

some of the more difficult and lower paying jobs in the country have lost their work. These are family members, heads of families, and they are out there wondering whether or not the next job is going to be available for them. So they are, in a sense, victims because, clearly, the events of September 11 have impacted their lives.

Many of us are suggesting as part of this economic package that we include extending unemployment benefits and health care, and we say to those people and their families that we wish we could provide you with a job tomorrow. We can't. We wish we could produce one for you immediately. We can't do that. But we can reach out to you and say during the next number of weeks we are going to provide extended unemployment benefits to you and see to it that States get back some dollars from Medicaid and the COBRA program, so you can have health care coverage during this time of difficulty. I don't think that is an exaggerated or excessive request. I hoped, frankly, that the request would be made of us to do this, rather than we making a request of the President and others to support this.

This is America. We are coming together as a people. Everybody who is hurt and has suffered as a result of these tragic events deserves an extended hand to try to see if we can't lift them up.

I was so impressed yesterday while watching the film clips of the people in New York. Average citizens were racing to help the firemen, helping to extend the hoses to try to put out the fires in the communities that were devastated by the downed aircraft. What a wonderful photograph, in a sense, during a time of tragedy. Average citizens—not firemen or policemen but people in civilian clothes—were running along the streets, grabbing firehoses and helping the departments reach the flames to try to save lives and property. That is my America. That is the America I know.

I want to see my Congress and my national leadership be as those people in the streets of Queens yesterday who were racing along to help out during a time of tragedy. That is what this economic package we have crafted tries to do. It is short term, it is focused, it is fiscally responsible, and it tries to help people who are suffering. That is all we are trying to do—give a tax rebate, a tax cut for the folks who didn't get it last spring so they might have additional dollars in their pockets to provide for family needs, and to see to it that we might invest some dollars as well in hardening up our infrastructure in the country.

Put aside September 11 for a minute. How many times have we heard over the last number of years that if you don't maintain the basic infrastructure of your country—roads, bridges, mass transit systems—economic growth suffers? So this bill will also include some dollars to try to harden up this infrastructure so we will be better prepared

to withstand the kinds of terrorist attacks that could occur that would put those pieces of infrastructure in harm's way. This bill will provide some resources for that. Of course, it puts people to work. Imagine that; we might put some people to work by passing this bill.

That is basically the package. It is designed to provide unemployment benefits, health care benefits, dollars for infrastructure, and a tax cut for people who did not get one so they might not only get a break themselves but also contribute to the demand side of the equation which is necessary if this economic stimulus package is going to provide additional lift during this time of difficulty.

I hope in these next couple of days we can come together. We have done it before in the last few weeks. These are not excessive requests. This is a fiscally responsible plan. We have done so much in the last 10 years to put our economy on a footing that none of us imagined would ever be the case: that we would actually be in a situation where we would be talking about eliminating the national debt if we wanted.

How many of us have seen those clocks in almost every city that rapidly show the increase of the national debt? Yet over the last 10 years as the result of some very fine leadership in Congress, by the Federal Reserve, and obviously the White House, we were able to make a difference to put this country on a path many people thought we could not get on again.

As we talk about an economic recovery package, it must be fiscally responsible. If we are going to spend ourselves once again into huge debt, I cannot imagine anything more that Osama bin Laden or his supporters would like to see than us not only weakened from their attacks on September 11 but that we would weaken our economy either because we made excessive tax cuts or spending additions that were unwise.

As most Americans, I am stunned. I represent the most affluent State in the country, and certainly many of my constituents would benefit directly. They are some of the top income earners in the country. I do not hear my constituents talking about the need for a \$1.3 million tax break for IBM or the Ford Motor Company as a result of repealing the alternative minimum tax.

Where is the sense of contribution? Are they like the people in the streets of Queens running and dragging those hoses along to help put out the fires, somebody who is probably making \$20,000 or \$30,000? Some of them are retired. They were racing along to help stop a fire. How about that coming out of the top income earners in the country to help put out the fire in a sense? That is all we are asking.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has consumed 10 minutes.

Mr. DODD. I thank the Chair. I will wrap up by saying I hope we can find some common ground this week and do what the American public expects of

us. I would so much love to hear my President ask me to extend these unemployment benefits and provide health care. Presidents in the past have done it.

This President is doing a wonderful job in the battle in central Asia. All of us appreciate his work and the work of his team. I know he is occupied with that now, but we also would like him to appreciate the battle going on at home.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. In my capacity as a Senator from the State of New York, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:30 p.m. having arrived, the Senate will stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon the Senate, at 12:29 p.m., recessed until 2:17 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BAYH).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

Mr. HELMS I thank the Chair.

