Senate to see what effect the discretionary caps will have on ongoing programs in fiscal year 2000. Fortunately, since then our subcommittee did receive an increase in the allocation, and I supported reporting this bill at both the subcommittee and full committee levels.

I have received a communication from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget regarding this bill. While that letter describes certain programs for which the Administration would like to see increased funding, there is nothing in the letter to indicate that the President would not approve this bill if sent to the White House in its present form. Likewise, I have letters from Secretary Glickman that makes appeals for increased funding in some areas, and at the appropriate time, I will ask unanimous consent that these letters be entered into the RECORD.

The Senate Report to accompany this bill begins with the following statement, ''Given the budgetary constraints that the Committee faces, the bill as reported provides the proper amount of emphasis on agricultural and rural development programs, and on other programs and activities funded by the bill.'' I believe this statement to be true. Senator COCHRAN has done an outstanding job in crafting a bill that is fair, and goes far in meeting the expectations of all Senators, and in view of the foregoing statement, I join Senator COCHRAN in supporting this bill.

Still, we should all give pause to consider the first four words of the statement I quoted above, ''Given the budgetary constraints'' and the implication of those words for the work that this Congress must complete before September 30th. In terms of the bill before us today, each Senator will have to consider for his or her self whether the ''budgetary constraints'' have weakened the programs in this bill beyond the point they can allow. Over the past several years, we have seen programs at USDA, FDA, and the other agencies funded by this bill, suffer a slow strangulation that is affecting programs and services to the American people and the ability of the agencies to carry them out.

I do support my chairman, Senator COCHRAN, in urging the passage of this bill, but I seriously hope that we have all come to the realization that continued reductions in these programs must come to a halt. It is for the full Senate to decide whether we have already gone too far.

Mr. President, during committee debate on this bill, an amendment was discussed, though never offered, that involved dairy pricing issues. That amendment would have extended the life of the Northeast dairy compact and created new compacts in other regions. In committee, I was willing to delay the agriculture spending bill indefinitely to avoid inclusion of such an amendment. It concerns complex issues in the jurisdiction of the Agriculture and Judiciary Committees—issues that have no place on a funding bill. Also, if passed, the amendment would do unacceptable damage to the dairy industry in the State of Wisconsin and all around the Upper Midwest. And finally, it would put in place permanently and nationally an unprecedented policy of regional protectionism.

For these reasons, I, and many of my colleagues, oppose such an amendment adamantly and will do everything within our rights to keep it off of this bill. To that end, I regret to inform my colleagues, I will not be able to clear any amendments, no matter how uncontroversial, or agree to any manager's package, until it is clear no destructive dairy amendment will be offered or included in this bill.

Mr. President, at this time I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and letters from the Secretary of Agriculture regarding this bill.

There being no objection, the letters were ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT,
Washington, DC, June 17, 1999.

Hon. HERBERT KOHL,
Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies Appropriations, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR KOHL: The purpose of this letter is to provide the Administration's views on the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, FY 2000, as reported by the Senate Subcommittee. Since the Administration has not had an opportunity to review the Subcommittee's bill and report language, our comments are based on preliminary information. As the Committee develops its version of the bill, your consideration of the Administration's views would be appreciated.

The allocation of discretionary resources available to the Senate under the Congressional Budget Resolution is simply inadequate to make the necessary investments that our citizens need and expect. The President's FY 2000 Budget proposes levels of discretionary spending that meet such needs while conforming to the Bipartisan Budget Agreement by making savings proposals in mandatory and other programs available to help finance this spending. Congress has approved, and the President has signed into law, nearly $29 billion of such offsets in appropriations legislation since 1995. The Administration urges the Congress to consider such proposals.

The Administration appreciates efforts by the Subcommittee to accommodate certain of the President's priorities within the 302(b) allocation. However, the Subcommittee bill is over $500 million, or four percent, below the program level requested by the President. The FY 2000 Budget would increase spending within the discretionary caps for agriculture and other programs in the bill by 3.6 percent over comparable FY 1999 spending. We urge the Committee to consider the over $600 million in user fees proposed in the Budget in order to fund high-priority programs. Given the current period of financial stress in the agricultural sector, now is not the time to reduce assistance to farmers, ranchers, and rural residents.

Below is a discussion of our specific concerns with the Subcommittee bill. We look forward to working with you to resolve these concerns as the bill moves forward.

FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION

While the Administration is pleased that the Subcommittee has reportedly provided an increase over the FY 1999 enacted level for the FDA, we are disappointed that the Subcommittee has apparently not funded the full request for the FDA, including important youth tobacco prevention activities and the proposed seafood inspection program transfer.

The Administration is concerned that the Subcommittee's apparent reduction of $40 million from the President's request for non-foods/tobacco FDA activities would jeopardize the FDA's ability to improve the public health infrastructure through enhanced product safety assurance and injury reporting systems.

The Administration is committed to Youth Tobacco Prevention activities and urges the Committee to provide the requested increase of $34 million for these programs. Every day, three thousand young people become regular smokers. Reducing young people's tobacco use would improve public health for generations to come. This is particularly important in light of the recent decision of the conferees on the FY 1999 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act to permit States to retain the entire amount secured from tobacco companies without any commitment whatsoever from the States that those funds be used to reduce youth smoking. To help discourage youth smoking, we urge the Congress to consider the Administration proposal to increase tobacco taxes.

FOOD SAFETY INITIATIVE

The Administration appreciates the Subcommittee's support for the President's Food Safety Initiative through increases above the enacted and House bill levels provided to USDA and FDA. Nonetheless, we are concerned that the Committee has reportedly provided only $46 million of the $62 million increase over FY 1999 levels requested in this bill for the Initiative. American consumers enjoy the world's safest food supply, but still too many Americans get sick, and in some cases die, from preventable food-borne diseases. The President's requested increase would provide critical resources to expand USDA's and FDA's food safety research and risk assessment capabilities. We strongly urge the Committee to provide full funding at the requested levels for these activities and consider the Administration's proposal to charge user fees for Federal meat and poultry inspection services in support of a safe food supply.

WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN PROGRAM

The Administration strongly supports the $33 million increase for WIC over the House level. The Committee mark should sustain a participation level of 7.4 million in FY 2000. We remain concerned, however, that this is still insufficient to support the proposed average monthly participation level of 7.5 million, thereby not achieving our longstanding 7.5 million goal.

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE RESEARCH

The Administration strongly objects to any provision of the Committee bill that would prohibit the use of Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) funds for research and evaluations on nutrition programs. To address program integrity and performance issues properly, it is crucial that research on nutrition programs also occur in the context of the programs' administration. We urge the Committee to provide funding for these activities within FNS.

COMMON COMPUTING ENVIRONMENT

The Administration is very concerned by the Subcommittee's decision not to fund the Common Computing Environment, either directly through the Support Service Bureau as requested in the President's Budget or by providing additional funds in the county-office agency salaries and expense accounts. Some in Congress have criticized USDA this year for delays in providing the crop-loss assistance funds to farmers that were provided in P.L. 105–277, the FY 1999 Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, and for long waiting periods some farmers and rural residents have faced in receiving other assistance through USDA county offices. Yet this bill would not provide the funds needed to address the very problems that contributed to the delays. At a time when the farm community is under financial stress and the demand for farm credit and other programs is high, the need for timely and efficient service to producers and rural residents has never been greater. Without the proposed $74 million in funding, it will not be possible to modernize the technology in USDA's local field offices, create ''one-stop shopping'' for rural customers, and promptly deliver the programs that Congress enacts with available staffing levels.

CONSERVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

The Subcommittee bill appears to cut spending on key USDA conservation programs by at least $140 million from the President's request. The $26 million reduction in the Environmental Quality Incentives program (EQIP) would mean 13,000 farmers and ranchers not receiving needed financial and technical assistance to stop soil erosion, improve waste treatment in animal feeding operations, and implement other voluntary conservation measures critical to protecting our natural resources. To further advance this important work, including addressing the significant backlog of farmers' requests for aid, the Administration requested a $100 million increase in the EQIP program as part of its Clean Water Action Plan. The combination of the EQIP reduction and the Subcommittee's failure to fund the requested additional funds for technical assistance to animal feeding operations could damage livestock owners' progress toward ensuring that their operations are environmentally sound and community-friendly.

