

morning where eyes had met gently saying good-bye for the day, a gentle brush of the hair that would be no more, that ended in violent, fiery tragedy and death. And for us to hobble our Intelligence Committee and knock out 60 percent of their intelligence gathering is un-American, it is something that we will not tolerate in this Chamber, and until we get it right, I will never be quiet on this subject. And I know the gentleman feels as strongly as I do.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. I appreciate the gentleman's sentiments. And I would just say I don't think there is anybody in this Chamber that depreciates the experiences of 9/11 nor the threat that currently faces this country. That does not excuse anybody in this Chamber or us collectively for making either ill-informed decisions or just wrongheaded decisions. And when we have the expert experience and judgment of people like Admiral McConnell, who told us of the threat that we are currently facing and his inability to do the job that he has sworn an oath to do, and when we responded in a way which he said works, it is totally beyond belief that we would want to change that now.

And the other thing is, is there anybody in this Chamber that believes the threat is only until February or is only for 2 years, as was in the bill that was presented to us? This is a long-term threat which necessitates a long-term commitment on the part of the American people, on the part of the Congress, on the part of the entire Federal Government. And we have an obligation to make sure that that takes place. Otherwise, the American people have every right to say to us you have not done the job.

So I would hope that when we have this bill on the floor we have an opportunity to make it permanent so that we can tell our adversaries we will throw everything at you, not to convict you after a perpetration of an attack on us but to prevent it in the first place. The American people don't want prosecution. They want prevention first and foremost.

Mr. AKIN. If I could just interrupt for a minute, I don't think any of us want to impugn anybody's motives. Our objective here is and the reason we were sent here by our constituents is to solve problems, which you have outlined is a reasonable balance between the privacy rights of Americans and the necessity of the government to do what it is number one tasked to do, which is to protect our citizens. But when we get that balance wrong and the director of the people that have to collect that intelligence say that we have got to have judges, you are going to knock out more than half of our intelligence-gathering capability, then it says we need to get back to the drawing board and get this thing done the right way.

I certainly appreciate your attention to the details to looking at the lan-

guage. And I certainly hope that our Democrat colleagues will allow enough debate and discussion to solve the problem.

Mr. DANIEL E. LUNGREN of California. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his words.

And let me just finish on these words. Justice Robert Jackson of the U.S. Supreme Court once said, "The Constitution is not a suicide pact."

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DROUGHT CONDITIONS IN THE SOUTHEAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MITCHELL). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to begin this hour to put a great spotlight on what is occurring in the southeastern region of the United States.

You know, when you look at the statistics and you look at the effects, there is only one word that can describe the drought that has gripped the southeastern United States, and that is "tragic."

If you look at this map to my right, you see that the Southeast is this large red area. And you also have some of the same effects in some parts of the west coast, and we've seen the effects of what's happening there with the terrible fires that are now taking place out in California.

Mr. Speaker, this is a disaster, not like a tornado or a hurricane or even any major catastrophic event. When you have a big storm or you have an earthquake, it's over, you come in and put things back together, you're able to start sorting people's lives out. But a drought of the magnitude of the one that is now gripping the Southeast is sort of a continual process. It started well over a year ago. We had a dry winter, we had a dry fall, last year a dry winter, this past year, and now this year. And I will talk about it more as the evening goes on.

We have places in my home State and in other places of the Southeast where we are 20 inches of rain below normal. And I will talk about that and will have more to say about it as the evening goes on. But this impact adds up over time. It impacts every person in the Southeast. It impacts animals, it impacts vegetation, and it certainly has an impact on the land.

This drought, frankly, is the worst one that people who are now living can remember. And in some places in my State, people who are approaching 100 years of age say they have never seen anything this bad. We know that this entire region has had, in some places, 10 inches less rain, others plus-20. And I was on the phone just today with one of our small towns working with the

Governor's office. They will be out of water in 60 days. We are struggling to get water lines to them just to help them out.