CONTINUATION OF AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, I speak on some legislation filed by distinguished Senators relative to S. 1673 this past Friday. I am honored to join with my distinguished colleagues in offering legislation to provide the maximum flexibility and stability our farmers need to make proper business decisions based on market conditions.

I am mindful, of course, of agriculture's importance to our country's economy and to America's security. I might add that agriculture is the No. 1 industry in North Carolina. Our farmers rank third in the Nation behind California and Florida in agricultural diversification.

It is with genuine appreciation that I join Senator LINCOLN, Senator HUTCHINSON, and Senator MILLER in working together in crafting this bill. The farm bill we are introducing will be helpful in our guaranteeing that American farmers will continue to provide the American people with the safe and adequate food supply that too many take for granted.

The past several years have been a genuine challenge to farmers, whether their operations are large or small. Farmers and their families have long been the backbone of countless rural communities. Every day, farmers face new challenges by literally dozens of factors beyond their control, from weather to insect infestation, to overreaching regulations that unnecessarily increase the cost of production,

to trade barriers imposed by other countries on our farm products.

All these factors make it especially difficult for farmers to earn a profit when prices are at such historic lows as they are today. As farmers begin preparing for a new planting cycle, meeting with their bankers to plan the financial future of their businesses and their families and making difficult decisions relating to capital improvement, they also face the uncertainty that comes with congressional consideration of a new farm bill. Farmers are already reeling from a string of especially difficult years, and this bill that was offered on Friday provides a balanced and bipartisan approach to provide the stability needed to better compete on a global playing field while allowing farmers the flexibility they must have in order to adjust to the world market.

I think the House of Representatives is to be commended for its leadership in so quickly passing a farm bill that is a positive step toward bringing stability and predictability to American agriculture. The bill we offered Friday in the Senate is built on the concepts adopted by the House which, by the way, developed its bill by soliciting the input of farmers and farm organizations throughout the country for the better part of 2 years.

We believe this bill is particularly well crafted to clear all of the legislative hurdles necessary to present it to the President for his signature by the end of this year.

Although we have had many important national issues to deal with during this historic time, we must not forget the needs of America's farmers.

I appreciate the willingness of my colleagues to work together on a good piece of legislation, and I look forward to our continued cooperation with each other.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a letter endorsing the bill we introduced this past Friday be printed in the RECORD.

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

NORTH CAROLINA
FARM BUREAU FEDERATION,
Raleigh, NC, November 7, 2001.

Hon. JESSE HELMS,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HELMS: The North Carolina Farm Bureau favors farm policy philosophies that were adopted in the House version (H.R. 2646) of the Farm Bill. We are also supporting your efforts along with Senators Hutchinson and Lincoln to draft a similar bill that includes a well-balanced funding approach among all titles.

All commodity groups were included in the writing of the House Farm Bill. The bill outlines the ideals of farmers by directly addressing farm programs while also making significant investments and improvements in conservation, rural development, export, research, and nutrition programs.

A Farm Bill that reflects the House version will result in a less contentious conference report. This hopefully should allow

for a new Farm Bill to be signed into law this year.

Thank you for your hard work in offering a Farm Bill proposal that helps address the challenges that our farmers face today.

Sincerely,

LARRY B. WOOTEN,
President.

The author of this letter, by the way, is the distinguished President of the North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation, Larry Wooten.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senator as in morning business.

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

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I am proud to rise to thank my colleague from North Carolina, having had the pleasure of working with him and his staff on this issue. I thank him very much for the leadership he has provided the State of North Carolina and this great Nation and certainly this body. I have had a wonderful time working with him.

I join my colleagues in introducing a bill of the utmost importance to our farmers. Since the passage of the Freedom to Farm bill in 1996, our farmers have toiled under clouds of uncertainty. Quite simply stated, our Nation needs a farm policy that works for working farmers. That is why, along with Senator HUTCHINSON, Senator HELMS of North Carolina, Senator MILLER of Georgia, Senators BREAUX and LANDRIEU of Louisiana, and Senator SESSIONS of Alabama, I am proud to offer a new alternative.