Other valuable environmental programs would be severely underfunded by the Subcommittee bill, and we urge the Committee to restore funding for them. The Subcommittee failed to fund the $50 million discretionary portion of the Administration's request for the Farmland Protection Program, which is part of the Administration's Lands Legacy Initiative. America's farmers need these funds to help them stay on their land, through easements that permanently protect 80,000 acres of prime farmland from development. We urge the Committee to provide the $50 million in discretionary funds requested for the program and redirects its savings from the Conservation Farm Option to this program, as well as to the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program to assist over 3,000 farmers in protecting and restoring wildlife habitat. In addition, the Subcommittee has not provided the $12 million requested in the Conservation Operations account to assess soil management's effects on carbon sequestration, and $5 million for USDA's initiative to help communities make use of geospatial data to make more informed land use decisions and promote smart growth. The Administration recommends funds be redirected to these high-priority activities, such as by eliminating the Forestry Incentives Program as requested and as included in the House bill.

OUTREACH FOR SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMERS

The Subcommittee bill does not provide the requested $7 million increase for the Outreach for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers program. This program has proven effective in mitigating the decline in the number of minority farmers by increasing their participation in agricultural programs, assisting them in marketing and production, and improving the profitability of their farming operations. USDA loan default rates have also improved in areas where this program operates. The requested increase is needed to expand this program beyond the limited areas in which it now operates, to further these farmers' equal access and their opportunity for success, and to continue USDA's work to improve its civil rights performance.

RESEARCH

The Subcommittee bill would fund USDA's National Research Initiative at $81 million below the request of $200 million, while providing funding for a large number of unrequested, earmarked research grants. We urge the Committee to increase the funding for competitive research grants and reduce earmarks for lower-priority programs.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Administration appreciates the support in the Subcommittee bill for priority USDA rural development programs, such as water and wastewater loans and grants,

Business and Industry guaranteed loans, and rental assistance for very-low income rural residents. The Administration is concerned, however, that the Subcommittee bill's funding for Rural Development salaries and expenses would jeopardize effective implementation of these programs. The $25 million, or five percent, reduction from the requested salaries and expenses funding could require USDA to eliminate over 400, or six percent, of its staff through a Reduction-In-Force. We urge the Committee to provide the requested level of funding to ensure an adequate delivery system for these vital programs for rural America.

We look forward to working with the Committee to address our mutual concerns.

Sincerely,

JACOB J. LEW,
Director.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC, May 17, 1999.

Hon. HERBERT H. KOHL,
Ranking Democratic Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR HERB: The Department of Agriculture's (USDA) outreach program to small, limited-resource, and minority farmers and ranchers—known as the 2501 program—is critically important to USDA's efforts to help these farmers weather the crisis spreading across the farm country and to further the accomplishments of the Department's civil rights agenda. Unless this program is funded at the fully authorized level for next fiscal year, as the Administration requested in its budget, both of these objectives will suffer, as will, more importantly, the thousands of farmers who benefit from the 2501 program. Congress has been extremely helpful in the past with requests I have made with respect to my civil rights initiative, and I hope you will once again respond positively by working to see that next year's appropriations bill includes the full $10 million I have requested.

Over the next year, USDA's estimates project crop prices, and thus farm income, at about the current levels, levels that have this year alone pushed demand for our credit programs up some 65 percent over last year's requests. The need for operating and refinancing credit has been especially acute among limited resource farmers, and USDA has aggressively sought to meet their requests. A crucial component of responding to them has been more than just the farm loans, it has been the technical assistance we have been able to underwrite through the 2501 program whereby cooperating institutions and groups have helped these farmers assemble their financial projections and operating plans so they could successfully apply for loans. If these groups cannot continue to provide this assistance, as well as the work they do making sure farmers know about our programs and other sources of assistance, because the 2501 program is not adequately funded, I fear that the decline in limited-resource and minority farmers, in particular, will accelerate and we will come ever closer to removing from American agriculture a viable, capable segment of farmers who have contributed richly to our rural and agrarian culture.

Last year, Congress took the nearly unprecedented step of waiving the statute of limitations, opening the way for USDA to settle the oldest civil rights cases filed against it for alleged discrimination in USDA's lending programs, and a few weeks ago, the federal court approved the consent decree the Department reached to settle the class action discrimination case brought against it for the same reason. Much needs to be done, however, both in bringing these accomplishments to fruition and all the other work I have launched across the board to improve USDA's civil rights performance. The 2501 program is vitally important to our strategy; it reaches the farmers and ranchers too long neglected by the Department and the ones whose complaints we have pledged and are obligated to correcting. Without adequate resources, our reach will be limited and the potential that I believe we have begun to see will not be fully realized.

I appreciate fully the constraints within which the Congress is working in assembling the fiscal year 2000 appropriations bill, and I will no doubt be back in touch with you through this process on this and other priorities; but in view of the critical importance of this program and the regrettable fact that the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies of the Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, chose not to fund fully the Administration's request, I decided I needed to point out to you the special importance of this program and its high personal priority with me. I hope you will give it and the Administration's budget request positive consideration.

Sincerely,

DAN GLICKMAN,
Secretary.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
Washington, DC, May 12, 1999.

Hon. HERBERT KOHL,
Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Related Agencies,
Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR HERB: Now that the fiscal year 2000 appropriations hearings are over, I want to thank you and your entire subcommittee for your attention and courtesy to the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) witnesses. I know you face difficult decisions writing an appropriations bill responsive to the needs of those who benefit from USDA programs, so I want you to know also that we are ready to work with you through the process of developing a bill that addresses your priorities as well as the Department's.

USDA needs to modernize our county-based delivery system, especially now so we can help farmers through these very difficult times we are facing with reduced staff levels in our local offices. This means we must continue our efforts to carry out our Service Center Initiative (SCI), including the installation of the Common Computing Environment (CCE). In this respect, I want to direct your attention to our proposal to spend $74 million under the new Support Services Bureau (SSB) account to finance continued progress on the modernization effort.

The Department could not provide detailed testimony on the SSB for the simple reason that the SSB is not yet operational. As indicated in the budget, the bureau will be operational by October 1, 1999. It will consolidate administrative management support activities for the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development. One of its responsibilities will be to continue to install and support the CCE. The $74 million requested in the budget will finance continued business process reengineering, data acquisition, and the necessary hardware and software to move this effort forward.

This request is an extremely high priority. Implementation of the SCI will improve customer service by providing collocated agencies the ability to share information and deliver services in a modern business manner. The problems we are having providing timely assistance to our hard pressed farmers in the current farm crisis best illustrates the need for infrastructure and program delivery modernization. The service center agencies' stove pipe technology systems and program processes present real barriers to delivering services in a modern way and optimizing the use of county-level staff. For example, I am convinced that had this initiative been complete we could have implemented the disaster assistance programs from the FY 99 Omnibus Appropriations bill much more quickly than we are doing.

As implementation proceeds, the SCI will streamline and integrate services, reduce paperwork, and provide technology so our customers can do business with us differently including the use of the Internet. Since 1993, USDA has significantly reduced staffing levels as a result of reorganization and budget constraints. This investment in our technology infrastructure and integrating business processes is essential to maintaining and improving service to the customers of our rural and county-based agencies.

The common computing environment is also critical to the SSB. The effective consolidation of three separate and largely redundant administrative systems into one, nationwide, SSB is dependent on the timely deployment of reengineered administrative systems and a modern technology infrastructure.

I want to assure you that the technology our budget request will finance is based on identified business needs. It complies with USDA's overall information technology architecture, and meets the Office of Management and Budget's criteria for such investments.

The CCE will replace the existing stove piped agency systems with a single, modern and flexible shared information system built around servers and personal work stations. This technology can be adapted to meet any changes brought about by business process reengineering or by any future decisions affecting the size of the agencies. If the budget request is approved, including the funding mechanism proposed for the SSB, we will establish clear accountability for this effort in the Support Service Bureau with strong oversight from our Chief Information Officer.

I am enclosing a briefing paper on the subject, and will provide you any further information you need.

I am sending an identical letter to Congressman Skeen, Congresswoman Kaptur, and Senator Cochran.

Sincerely,

DAN GLICKMAN,
Secretary.