But tonight I'm going to talk about a broader issue of it is impacting the people who live on the land, who provide our food and fiber in this country. This area has been the hardest hit. And it's a broad area, as you can see here. It's in the State of Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and even parts of Maryland.

In North Carolina, Governor Easley has issued a state-wide ban on burning, and he has asked citizens to halt all nonessential water use. Just this week he took another step, and he asked our citizens to reduce their water use by 50 percent by Halloween. And this drought has affected our farmers to an extent so great that it is now affecting rural communities across North Carolina. And I'm sure, as my colleagues come this evening, they will share with you what's happening in their State across the Southeast.

I don't know if my colleagues can see here, but certainly North Carolina is predominantly red because now, and I will talk about it in a few minutes, almost every county, almost all 100 counties are in what's called the "extreme drought," and I will talk about that; but my congressional district falls 100 percent in the extreme drought area.

And it does have an effect on rural communities, but it also affects suburban and urban communities. Plants are having their production levels cut to save water. Several communities have only a few months of water supply remaining. And I just talked about one that has no more than 60 days. It has now cut production in one of the plants that employs roughly 2,000 people; it has cut their production back to 3 and 4 days. They're hauling water in water tankers just to keep operating. I know that this is the case in several of these other States as well, and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

What we really need is a good rain. Members of Congress think they can do a lot of things, but they can't do a whole lot about rain. We can talk about it, we can pray for it, we can wish we were able to get it; but the truth is we can't do anything about it. And when we can't do that, what we can do is help in ways we can help.

In my district, the Second District of North Carolina, as I've said, the entire district is virtually in the exceptional drought area. That is the most serious category of drought you can have. Farmers have had to struggle all year in this very difficult situation.

The crisis that this drought is is underlined by the two critical variables that seem to be working against us. First is the self-sustaining cycle that a drought of this magnitude can trigger. For this region to recover any time soon, we will need at least an additional foot of precipitation. We're not likely to get that. This late in the

year, we normally get the ocean tropical storms out of the Caribbean. There was a time when we worried about hurricanes. We have people in North Carolina now saying we wish we could get one because they would get rain.

Mr. Speaker, I'm working in Congress to provide some relief. The House Agriculture Committee is holding a hearing on Thursday to help shine the spotlight on this growing disaster, and it really is a disaster of large proportion.

I wrote a letter to the President asking for assistance. This letter was signed by 54 of my colleagues, both Democrat and Republican. I assume it takes a long time for a letter to get to Pennsylvania Avenue. I haven't heard anything from him. I assume that Pony Express will show up one day, maybe it went with Turtle Express, but I do hope to hear. We have asked that some money be included in the supplemental that the President requests. And I understand he sent a supplemental down, but there was no request in it. I hope he will reconsider because these farm families may not be able to make it another year.

They pay taxes when they have money. They're God-fearing people. They help in their communities. And they deserve, when they have tough times, for their government to help them because they've helped others when they've had tough times.

Farmers are some of the most resourceful, ingenious, productive people around; but there is not much you can do to grow crops or raise livestock or produce poultry and pork without some of the essential things you need, and rain is one of those things. And you need feed.

Mr. Speaker, this is why we're here tonight, and this is why we all work together. And we're going to work to create an awareness to this problem. And we're going to put a fire under our colleagues, if necessary, and we're going to do the same at the White House if it takes that because our farmers and rural communities desperately need assistance. It is my hope that we can pass a relief package and that the President will sign it into law.

These are good Americans. They don't live someplace around the world; they live here in the United States of America. As I said earlier, they're tax-paying citizens when they have money.

Now, let me yield to my good friend from North Carolina, MIKE MCINTYRE, who also understands this problem. His district is caught in the red area also. So I yield to him for whatever time he may consume.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you, Mr. ETHERIDGE. And I want to thank my colleague, BOB ETHERIDGE, for requesting this time tonight. Indeed, we all stand together, knowing that the severe drought which is gripping the southeastern United States has already destroyed millions of acres of valuable crops, Mr. Speaker, not only in our home State of North Carolina, but

throughout the southeastern U.S. And, unfortunately, the situation is only going to get worse.