We have offered a farm bill that will ensure a strong safety net for America's farmers and ranchers. We have offered a farm bill that will increase investment in conservation programs by 80 percent. We have offered a farm bill that provides more effective support for disadvantaged working families through nutrition programs. We have offered a farm bill that will increase and improve our Nation's agricultural trade programs such as the Food Aid Program that sends food to the most needy of nations, many of which are aligned with us in our conflicts today against terrorism across the globe. We have offered a farm bill that will preserve and protect our Nation's forests and environment while investing in rural America.

For too many years, while the American economy at large was posting astonishing and unprecedented gains, our agricultural producers have not benefited from our prosperity. It is not only our farmers who are suffering as a result of failed Government policy; the institutions of small-town and rural America—local banks and merchants, feed and supply stores, equipment dealers, even corner grocers and family-owned hardware stores—are all caught in the web of financial collapse in rural America.

From a letter I received from a young farmer in northeast Arkansas a

few months ago, he said his family's farm is nearing "a point of no return," and if the crisis continues he will have to leave the land that his grandfather worked before him.

Our family farmers are farming away their equity. They are farming away their heritage. Their Government has not provided them the safety net they need to be competitive in a global marketplace in order to continue to provide us, the American people and people across the globe, the safest, most affordable and most abundant food supply in the world.

Here is a letter from a bank president in southeast Arkansas who notes that when he moved into his community in 1969, a new John Deere combine sold for about \$15,000. Today, a comparable model sells for about \$220,000. Fuel for that combine was 15 cents per gallon in 1969, he writes, but today a gallon of diesel fuel costs about \$1.05. He goes on to note that while farmers could expect to receive \$3 for a bushel of rice 33 years ago, today he only gets \$2.70 for that same bushel.

As the costs continue to skyrocket—the input of resources demanded of farmers to be put into their crops—the return on these investments continues to fall below the levels they were paid over 40 years ago.

Here is a letter from a young woman in east Arkansas who works a 60-acre rice and soybean farm with her husband and child. Her husband is so depressed because of his lack of ability to be able to provide for his family he needs counseling and medication and she can't let her child participate in afterschool sports because of the additional costs that are entailed.

She writes that where she and her family once felt pride in their sense of independence and self-sufficiency, today they feel only shame because they have to rely on loans and supplemental income payments to survive.

These stories are not unusual. In many rural areas, they are becoming the norm.

We cannot afford to let our farmers continue to suffer this way. They can't wait another year; their problems are real and they are here today. Our bill will address their problems. Our bill will restore them to a better economic future. Our bill will restore to them their hope so they can build a better future for their children and for the rest of the children in this great Nation.

I am proud to be a coauthor of this bill, and I am proud to say I will take my stand to fight for its passage for the men and women who toil day in and day out as agricultural producers in this great land. We owe them no less.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MILLER. Mr. President, I am pleased to have joined with my colleagues to introduce a bipartisan farm bill—a farm bill that will secure American agriculture into the 21st century.

For the past 4 years, our farmers have experienced an agricultural crisis

unlike anything seen since the Great Depression. As they say where I come from, it's been "hell on a holiday."

It has been particularly cruel because until the recent recession came along, our suffering farmers had watched the rest of our economy thrive with tremendous growth and prosperity.

The way we distribute disaster assistance cannot continue. Our farmers cannot wait any longer. The time for a new farm bill is now.

Our bill maintains the freedom for producers to plant the crops that best reflect market conditions. It provides an adequate safety net during economic and weather disasters, and it allows an 80-percent increase in conservation spending. Let me repeat that: It provides an 80-percent increase in conservation spending. That is nearly double what it is now. In past farm bills that would be unheard of.

The bill also makes dramatic and needed improvements in nutrition programs, trade promotion programs, and forestry incentives. It also—and this is very important—provides greater funding for our nation's research institutions such as the University of Georgia.

I have heard from members of the administration and members of the Agriculture Committee that we must take this first farm bill of the new century in a new policy direction. I do not disagree. I believe that is true. Along those lines, I respectfully point out that our bill includes the most dramatic farm policy change in nearly 70 years. That favorite whipping boy of all farm subsidies, the peanut program, has been turned on its head.

Perhaps, a little history is in order, because where we are advocating going compared to where we have been is as different as night and day.

During the Great Depression, when the South I grew up in was that "one-third" of a nation, President Roosevelt spoke about, the peanut quota system was established for poor farmers.

Quotas eventually became based on poundage and were set each year on the projected needs of domestic manufacturers.

As years went by, they began to be rented sometimes from landowner to farmer. Whether you agree with the policy or not, the peanut quota became a commodity in our neck of the woods.

The quota was passed down in families from generation to generation, and sold much as Coca-Cola or some other stock owned by our city cousins.