Enclosure.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, the communications from the Office of Management and Budget and the Secretary of Agriculture make the case for the need to provide additional resources for this bill. I am also aware that funding constraints have prevented the bill from including levels of spending for programs important to Senators. In support of, and in addition to, the comments provided by OMB and USDA, I would like to offer the following observations.

While this bill provides a substantial increase for the President's Food Safety Initiative, it does not meet the fully recommended level submitted by the President. Perhaps the greatest single responsibility of this subcommittee is to protect public health. That responsibility is carried out primarily through

oversight of the blood supply, the approval of medical drugs and devices and, most certainly, the food supply.

Many of the procedures for protecting our food supply are now in transition, moving toward a HACCP system that provides a new set of checks and balances in the production, processing, manufacturing, and distribution of food. In addition, we are learning through research new techniques to help enhance the safety of the food we eat. It is unfortunate we are unable to find the resources within our ''budgetary constraints'' to provide the fully requested increase. We should, at least, provide the fully recommended level for inspections of meat and poultry provided for the Food Safety Inspection Service.

One of the most popular programs funded in this bill is the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program. Again, this bill provides a significant increase for this program and I am very happy to report that the level appropriated, more than $4.038 billion, is determined to be adequate to support an average program participation level of 4.7 million people, which is likely to be an increase above the FY 1999 participation average. However, we know that this program is not only popular, it works. It works in protecting people who are nutritionally at risk, and it works to protect the American taxpayer by lowering future health care costs. The President's budget would have allowed for the program to grow to the fully targeted participation level of 7.5 million women, infants, and children and this Congress should be providing the resources to make that happen.

In addition, this bill should be providing higher levels for WIC Farmers Market Program, the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Nutrition, Education and Training Program, for the Commodity Assistance and Food Donation Programs and for the Secretary's Food Recovery and Gleaning initiative. Also, this bill should restore full levels for the studies and evaluations activities of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). It is curious that while Food Stamp rolls are dropping, we are seeing increased demand for food assistance at shelters, through charitable organizations, and through the various food donation programs. We need to understand this phenomena better and to do so, the agency in charge of these programs should be given the tools to research and evaluate what is happening. At the very least, a reasonable level of funds should be provided to FNS to conduction studies and evaluations of activities directly related to nutrition.

Agriculture has always been, and continues to be, the backbone of the American economy and society. The history of this nation is firmly grounded in the development of agriculture beginning with the earliest settlers who learned farming techniques, such as fertilization, from Native Americans. The first Thanksgiving was, among other things, a celebration of agriculture.

As the growth of America continued, agriculture was a driving force economically, socially, and politically. Thomas Jefferson, whose philosophy in so many ways personifies the national spirit, centered much of his political and governmental engineering around the role of the farmer. In time, farming in this nation followed the lines of westward expansion and filled the vast spaces of our interior with continuing advances in production and further development of democratic principles. When the United States entered the stage of world power, especially during our two world wars and since, the American farmer continued to provide the basic necessities to keep our armed forces fed and our populations safe.

In so many ways, food security is an integral part of national security. We all are aware of the hard times now facing farmers and the rural economy. Yet, without agriculture, and the economy that supports it, food shortages and disruptions would lead to urban panic and riots. No region of the nation would be safe and our entire national security would be at risk. In spite of these facts, we struggle to find the resources to protect agriculture. Can any Senator imagine how absurd it would sound to stand here on the floor of the Senate and announce that we simply can't afford national security? To a degree, that is what we are saying when we announce that we can't afford to help our farmers.

Does this bill fully fund the request for agricultural research, no it does not. Neither does it provide funding for initiatives to help farmers overcome today's economic troubles through outreach to socially disadvantaged farmers, small farmers, or to help USDA agencies protect against unwarranted market concentration. This bill does not provide additional levels to help establish and hold on to foreign markets through export programs such as PL 480 which combines humanitarian assistance with overseas market development.

I am also disappointed that our allocation has prevented us from making the gains we should in the area of conservation and environmental protection. In order to achieve savings, this bill has had to impose limitations on the Wetlands Reserve Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the Conservation Farm Option program. It also fails to fully fund many of the other conservation initiatives recommended by the President.

In addition, if resources were available, we could provide additional funds to help the environment, and the farmer, through the development of better methods for overcoming pesticide related problems. In the near future, the fumigant methyl bromide is going to be removed from the market and unless a viable alternative is developed, production of various commodities will fall sharply, much to the dismay of farmers and consumers who have come to take the availability of these food items for granted. Also, this bill does not provide adequate levels for Integrated Pest Management and for program increases requested for implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act.

Mr. President, there are many other items I could describe and I do not, in any way, want to detract from the fine work of my colleague, Senator COCHRAN. As I stated earlier, my friend from Mississippi has done an outstanding job in crafting this bill with the resources he was given, and I support him and this bill. I simply feel it is my responsibility to remind my colleagues that everything is not necessarily fine simply because things are not getting a whole lot worse.

I don't know if this subcommittee will receive any additional resources between now and when this bill goes to conference with the House. We can't count on that happening and we must realize that what we approve here may be all that is finally included in the appropriations for these programs in fiscal year 2000. As we proceed with this bill on the floor, it is important that we all work together for what is best for all farmers and for all areas of rural America, and for all Americans.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, on behalf of the Senator from South Carolina, Mr. THURMOND, I ask unanimous consent the privilege of the floor be granted to Ernie Coggins, a legislative fellow, during the pendency of S. 1233.

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

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, for the information of Senators, we are hopeful we can take up amendments that Senators may have on this legislation. We will have between now and about 5:30 available for that purpose. The leader had announced when the Senate recessed last week that a vote was anticipated at or about 5:30 today. It could be that a vote on an amendment to the bill will occur at about 5:30 today.

If Senators would like to offer an amendment and get a vote, this is an opportunity to do that—debate the amendment, explain the amendment; the managers are available here to consider any suggested changes in the bill. We invite Senators to come to the floor and offer their amendments or make statements on the bill.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VOINOVICH). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of S. 1233, the fiscal year 2000 agriculture appropriations bill. I commend Senator COCHRAN

and Senator KOHL for bringing forward what I believe is a solid bill to fund our most important programs in agriculture and provide continued benefits to rural America. This has been no easy task. With the tight budget caps that are in place, preparing this bill was a very difficult task, and I applaud the Senator for his hard work in this area.

Let me just say a word about the Senator from Mississippi in this regard. There is a routine procedure in this body and that is to thank the hard-working chairmen of our Senate committees, and, of course, their ranking members, for their hard work in bringing important legislation to the floor. That practice is certainly appropriate in regard to the Senators who have worked to bring this bill to our consideration, including the chairman, as I have indicated, and the distinguished ranking member from Wisconsin, Senator KOHL. But I would like to offer three cheers and a ''well done'' to Senator COCHRAN.

If there is a Senator who I think everyone would agree is the epitome of a Southern gentleman and a Senator who goes about his work with dignity and decorum and truly still gets things done, that Senator is Senator COCHRAN. Here we are in the midst of all sorts of problems and challenges in agriculture today, unprecedented situations, really, what with the world depression that is still hindering our markets, unfair trading practices by our competitors, record world production that has caused market declines in virtually every commodity, trade policy that is hampered by all sorts of challenges, the need for sanctions reform, crop insurance reform, and tax policy changes and reform. The list goes on, as has been mentioned by the distinguished chairman of the subcommittee, including the need for emergency assistance under the current farm bill. We are going to be debating all this and the answers individual Senators will bring to this debate and to this legislation. But through it all we will have the steady hand of Senator COCHRAN and his calm and reasoned and experienced leadership. I thank the Senator for the job he has done for our farmers and ranchers, the men and women of rural America who work so hard to feed our Nation and a troubled and hungry world.

Chairman COCHRAN has presented a bill that really freezes the discretionary spending at the fiscal 1999 level, while still managing to provide increased funding in several areas, including agriculture research, the staffing for the farm service agencies, and the Food Safety Inspection Service. I mention the freeze in particular because what we would like to do, as we consider the 13 major appropriations bills, as we are going through that process, is stick to the budget as best as we possibly can. Obviously, if we do that, interest rates will remain low. Hopefully, we will control inflation, because interest rates are of tremendous importance to the farmer and rancher, and, for that matter, every business person in America.