Today, North Carolina experienced yet another day of dry weather. Months upon months of hot temperatures, scorching sun back since early this summer, and little to no rain since then have brought about dead and dying crops, soybeans, corn, hay, cotton and nursery crops, in particular. During my travels around southeastern North Carolina, both the summer and this fall, I met with many farmers about this issue. Back in August, during our recess, I met with farmers then who feared the worse, and now here we are months later and unfortunately their nightmares are coming true. If we had not experienced significant rainfall by the Labor Day weekend, we were going to have even worse problems and, indeed, we have. Where lush green fields of corn once stood, ragged brown stalks, beat down by the sun, now dot our rural landscape; constant reminders of how devastating this drought is proving to be.

During August, I met with and talked with farmers from several counties. I asked North Carolina Governor Mike Easley, on behalf of our area's farmers, to request a disaster declaration as severe drought conditions existed in most areas, and I know my colleagues have done the same.

I also wrote then-Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns and the President to request their assistance. And subsequently, upon the return to Washington after the August recess, I then also asked the leadership of both parties here in the House to help us to help those in need because, indeed, this is not an issue about political parties. This is an issue of economic survival, and ultimately, it's going to affect everybody.

You know, Mr. Speaker, and to my friend, Congressman ETHERIDGE, and those others who are joining us here tonight that you will hear from shortly, this is something that affects everybody's pocketbook. We all depend on food and fiber for our very survival. And this is an issue that is now going to affect all of us here in our neighborhoods back home, in our communities, indeed, across our State of North Carolina and throughout the Southeast, and ultimately across this Nation.

According to USDA loss estimates, 85 of our State's 100 counties have reported excessive agriculture losses due to drought for at least one significant crop. And major losses have been reported already on corn, cotton, tobacco, soybeans, pastures, hay and peanuts. And those numbers continue to rise, Mr. Speaker, as farmers harvest what's left of their crops.

I also joined my friend, Congressman ETHERIDGE, in signing a letter to the President as well when we returned from our recess.

Now, for many families in our district, farming is their sole source of income, and any significant loss of yields

is financially devastating. As we all have been hearing from our farmers, they may not even be able to make it until next year, and many may be forced to sell the land they have just to pay their bills. And even if North Carolina were to see some significant rainfall, most crops are already too far gone for it to make a difference at this point.

What these folks need now is disaster assistance to help them pay their bills, to make sure that they can remain on their farms and get ready to plant again in the spring. It is also important for all of us, as communities and as citizens, to realize that this is going to affect all of us beyond the farms into our very homes. And now people are realizing that with preventative measures they're having to do to avoid wasting water.

It's imperative that we support our farmers during this dire time so that we may ensure a safe and abundant food supply for which we, in America, are known and which is important to all American citizens. We need help, and we need it now.

And let me just say that this drought reaches, indeed, beyond the farm to citizens throughout regions now across the country. Restrictions on watering lawns and washing cars have now turned into calls to even reduce shower times. And public schools and some places now have started to switch to paper plates to conserve water.

Our Governor now has called on even greater restrictions in North Carolina. And there are great concerns that we not only need rain to help the farmers, but this drought has affected every citizen, and our supply of water for all needs, in industry, in home, in schools, and throughout all sectors of society.

We must all begin to think about long-term strategies to conserve water and protect the vital water supplies of countless communities through, not only North Carolina, but, indeed, the rest of the southeastern U.S. With meteorologists now calling for continued warm, dry weather, the urgency of addressing this worsening drought continues to rise, and the need for financial assistance is greater than ever.

The time is now to act. I thank my colleague for helping us bring attention to this tonight in this time we have. And I know several colleagues from not only throughout North Carolina, but across the South, are going to be speaking tonight on the floor. We must act. We must stand in one voice. We must stand across party lines. And we must give the assistance that is needed now.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I thank the gentleman.