This policy, again rightly or wrongly, had seen little change since the early days of the Depression. Many families came to rely on quota support as their only source of retirement. It was their 401k.

And then NAFTA and GATT were passed and the peanut farmers' world was turned upside down. Because then, in the name of globalization, our trade protections for peanuts were lowered, imports were increased, and as a result quotas were gradually reduced.

Many peanut farmers across the country, seeing firsthand that what was good for the goose was not always good for the gander, and realizing what the future would hold if the current policy remained, decided to follow a new path. A way of life for more than three generations was, to use a phrase we understand very well, "gone with the wind."

This policy was so entrenched, because it had lasted so long, that this change has been difficult. It has not been easy to accept. Where I come from, a small problem that can be easily solved is known as "a short horse—soon curried." Well, this was a big horse, and it has taken a long time not only to curry but to break it.

For months, I, along with many others, called for the peanut community to unite and face reality—to get them to accept the fact that the peanut quota system as their daddies and granddaddies knew it, was gone, to understand that the people in Washington won't support it, and NAFTA and GATT are here to stay.

So, we, their representatives in Congress, urged them to accept this change and work to develop a new, comprehensive policy that would allow peanut farmers to be competitive in world markets and that would compensate those affected by the change. After a lot of discussion, I think that is exactly what we have crafted.

There are never many people happy at a shotgun marriage, and that is what this is. To make such a drastic reform took careful bridge-building to get across these troubled waters. We needed a transition. Anything else would have been unfair and not the American way.

We are willing to face the bad along with the good of fair and open trade. But we also want to maintain a peanut industry that will survive for future generations of peanut farm families.

The peanut program in this bill will be a tough row to hoe, but it is fair and the peanut community can say, "We are now like everyone else."

There are another important point that I wish to make, and it is an issue that strikes at the heart of the entire agricultural industry.

I recently met with a large group of Georgia agriculture leaders, and the message they expressed to me was one of great distress and crisis.

In this time of the lowest interest rates we have seen in years, in this time of generous credit, there are banks all over rural Georgia that will no longer finance a farmer on the basis of future crops or equipment value. It is not that they do not want to help their friend and neighbor, but it is simply too big a risk. The loan officer reluctantly points out that commodity prices are just too low, and they do not see much of a chance for the farmer to repay the loan, no matter how hard he and his family might work, not under our present trade policy.

They also point out that the agricultural economy is so distressed that

equipment purchased by farmers for thousands of dollars only a short time ago now has little value because no other farmer can afford to buy it.

The current recession did not bring this on, nor did the events of September 11. Mother Nature and poor market conditions did, and it shows that our farmers must have a stronger safety net.

In addition, disasters over the past 4 years have exhausted many life savings and left no collateral on which to finance anything. Those who say we ought to wait to pass a new farm bill ought to have to walk a mile in those farmers' shoes. They ought to have to be the ones on the farm who work from daylight to dark and from can to can't. They ought to have to be sitting at that kitchen table after supper when the kids are in bed and hear the discussion about having to give up a farm that has been in the family for generations. Then, when the family farm is put up on an auction block and it goes for pennies on the dollar, what do we say to them then? That is something we can't figure out over lunch at the Palm.

We are going to be talking this week about a stimulus package. We have proposals on stimuli coming out of our ears. It is *creme de la creme* that can be conceived only by those highly paid lobbyists, pushing and pulling, paying and pimping, and promising to get their clients the best breaks and the most generous incentives.

I learned a long time ago that when it comes to how legislation is written—especially here in Washington—it is kind of like that country music song by Freddie Hart about his girlfriend: "If fingerprints showed up on skin, I wonder whose I would find on you."

I am afraid both stimulus bills have a lot of questionable fingerprints on them, and we do not need the FBI to figure out whose they are. Their names, addresses, and their interests are in the top contributor list of both parties.

The legislation I am speaking on today also has fingerprints: Fingerprints from callused hands—the hands of the workers who feed us and clothe us, people who, like the family dog, we just take for granted.

Do I speak too harshly? I am sorry, but because I am not blind to what I see, I cannot be bland in what I say. Of course, we cannot continue to do things as we have always done, and we cannot continue to provide disaster assistance each and every year. But there has to be a transition, some "weaning time," as it is called down on the farm.

Mr. President, this farm bill sets a new policy, a sea change in conservation and peanuts. It addresses the critical needs facing America's farmers. It was written by Senators from both sides of the aisle. I hope that same bipartisan support will pass a new farm policy this year.