Investing in agriculture research, as Senator COCHRAN and Senator KOHL have done, is perhaps one of the most important investments we can make as a nation. Today our farmers and ranchers actually produce more food to feed more people on less land—on less land—than ever before. That is a modern day miracle, and it is a miracle in no short part because of agriculture research.

Ag research has played a major role in increasing the productivity of our Nation's farms in the past century. The projections indicate that as the world's population continues to grow in the next 50 years, the world understandably will have to dramatically increase its agriculture production and its food output. The United States will be the leader in this quest to feed, as I have indicated before, a troubled and hungry world with a growing population, but we are not going to be successful without this continued commitment to agriculture research funding. The Senators have done that in regard to their subcommittee work, and it is now before the Senate for our consideration.

I also thank Senator COCHRAN for his efforts to increase funding for the Farm Service Agency staff. I know any increased funding for any Government program or Government agency staff is not very popular in Washington. I have often had my own concerns with such increases. I assure my colleagues that this increased funding is desperately needed.

Many county farm service agencies—that is the old ASCS—have been swamped by the number of loan deficiency payment and USDA lending requests they have had to address. As a matter of fact, when we considered the farm bill of 1996, I do not think any of us would have imagined the vulnerability of the Farm Service Agency or the demands on the Farm Service Agency as a result of the LDP payments that came into play. Despite the best efforts of our county offices to serve our producers in a timely and efficient manner, the staffing necessary to accomplish this goal simply has not been up to the level needed to provide the quality of service that our producers expect.

I also thank the chairman and the ranking member for increases in the FSIS budget. That is an acronym which stands for the Food Safety and Inspection Service. A safe food supply is essential, and our consumers demand it. As my colleagues know, my State of Kansas is one of the largest beef producers in the world, with a large number of packing operations as well. With a continued shortage of inspectors in the Topeka district, I am concerned, and I hope and expect the Secretary of Agriculture to address these deficiencies—I know he will—through this increased funding. I also ask him to contact the Congress and inform us of any continued shortfalls that may be occurring.

Before I close, I want to address what I know is also a very critical concern of many of my colleagues, and that is the tough times we are experiencing throughout rural America. Every farm organization, every commodity group, every producer one visits with obviously tells the same story. I thank Senator COCHRAN for making it very clear we are going to work with the President and we are going to work in a bipartisan fashion—we have already had several meetings since the first of the year—to try to address this.

When the President does inform the Congress, along with the help of Secretary Glickman and others, on what kind of an additional package is necessary and some of the specifics as the crops are harvested, we will be more than willing to take a hard look at this need as harvest season moves along. We did last year. The process, as the Senator has pointed out, was a little backward in regard to how we approached that. Let's do the right thing in regard to the President making his recommendation and working with us and we will work with him.

I agree with Senator COCHRAN; prior to the President's request, we can do a lot of talking about it, and we have for the last several years, but I believe that would be premature. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, my good friend and colleague from Kansas, was quoted in the press last week as saying it would be preferable to go in that direction and it was too early to determine the size of any package that may be needed.

In the meantime, I am committed, as a member of the authorizing committee, the Senate Agriculture Committee, to pursuing the long-term goals needed to ensure the long-term financial viability of our farmers and ranchers. Senator COCHRAN and others have talked at length in this Chamber about these, about the crucial needs—expanded export markets, sanctions reform, embargo policies, tax reform, regulatory relief, crop insurance reform—all of the things we talked about, by the way, when we were trying to put together the 1996 farm bill.

There was a list. There was a ledger, as a matter of fact. In those days, I had the privilege of being the chairman of the House Agriculture Committee as we put that together. We said: Look, if we go to a more market-oriented farm policy—we all wanted that and we wanted producer flexibility to meet the producer's individual needs, to restore the decisionmaking back to the farm level as opposed to Washington—we can do that but only in a component package of other things we need to do.

Quite frankly, I must tell my colleagues that we, and I am using the editorial we—Democrats, Republicans, the administration, the Senate and the House—we have not done that. We have not gone down that list that I and others put on the ledger. There is no pride

of authorship here. We need to do it now. Had we done it then and 2 years ago, I do not think the situation would be nearly as grave throughout our rural areas. Let's get cracking on these challenges, as well as meeting the crucial spending needs or the appropriation needs in regard to U.S. agriculture.

I mentioned expanded export markets, sanctions reform, tax reform, regulatory relief—all of that. We need to pass this legislation and move to a very quick conference with the House. The programs funded in this legislation are too important to be delayed. We need action on them.

I commend, again, Senator COCHRAN and Senator KOHL for their fine efforts on this legislation under very difficult funding circumstances. I look forward to working with my colleagues to move this legislation to quick passage and then working with my colleagues on the other policy changes I have mentioned, and, yes, I know at the end of harvest, we will work with the President, we will work with everybody on that side of the aisle to put together a reasonable program of relief because we have yet to see the relief in our markets. This has been going on now for 2 years.

Again, I thank Senator COCHRAN and Senator KOHL for their efforts. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am genuinely flattered by the kind and generous comments of my distinguished colleague from Kansas, Senator ROBERTS. As others know, he served with distinction as chairman of the Agriculture Committee in the other body. He led the passage of farm legislation in that body, and he has been a very effective spokesman for the farmers and ranchers of the entire country, not just of his home State of Kansas. We benefit from his advice and counsel. I appreciate his personal friendship as well and taking time to talk about this legislation and point out what we are trying to accomplish by funding the programs in this bill. I appreciate his remarks very much.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I say to my colleague, Senator DORGAN from North Dakota, I will be very brief. I did not come to the Chamber with prepared remarks, but I do want to pick up on the closing remarks my colleague from Kansas was making; by the way, a Senator who has lived and breathed agriculture for many years and whose expertise I certainly respect.

I think the appropriations bill raises a lot of questions that we better answer and we better answer soon. I do not really think we can have a discussion about agriculture—the Senator from Kansas at the very end said: Listen, as I speak today, I am mindful of the economic pain out there in the countryside.

We are experiencing an economic convulsion in agriculture. Frankly, I do not think there is any way to talk about what is happening in the countryside without talking about this Freedom to Farm, what I have always called the ''freedom to fail'' bill.

In my State of Minnesota, the Minnesota Star Tribune—which is the largest newspaper in our State, which editorialized very strongly in favor of this bill not that long ago—had an editorial saying, listen, we need to revisit this.

Clearly, we do not have any safety net any longer. Clearly, we do not have a way that farmers—family farmers, family farmers, family farmers; we need to say that three or four times—have any leverage in the marketplace to get a decent price.

I think one of the really bitter ironies of what is going on is we are spending—this was supposed to be the market—$25, $30 billion of bailout money—and actually I am all for getting the credit to farmers so they can live to farm another day, but most of the farmers in Minnesota basically say, thank you, but, in fact, they are going to need even more to be able to keep on going.

But what they also say is: Senator WELLSTONE, what's even more important to me is, where will we be 5 years from now? Where will our kids be 5 years from now? I am just telling you that I know on our side, the Democrats, we are going to be out here—and I am hoping with a lot of Republicans as well—with a whole package of proposals.

Time is not neutral. We cannot wait around. Time is not neutral at all for these farmers. The projections for the number of farms we have lost in Minnesota and we will lose on our present course are devastating. We have to change that course.

I think maybe we need more of a reality check. We can talk about the fact that we all care about agriculture, and we have this bill, and we are spending this much money, and all the rest, but this isn't business as usual. We are talking about a crisis, all spelled out in capital letters. We have to take some action. If we do not take some action, then I think this will be kind of the last stage of just losing the family farm structure in agriculture.

By the way, when I am talking about family farms, I am talking less about the size of the farm, though I do think there are clearly some limits, as far as I am concerned, when we talk about any kind of subsidy or support. I am talking about the pattern of the decisionmaking; I am talking about entrepreneurship; I am talking about the family farm as in the people who work the land, live on the land, that they make the decisions. That is what I am talking about.