I have just changed the map here for my good friend, Mr. SPRATT from South Carolina, to give a little bit better view of the South Carolina area that his district falls in. And it reaches, of course, into North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, as I said earlier, Tennessee, Kentucky, all the way down to Alabama.

As my colleague, Mr. MCINTYRE, said, and I think my friend from South Carolina will confirm, you know, these are the things, it sort of starts to weigh on you as the drought gets worse and worse. You know, not being able to water our lawn, wash your car, take a long shower is an inconvenience; but if you're a farmer and you don't have the water for your crops, it's catastrophic. Because you not only have an opportunity to lose your livelihood; you could lose your means of future livelihood if you ultimately lose your land and the equipment that you till it with.

So I would yield such time as he may consume to my good friend from South Carolina, the gentleman, Mr. SPRATT.

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Mr. SPRATT. Mr. Speaker, I thank my good friend for yielding and thank all of you for participating in this Special Order tonight. You know, we tend to think of ourselves as urbanized, even in the Southeast these days. But in South Carolina, my State, and even more so in North Carolina, agriculture is critically important as part of our total economy. In South Carolina, 46,000 full- and part-time jobs are supported by agriculture. That is 22 percent of all the jobs in our State; \$15.1 billion in income is attributable to agriculture, 17 percent of the State's total income.

I could go on to show that even now in the 21st century, we in the Carolinas and throughout the Southeast still have a lot of agriculture, and we are critically dependent upon it. Our farmers and our people throughout the Southeast are faced with just about the worst drought I have seen in I don't know when. And it keeps getting worse and worse. I went to Marlboro County, probably one of the most agricultural counties in the 14 counties I represent. I couldn't believe what I saw. And it hasn't gotten any better since then. Soybeans that never develop. There is no pod. Cotton that is barely worth getting out of the fields. Hay, peanuts, pastures, you name it, they are all suffering. It is basically at the level of being catastrophic unless we can help and help soon. In Marlboro, back in September, the threshold for the Department of Agriculture in declaring a crop or an area a disaster area is 33 percent crop loss. Marlboro County in September, 2 months ago virtually, at least 6 weeks ago, had 67 percent of its crop already damaged. It is worse by now I am sure. I represent 14 counties, small-town counties, proud counties, but still dependent on agriculture, and 13 of those 14 counties were included recently in a disaster declaration from the Secretary of Agriculture. That is how widespread the disaster situation is.

Our Commission of Agriculture estimates that in South Carolina alone, the losses are going to equal \$500 to \$600 million. Now, most people don't know it, but most farmers today, re-

sponsible farmers, carry crop insurance underwritten and subsidized by the Federal Government. But it is not enough to cover their losses. It is partial recovery, but it is not nearly enough. The existing law requires, allows disaster relief and other forms of relief to farmers who have suffered from natural disasters, provided that they planted their crops or harvested their crops before February 28, 2007. Unfortunately, that applies to very few of our farmers in the crops that they plant. Consequently, they have next to no coverage, next to no protection from disaster relief that some farmers in other parts of the country would enjoy.

Basically what we would like simply to see happen is for our farmers to be cut into the same program of relief that other farmers are enjoying by virtue of existing agriculture law. That is what we are asking for. And there's several different ways to do it. Supplementals will be coming through here with capital improvements in various parts of the world, Iraq, Afghanistan; we could afford something in those bills for our own farmers. The farm bill itself will be coming back here in conference report. Maybe there is some way we can adjust it to provide for us. The Agriculture appropriations bill has not yet been passed. There are lots of opportunities.

We are here tonight to say we need the help of everyone, beginning with the administration. The Bush administration could initiate this process by requesting in the next supplemental some sort of assistance for these farmers, as was done and should have been done for the farmers suffering from wild fire on the west coast and, by golly, that will be a big first step and help us finish the process, carry the ball across the goal line here in Congress.