So I just want to make it really clear, whether or not you take the cap off the loan rate, whether or not you figure out a way to have corn and wheat in the same kind of ratio in relation to the price that we now have for soybeans—a lot of farmers in Minnesota are planting soybeans, soybeans, soybeans. This whole Freedom to Farm bill is a nightmare. The sooner people here are going to be willing to face up to it, the better.

As I said before—I will say it again—it was a great bill for Cargill. It was a great bill for the big grain companies. And it is a living nightmare for family farmers. They cannot cash flow on the price they receive. If we do not talk about price, price, price, then, frankly, we are not going to enable people to make it. So that is my first point.

My second point, speaking just for Senator KOHL, who stepped off the floor briefly—and I include myself in his camp; I know Senator FEINGOLD has the same belief—one of the reasons we are on the floor is because we are not going to see any extension of the dairy compact. Those of us from the Midwest are not going to let that happen. If there is one thing I do agree with, it is the adage that all politics is local. We are here to fight for people in our States. We are not going to let dairy farmers in our States come out on the short end of the stick. So just to be crystal clear about that, that is just not going to happen.

My third point—and I will have two others, I say to Senator DORGAN; the third and fourth point I can do in 2 or 3 minutes—is that we have a good piece of legislation which ought to be slam dunked. It ought to be slam dunked. There ought to be 100 votes for it. The sooner we get to it, the better—price disclosure. You have this situation where it is not just the grain farmers; it is not just the dairy farmers; it is our livestock producers as well.

I have said it many times, but it is worth saying again on the floor of the Senate. You have this bitter irony of our hog producers facing extinction, our pork producers facing extinction, and the packers are in hog heaven. They are making record profits. We want to know what is going on.

So at the very minimum, our family farmers who are not vertically integrated, our family farmers who do not represent the conglomerates that have so effectively muscled their way to the dinner table, exercising their power over so much of the food industry, want to know exactly what people are being paid for their product. We think that ought to be public information. We think our family farmers have a right to know that. I just will say that this ought to be slam dunked. There ought to be 100 votes for it; the sooner the better. What are we waiting for?

I could go on and on, and later on, when it is appropriate, I will bring out any number of different studies, with a lot of data, because I think it is really worth talking about. In some ways I almost find this ironic. I think maybe I am going to pick up on an argument that some of my Republican colleagues like to make about the problem of just throwing money at a problem. With all

due respect, if we do not change this structure of agriculture, a lot of the family farmers in the Midwest, South, all the family farmers who are left in the country, are just not going to make it. They are not going to make it.

Everywhere you look, in all sectors of the food industry, whether it be the input side or the output side—from whom the farmers buy, to whom they sell—you are lucky if you have four firms that dominate only 50 percent of the market. Quite often it is more than 50 percent of the market. It isn't even an oligopoly. It isn't even four firms dominating 50 percent of the market. It is a monopoly structure. Whether it be the packers, the stockyards, the USDA, or the Justice Department, we need antitrust action. We need antitrust action. We need to put some free enterprise back into the food industry.

Give the family farmers in Minnesota a level playing field, give them a fair shake, and they can compete against anybody. But right now what you have is a situation where these conglomerates have muscled their way to the dinner table and exercised their raw political power over family farmers, over consumers, over taxpayers, and we need antitrust action.

That means we have to take on big economic interests. That means we have to take on some of the largest contributors on the floor of the Senate. My colleague, Senator FEINGOLD, said the other day he was going to start calling a kind of rollcall of big contributors as we go to different bills. On agriculture I probably ought to come out here and just go over the list of contributions. It is not for a particular Senator but the Senate.

All of us need to change the system of contributions that come from these packers, that come from these big agribusinesses, that come from those corporate giants, because, frankly, we seem to be afraid to take them on. But if we are not willing to take them on and we are not willing to have antitrust action for real competition, our family farmers cannot make it.

So I just say that now is the time. We have legislators coming in to Washington, DC tonight. Many of them travel out here with their own income. They do not have a lot of income. Many of them are farmers from State legislatures. Many of them work with really good grass-roots organizations.

This isn't business as usual. So sometime, whether it be on this bill, whether it be within the next month, whether it be in the fall, this Senate has to take some action that makes a real difference to family farmers so they have some kind of future. One of the first things we have to do is be honest, just declare that the Freedom to Farm bill has been a ''freedom to fail'' bill. We need to change this legislation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, I want to make a few opening comments as a member of the subcommittee. The Appropriations Committee is an interesting and a very productive committee. I am a member of the subcommittee that is chaired by Senator COCHRAN from Mississippi and whose ranking member is Senator KOHL from Wisconsin. I commend them for the job they do. It is not an easy job.

We have the classic problem of economizing. The definition by an economist of that is trying to fulfill unlimited wants with limited resources. That is not a very easy thing to do.

As I start, let me again compliment the work of Senator COCHRAN and Senator KOHL.

I will talk also about some of the challenges that we face that are not in any way addressed by this legislation. The legislation funds a range of issues with respect to the Department of Agriculture and agricultural programs. We need to do better in some of those areas.

I specifically mention the human nutrition study programs that exist in USDA. The administration had proposed a very substantial investment in those programs. We have not been able to meet that. I hope we can, because the work that goes on in those human nutrition labs is very important work in the nutrition area.

There are a number of other areas where we need to do better in research and agricultural-related areas, but I want to talk a bit about the crisis that faces our family farmers. We are going to have a Democratic Policy Committee hearing on Wednesday morning here in the Capitol from 9:30 to 11:30 on this subject: the farm crisis. We have a very serious problem on America's family farms. Frankly, we need to address it. I hope we can do that in a bipartisan manner.

This weekend I was in North Dakota. I drove to Finely, ND, for an event in the American Legion hall in Finely that had to do with a rural empowerment zone. Once again, in Finely, ND, as I would have found in every part of North Dakota, family farmers told me that they are not going to be able to make it much longer unless something changes. You cannot plant seeds in our ground, then tend those seeds, fertilize, spray for pests, hope they grow, hope it doesn't hail, hope the plants develop, hope it doesn't rain too much but rains enough, hope against crop disease and then, at the end, finally harvest that grain and take it to the elevator, only to discover that the elevator or the grain trader is willing to pay you a $1, $1.50 or $2 a bushel less than what it cost to produce the grain. That is not a formula for success. That is a formula for failure. Most family farmers know they will not last long with that kind of a formula.

Will Rogers once said: When there is no place left to spit, you either have to swallow your tobacco juice or change with the times. Well, there is no place left to spit. That is not a delicate way to say it, but there is no place left to spit on these issues. The current farm program is not providing price supports that are able to help family farmers continue in operation during a time of collapsed prices. It just isn't. We had to do an emergency piece last year, and we did that in the appropriations process. I commend all of those who were involved in it, including the Senator from Mississippi. My colleague from North Dakota, Senator CONRAD, myself and many others worked to make sure that we did an emergency piece that provided some income support for families during collapsed prices. But the prices are still collapsed. We will not have many family farmers left unless we provide some mechanism of supporting prices here in the Congress.

Is it our job? No, it would be better if we could get the price in the marketplace. But that is not happening. The price in the marketplace is dismal. Farmers are told that their hogs aren't worth much and their cattle are not worth much. The grain isn't worth much too.

There was a time when you could speak on the Senate floor when the farmer was hauling a hog to market and getting 10 cents a pound. In fact, that farmer could go to the grocery store in that small town and discover that it would cost him three times as much to buy a relatively small ham than he was able to get for the whole hog.

Now, there is something wrong with that. When prices collapse, if we want family farmers left in our country's future, then we have to do something about it.

My colleague from Minnesota talked about the need to reform the system. I was not able today to hear my colleague from Mississippi or my colleague from Wisconsin as they opened this discussion, but I know that they are well aware of the farm crisis. I will hold up a couple charts, if I might.

This chart shows the number of farm youth, down 82 percent since 1970, fairly steadily. We are ending up without any young people left in rural America.

This chart shows the last year for which we have net income data. It shows the change in net income, 1996 and 1997. We do not have the next 2 years. North Dakota lost 90 percent of its net income; Minnesota, 42 percent. These are net income losses. It would be interesting to know, I wonder how any wage earner would handle it if 90 percent of their income were gone. I wonder what Wall Street would do if they discovered that some industry of theirs had suffered a 90-percent loss. Think that would crash, that industry? You bet your life, in a moment.

But on the family farm, in 1 year a change in net income, down 38 percent in Nebraska, 28 percent in South Dakota, 90 percent in North Dakota, these figures change from year to year and State to State. The fact is, we have seen a dramatic change in net income in a negative way in my State and others. It results from a collapse in prices.

Now, there are people who say that is because EEP wasn't used. It is because of this or that other thing, 100 different reasons. The fact is, it is price. You can come up, I suppose, with your own notions of how to increase price in the marketplace, but I think we have a failure here.

The failure is that we have a farm program that says: Let us not care about supporting prices. Whatever the price in the marketplace place is, if it is 10 cents for hogs or if it is $2.50 for wheat, that is just tough luck. That is the way the market is. So let's have farmers get whatever they get from the marketplace.

The problem with that is, we won't have many family farmers left, if that is the attitude we take, because the marketplace doesn't work for agriculture. There is no free market for agriculture. Everybody knows it. Anybody that comes out here and preaches about a free market for agriculture is preaching a sermon that is not worth listening to.

Now, my colleague from Minnesota talked about the issue of monopolies. I want to talk about that just for a moment. I want to show a cartoon that appeared in the newspaper in Lincoln, NE, the Lincoln Journal Star. The cartoon shows something that I have previously spoken about on the floor of the Senate. The cartoon says: If the grain to make this costs pennies—talking about grocery cereal—and I have to pay $3.95, who gets all the rest? And here is a picture of a farmer giving up.

It is interesting that at a time when prices have collapsed for grain, cereal manufacturers have announced that they will increase the price of their cereal. I found it interesting that when grain prices increased a few years ago, wheat went to $5.50 a bushel, the cereal manufacturers were complaining that they had to increase cereal prices because grain prices were strengthening. So grain prices collapse, drop in half. What happens to cereal prices? They go up. What is wrong with that picture? It seems to me you would fail third grade math with that kind of calculation.

The point that the Senator from Minnesota made is an accurate point. In every direction the farmer looks, the farmer faces either a monopoly or a near monopoly. Let's say the farmer raises grain and wants to have it transported. So the farmer takes it to the railroad and the railroad operator says: We will transport that grain for you. And they tell the farmer exactly what it will cost. If the farmer doesn't like it, it is tough luck.

In our State, our State Public Service Commission says the railroads overcharge North Dakota, principally farmers but all businesses. They overcharge North Dakota farmers $100 million a year. How can they do that? No competition. We do not have three railroads vying for that business. When you have near monopoly or a monopoly, they charge what they want. So when the farmer goes to the grain trade and decides to sell their grain, what do they find? Only a few companies control most of the grain trade.

Two of those companies now want to get married. Continental and Carghill decided they like each other so much they don't want to compete anymore. They want to get together. So now they have this merger proposal, meaning more concentration. Does that make sense for farmers? To me, it doesn't. I do not think they ought to be allowed to merge.

Then when the farmers decide that they want to sell their fat steers—they had some calves and they raised some fat steers and heifers—they take them to market. Eighty-seven percent of the fat steer market slaughter in this country is controlled by three companies, three. So they tell the farmers and ranchers: Here is what we are going to pay you.

They say it is a free market. Of course, it is not free. So let's assume that the grain trade wasn't throttled at the neck of the bottle by a concentration of large corporations, and instead you had a free market.

Is it a free market for our producers, who raise a steer or heifer or cow and want to sell the beef to Japan, are faced with a 50-percent tariff because of a beef agreement with Japan, which does come down a little year by year, but snaps back up if you get more beef in? Currently, as I understand it, the tariff on beef going into Japan is 45 percent. Is that fair? I don't think so.

Or China sends us all their shoes and trousers and shirts and trinkets, and they have a $50 billion to $60 billion trade surplus with us, or we a deficit with them, and they say: When we want wheat, we want to buy it elsewhere; plus we want to keep part of your wheat out, and we don't want your hogs at all. Is that fair trade? Does a farmer have a right to complain about that? I think so. In every single direction, farmers have a right to say it is not a free market.

Let me mention trade. Our family farmers—despite having mentioned some trade with Japan and China, our family farmers are furious about our trade situation with Canada. We passed this NAFTA bill here in the Congress. I didn't vote for it, but everybody who voted for it, I guess, felt that the people who sold it said we were going to get some 300,000 new jobs in America with this NAFTA.

NAFTA turned a trade surplus with Mexico into a trade deficit very quickly and doubled the trade deficit we have with Canada. Now the fancy economists who decided they wanted to make money putting out studies telling us how wonderful NAFTA was going to be are saying: Maybe we were wrong. When you pass an agreement that creates huge deficits, lose jobs instead of gaining jobs, you are wrong.

But take a look at the trade back and forth across the border. What you will find with Canada is, we have massive quantities of Canadian grain coming in and undercutting our American farmers, and you can't get much American grain into Canada. I have been to the border there. I was riding in an orange truck trying to get durum wheat into Canada. I could not do it. But I saw Canadian trucks hauling Canadian wheat south. Is that fair trade? I don't think so.

That is what farmers face, unequal treatment. If you wipe all that away and just have farmers trade in the open market, free trade or fair trade, then when the farmer competes against the European grain or livestock producer in an international marketplace, how do you get around the fact that the Europeans subsidize their grain sales 10 times our subsidy—10 times? We say to our farmers, well, that is fair; it would be like a competition, let's give the other team a huge head start and then say it is a fair competition.

I don't know what people are thinking about. It is not fair. It doesn't make any sense. Our farmers in this country have a right to be very upset, because I don't think they have been supported very well by our range of policies, our agricultural and trade policies. They have not been fair and consistent.

On the United States-Canada free trade agreement, I was in Montreal when Clayton Yeutter was negotiating with Canada. I will tell you what happened with Canada. The U.S. agricultural interests got traded away—flat out traded away. This country got something for it. I wasn't in the room, but I guess we got access to 20-some million people for the financial services industry, and so this country got something for it. But farmers got traded way. So at the end of the time, we got an agreement that weakened section 22, all of our trade remedies, and then we got a piece of paper from Clayton Yeutter, the Trade Ambassador. I could read it, but generally the paper said we have essentially a spirit between us that, following the agreement, there will not be a substantial increase in grain flowing across the border one way or the other. That wasn't worth the paper it was written on. It was a guarantee.

I was on the Ways and Means Committee; that is where this had to originate—the passing of the language on the agreement—and we got from the Trade Ambassador a guarantee that was worthless. We immediately began to see a massive quantity of grain coming into our country in a manner, in my judgment, that clearly violates our trade laws—dumping below the cost of acquisition.

Now, I know some of this is probably confusing and difficult. But I want to illustrate this point. The U.S. farmers said: Wait a second, this is not fair; we were told by our Trade Ambassador's office this wasn't going to happen. We have it in writing, we have a guarantee; this isn't fair. So action was taken against the Canadians to try to stop it.

Do you know what we discovered in that action? A side deal had been made between the Trade Ambassador's office and the Canadians that was never disclosed to Congress, never a part of debate. It gave to the Canadians, in selling into the American marketplace the ability to go below acquisition cost, the Canadians will not have to include their final grip payment—it is called a grip payment—to their farmers.

So what they did was set aside part of the cost of the acquisition of that grain and said that will not be considered. By definition, the formula says they can sell at below cost in this marketplace and they will not be in violation, because there was a separate side deal between our Trade Ambassador and the Canadians, in effect, selling out the interests of our farmers.

Do farmers have a right to be upset about that? Do they have a right to be concerned about policymakers who don't support our farmers' interests? You bet your life they do. Now, we have to decide in this Congress whether we are going to be willing to rebuild and invest and strengthen family farms.

Let me make this point. I am not at all bashful about coming to the floor and saying we need this help. We were just in a conference committee—I was part of it—in which the President said: We need some additional money for Kosovo. We need money for Kosovo. So Congress said: Well, how much do you need? The President said: Well, we need $16 billion. Congress said: No, you don't need that, you need more than that. So Congress added $6 billion to the President's request, saying: We don't think you have asked for enough money. If it is for defense, we don't think you have asked for enough money. There are those who said that the sky is the limit for defense. They said: The President didn't ask for enough, and we want to add $6 billion more.

I say to them, what about the issue of family farming in this country? What about the issue of agriculture? That is here at home. Those are our interests. That is not Kosovo. That is not bridges. That is not investment in weapons. That is here in this country. What about that? Is that not a priority? Are we not willing to decide that we will provide that resource?

Some say, well, the President should ask for it. Yes, he should, but the President didn't ask for the extra $6 billion Congress put in the emergency bill for defense. So apparently you have two standards. The President doesn't have to ask for the extra $6 billion for defense, but he must for agriculture. Well, those who say the President needs to be involved and ask for it, they are right. Let's have him do that. I want him to be engaged here with a request, and I think he will be.

Mr. HARKIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DORGAN. Yes.

Mr. HARKIN. In listening to the Senator's very eloquent remarks, the Senator from North Dakota really does understand the depth of the problems in agriculture. He has been one of our great leaders in fighting for family farms and our rural communities, in making statements and comments about the lack of free trade and the other economic conditions that are working against the farmer.

What I really wanted to ask the Senator is, What role do the increasing sorts of conglomerates, vertical integration, the fact that we are getting fewer and fewer hog farms, for example, that we are experiencing in Iowa and other places, smaller and smaller numbers of meatpackers and slaughterers in this country—when you look at the increasing concentration, what, I might ask, is this doing, and what effect does this increasing concentration have in reducing the price that the farmer gets?

In other words, we saw the cartoon about the person in the grocery store saying, ''It only pays pennies. Who gets the rest?'' I ask the Senator from North Dakota again, what is the effect on the farmer?—in other words, what the farmer is getting from the consumer's dollar, because in the past you had a lot of competitors out there competing against one another to take the raw product and get it to market. Now you have just a few. You have a very narrow funnel now. It has been my opinion and observation, based upon a lot of economic data, that this small funnel now they have to go to, the few meatpackers and processors, vertical integration, basically that is where the consumer dollars stops, and it is not getting back to the farmer.

The Senator has been very eloquent on this issue of the increasing concentration and what that means for family farming; does the Senator share that feeling?

Mr. DORGAN. The share the farmer gets from the food dollar has diminished about 20 percent.

All the other interests that touch what the farmers produce make a lot of money, and many of them are making record profits right now. The farmer raises the grain; buys the tractor, plows the ground in the spring, tends the land; and takes all the risk. They harvest it and work hard.

Family farmers don't make much money. Now they are losing a lot of money. Even in the best of years they don't make that much money, taking into account all the unforeseen risks. They put the product on a railcar to market; it goes to a cereal manufacturing plant. The rail car company makes money and the railroad companies are making record profits. The grain trade makes profits. The grain goes to a cereal plant and they take that wheat and inject it with some air. Now it becomes puffed wheat. They package it in a bright colored, big box, with cellophane wrapping that can't be opened in the morning and they send it to a grocery store.

Farmers, last year, lost their shirt on the very same wheat that was puffed up by air and produced by the cereal manufacturers. The farmers lost their shirt; the cereal manufacturers make record profits.

Something is wrong. Those who haul it, those who trade it—every step along the way the big economic interests are making big profits. It is the folks who grow it that are told: No, somehow you don't matter.

On this Earth, every single month, we add another New York City in population; every single month we add another New York. Yet, the farmer is told by the grain trade—when the farmer loads the truck and takes it to the elevator—that this grain isn't worth very much; this food isn't worth very much.

We are told half a billion people go to bed every night with an ache in their belly and it hurts to be hungry. Most of them are kids. Half a billion go to bed every night with an ache in their belly because they are hungry. Far more people are malnourished than that. And we are adding a New Yorker to the City every month, yet we have farmers in Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, Mississippi, and Wisconsin going broke because they are told—after all of their work, all of their risk, all of their dreams—that the grain they produce doesn't have value. They load the truck, go to the elevator, and get the message. The message is, food doesn't have much value.

Within recent months, we had people come to Capitol Hill to testify about the famine in the Sudan. We had testimony by people talking about old women climbing trees to gather leaves to eat because there is nothing to eat, and our farmers are told: Your food has no value.

If we get past the question of, does food have value, there is a larger question. Who farms in this country, and does it matter? Family farmers are more than just planters. It is the family farm around my hometown of Regent, ND, that provides the blood vessels which make that small community live. It is the family farmer who helps build the church. It is the family farmer who helps keep the main street open. It is the family farmer who helps create a rural lifestyle. This is more than just a question of, does food have value; it is, who is going to farm in our country?

Some say: Let the corporations farm. They are fine; they can farm America from California to Maine. That is true. And we will have no population left in the middle part of our country.

This map demonstrates what is happening in the middle part of our country. The red represents the counties that have lost more than 15 percent of their population. You can see what is happening. In the middle part of America, we are depopulating a significant part of our country. People are leaving, not coming.

I was in two different counties on Saturday in North Dakota. One county lost 60 percent of its population, and one of them had lost 50 percent of its population in the last 25 years.

Picture trying to do business in a small town, in an area that has lost 60 percent of its population. That is trying to do business in a depression.

It matters who farms—not just what is the return, what is the price of grain, but that we do we have a system that encourages family farming. Is the family, as an economic unit, something that has merit and value? Some say, let the market decide that. The market is not an allocator of all goods and services in a fair way at all times. There are times when we have to be a referee in the marketplace.

That is why we have had a farm program. If we hadn't had a farm program, we probably wouldn't have any family farmers now. When prices collapse and you have the valley, the only way family farmers get across the valley is by building a bridge called price support. Three or 4 years ago we were told: That is old fashioned; blow up the bridge. So Congress did—I didn't vote for that. It was called the Freedom to Farm bill. We blew up the bridge and pulled the rug from the family farmers. Let them go to the market. Whatever the grain trade says is the price, that is the market price.

We found out that is absurd. That doesn't work. China, Japan, Canada, Mexico, and Europe are engaged in the kind of trade practices that restrict our products, there are sanctions against food—some of which have, fortunately, been revoked—the farmer finds it can't sell into certain markets, it is locked out of about 11 percent of the international wheat market.

In my judgment, sanctions should almost never be put on. Hubert Humphrey used to say, send them anything they can't shoot back. It certainly makes sense to be able to send food to people who are hungry in the world. That has nothing to do with foreign policy or with guns.

When there is a sanction, certainly farmers should have been paid. Why should farmers bear the cost of this country's national security issues? We have had the sanctions, have had a range of other trade issues and farmers have always been the victims.

There is a way, it seems to me, for Congress, with both Republicans and Democrats to decide jointly that family farmers ought not continue to be victims in this country on trade policy or agricultural policy or policies dealing with market concentration. We need to do much better than that. Frankly, in recent years, I think we have let the farmers down.

This bill is an appropriations bill. There is much in it that is important. I say to the Senator from Wisconsin, your work and the work of Senator COCHRAN is very important work, as is the work of both staffs on the subcommittee. I was pleased for the first time this year to be able to join the subcommittee. It is an important subcommittee that makes critical investments in a wide range of agricultural issues.

At the end of the day, when all of this is clear, we must do something about prices for family farmers. If we don't do that, all of this other investment is not going to be very productive for our country. We must do something to address the question of price collapse.

We offered an amendment in the emergency supplemental bill a couple of months ago. Senator HARKIN and I offered that amendment. I recall, I think, it was midnight or so when Senator HARKIN was recognized to offer it. He spoke, I spoke, and several others spoke. Then we had a vote. We made the points, I and Senator HARKIN, about the difficult time in agriculture, the real crisis that exists at this point. The vote, I believe, was probably a vote on tabling or a vote up or down. We lost on a 14–14 tie vote, and that was only with the Senate conferees.

I know the Senator from Iowa is going to offer an amendment, and I certainly intend to join him during this appropriations process, to have a discussion about that amendment, about an emergency farm bill that puts some resources into rural America to try to respond to this farm crisis.

I am not now going to speak at much greater length on the amendment. I have more things to say, and I will say them at a more appropriate time. My expectation is this legislation will be on the floor for some while. I do want to speak at greater length about some of these farm issues, and my colleague from Iowa and others have a fair amount to say as well about these issues.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I wish to raise a problem relating to pharmacy compounding and a proposed Memorandum of Understanding from the Food and Drug Administration with state boards of pharmacy relating to compounding.

Pharmacy compounding is a part of the practice of pharmacy that involves specially-tailoring a prescription drug product for a specific patient's needs. A good example is when a pharmacist takes a pill prescribed for an infant—but which that infant can't swallow—and grinds it up and mixes it into a sweet syrup that the baby is happy to take.

Pharmacy compounding has been part of what pharmacists do for centuries, and it is important to preserve their ability to do this without huge regulatory hassles. Pharmacy compounding is important for many patients who need specially-designed drugs because no commercially-available product meets their specific needs. Interfering with compounding will only hurt these patients by making it more difficult to get—or even denying them—the specific pharmaceutical products they need.

But the Food and Drug Administration is now threatening to create problems for many pharmacists who do a lot of pharmacy compounding—which means problems for the customers they serve. The FDA has proposed a joint regulatory setup with states that calls on state Boards of Pharmacy to investigate pharmacists if more than 20 percent of the total prescriptions they distribute are compounded products sold out-of-state.

This proposal is supposed to guard against a handful of bad actors who are mass-producing drugs but are trying to avoid FDA regulation by saying they are actually involved in pharmacy compounding. The problem is that this proposed solution will also interfere with honest pharmacies and pharmacists who are legitimately engaged in pharmacy compounding.

Two types of pharmacists who are particularly at-risk of being hassled by this rule are pharmacies that are located in multi-state areas and pharmacists who specialize almost exclusively in pharmacy compounding and who are well-known for their specialty either nation-wide or region-wide.

Under the regulatory setup the FDA has proposed, these pharmacies are vulnerable to automatic state investigations or other regulatory actions, even if there is no evidence that they are doing anything but legitimate pharmacy compounding.

Mr. COCHRAN. I thank my colleague from Missouri for raising this issue. For patients who have very specific pharmaceutical needs, pharmacy compounding is clearly extremely important, and I don't believe the federal government should be creating unnecessary hassles or problems for pharmacists who are legitimately serving these patients needs.

Mr. BOND. I thank the Chairman for that comment, and would like to bring up one specific example of the unnecessary problems this proposal creates.

Last week, I spoke to a woman from Kansas City, Missouri, who runs two separate pharmacies. One is a typical drug-store type pharmacy where you can go in to fill prescription drugs that came straight from the manufacturer. Her other pharmacy—which is legally separate—is exclusively involved in pharmacy compounding. The only thing this pharmacy does is specially-tailor prescription products for people in the Kansas City area.

The problem is that easily over 20 percent of her compounding customers are from across the state line in Kansas City, Kansas. She also suspects that many of these Kansas customers—although she's not sure exactly how many—live more than 50 miles away from her pharmacy, meaning she might not fit in the protections the FDA tried to include for pharmacies that are selling to out-of-state customers locally.

Because this pharmacy in Kansas City doesn't meet the somewhat arbitrary FDA guidelines, this woman could automatically be subject to an investigation by the state Board of Pharmacy, even though all of her pharmacy compounding is done legitimately for specific patients.

I just don't believe the FDA has done a good job writing these guidelines.

There must be a more sophisticated way to approach this problem that won't threaten legitimate pharmacies with unnecessary regulatory hassles. I believe Congress needs to take a stand on this issue to force FDA to reconsider their proposal.

Mr. COCHRAN. I thank the Senator for his thoughts, and pledge to work with him and others during deliberations of the conference committee on this bill to address this problem.

Mr. BOND. I thank the Senator.

AMENDMENT NO. 702

(Purpose: To amend the Public Health Services Act, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, and the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to protect consumers in managed care plans and other health coverage)

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I am asked to send an amendment to the desk for Senator DASCHLE. I do so at this point and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. COLLINS). The clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

The Senator from North Dakota [Mr. DORGAN], for Mr. DASCHLE, proposes an amendment numbered 702.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. COCHRAN. I object.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the amendment.

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

Mr. KENNEDY. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard. The clerk will read the amendment.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The text of the amendment (No. 702) is printed in today's RECORD under ''Amendments Submitted.'')

AMENDMENT NO. 703 TO AMENDMENT NO. 702

(Purpose: To improve the access and choice of patients to quality, affordable health care)

Mr. LOTT. I send a second-degree amendment to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Mississippi [Mr. LOTT] proposes an amendment numbered 703 to amendment No. 702.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

(The text of the amendment (No. 703) is printed in today's RECORD under ''Amendments Submitted.'')

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I find our Democratic colleagues have put the Senate in an unfortunate position by offering this bill at this time. The pending bill is the agriculture appropriations bill, certainly a very important appropriations bill. I think you could probably argue they all are. But even more so than usual, the agriculture appropriations bill this year is very significant because we are still dealing with an agriculture economy that has been shaken by prices and by the loss of some markets around the world. We need to move this bill forward.

American farmers are in dire need of many of the provisions in this bill that has been developed in a bipartisan way, with Chairman COCHRAN leading the way. These farmers rely on the legislation and appropriations every year. For some reason, the Democrats have decided to ignore the needs of the American farmer and instead turn this bill into the health care reform bill.

I have in the past, and as recently as last Friday, offered our colleagues on the other side of the aisle an opportunity to debate this issue in the form of a separate bill under a time agreement. However, they have always indicated a request for dozens and dozens of amendments. In fact, the latest discussion, sort of indirectly, but the latest number would call for a minimum of 40 amendments.

Now, I thought they had a bill that basically represented the position they wanted to take on the Patients' Bill of Rights, as developed by Senator KENNEDY and Senator DASCHLE. We have our approach, which is quite different, developed by Senator NICKLES, the Senator in the Chair, Ms. COLLINS, Senator FRIST, who certainly is one who could be very helpful in devising health-related legislation. So we have our two alternative bills, which I thought we could get a direct vote on and have some reasonable number of amendments and then go on to a final conclusion.

However, it seems to me that colleagues on the other side of the aisle are interested in having an issue rather than bringing this Patients' Bill of Rights issue to a conclusion.

I think clearly there are some things we need to do in this area. I assume there are some areas of agreement. There are some fundamental disagreements. For instance, I believe very strongly, in dealing with patients' rights and needs, where there is a dispute, there should be a process for resolving that dispute within a managed care organization or through an expedited outside procedure to get a result and not just look for more opportunities to file more lawsuits.

However, I will continue, as I did last year, to work with the Democratic leader to propound a time agreement which will allow for votes on these important issues, the two approaches, as well as a reasonable number of amendments.

In the meantime, I call for regular order with respect to the State Department authorization bill.

FOREIGN RELATIONS AUTHORIZATION ACT, FISCAL YEARS 2000 AND 2001

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the State Department bill.

The legislative clerk read as follows:.

A bill (S. 886) to authorize appropriations for the Department of State for fiscal years 2000 and 2001; to provide for enhanced security at United States diplomatic facilities; to provide for certain arms control, nonproliferation, and other national security measures; to provide for reform of the United Nations; and for other purposes.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

Pending:

Sarbanes amendment No. 689, to revise the deadlines with respect to the retention of records of disciplinary actions and the filing of grievances within the Foreign Service.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following the modification of the pending Sarbanes amendment, the Senate proceed to a vote on the amendment at 5:30 this evening.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I believe we will be waiting for the managers of the State Department authorization bill to come back to the floor. We had a time agreement on the State Department authorization, and we had hoped to complete that bill last Friday, but for a variety of reasons we weren't able to do so. We did get a list of amendments. I believe we have some pretty tight time agreements on those amendments.

We need to move forward with getting to a conclusion early this week on final passage of the State Department authorization. That will be helpful in dealing with other issues pending before the Foreign Relations Committee, including possibly some nominations that have been pending there, because of the very serious nature and the need to get the State Department reauthorization done. So we will go back to that and the managers will be coming to the floor shortly, I am sure, and then we will have a vote, as agreed to, at 5:30 this afternoon on the pending Sarbanes amendment. With that, I am glad to yield to the Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, it is my understanding, therefore, with the majority leader's action, we have effectively moved off discussion of the Patients' Bill of Rights, which we had before us for a very brief period of time this afternoon, and that is the result of the majority leader's action.

Mr. LOTT. That is correct, but it is temporary. We basically now are dealing with three different issues—the