We are here tonight from all over the Southeast to bring the same message to the Congress, to the country and to the Bush administration. We are hurting, hurting bad. And if we don't get some sort of relief, it is going to be devastating for our farmers.

Thank you very much for the time you have yielded.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I thank the gentleman, and he is absolutely correct. Let me share some numbers, and I think the same could be said for South Carolina as in North Carolina. This is from the National Government, and this map here was actually from the U.S. Department of Drought Monitoring and it is dated October 16. It is worse today than it was on the 16th because we have had no rain.

Let me just share some numbers, and it will be the same that is true in South Carolina, Georgia and all these regions that we see in red. For instance, as a State as a whole in North Carolina, just talking about topsoil moisture, 73 percent short, very short, 21 percent short. Translated, what that really means Statewide is you can't

plant grain for the fall. The ground is so dry it will not germinate. In the mountains, 81 percent, very short, 16 short. In the piedmont, 87 percent short, 13 percent very, and even in the coastal plains 53, 34. From the mountains to the coast in North Carolina. South Carolina probably faces some of the same challenges in terms, and if you look at the crop conditions, and this was over a month ago, cotton, very poor and poor to fair, 80-some percent; pastures, 99 percent either fair, poor or very poor. I share that on pastures because there are a lot of cattle in South Carolina as there are in North Carolina. The price of cattle at the auction market has dropped \$15 a pound since early summer. Now farmers are being forced to sell because of no hay, no grazing for the winter, and guess what is happening? They are getting hit twice. They are buying hay to feed the cattle that they have left, and the ones they are selling they get less money.

Now, the people in the Midwest faced this several years ago. This is something we haven't faced before. I will go through the others later. But at this time, my colleague from eastern North Carolina, where he is facing some of the same drought areas, one of the heaviest agricultural areas in North Carolina, my good friend, G.K. Butterfield, I yield to you such time as you may consume.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. I want to thank my friend, Congressman ETHERIDGE, for yielding me this time. This is a very important issue for North Carolina, and I want to thank him for allowing me to come to this floor tonight to add my comments to this subject. Also I want to thank my good friend MIKE MCINTYRE. He spoke just a few minutes ago. MIKE and Congressman ETHERIDGE both are dynamic leaders of the Agriculture Committee. They both serve as chairmen of subcommittees on the Committee on Agriculture, and they are leading the way. I want to thank them publicly for their extraordinary leadership.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have come to the floor tonight to, again, talk about this serious drought. My colleagues are absolutely correct. North Carolina is experiencing its worst drought in 50 long years. In fact, nearly three-quarters of North Carolina's 100 counties, that is 75 or more counties, are experiencing an exceptional drought, the most severe category listed by the Drought Management Advisory Council. The council also lists the remaining counties as experiencing extreme drought or severe drought conditions. This is very serious for North Carolina.

The conditions have been so severe that several of our communities have as little as 3 months of water left remaining. If North Carolina does not see significant rain, some areas face prospects of water rationing. Yes, water rationing, or potentially running out of water entirely. The climate data shows that this spring and summer was the area's driest period since 1948.

North Carolina, Mr. Speaker, is taking this problem seriously. Currently, 106 public water systems have already adopted mandatory water restrictions, while 118 have enacted voluntary restrictions. I was on a program a few nights ago with the Speaker of our House of Representatives in North Carolina, Speaker Joe Hackney, and I told Speaker Hackney that I would be on the House floor tonight with our friend BOB ETHERIDGE and we will be talking about the drought. The Speaker of my House told me, "Congressman, with all due respect, you need to talk about more than the drought. You need to provide resources for the farmers and others who are affected by the drought."

This is very serious. As anyone can imagine, the effects on agriculture have been brutal. Congressman ETHERIDGE talked about it a few minutes ago and Congressman MCINTYRE and my friend Congressman SPRATT, they all talked about it. The effects have been absolutely brutal. It is estimated that peanut production is down about 20 percent from this time last year. Hay production has been cut nearly in half, and soybean production is down by more than a third. My colleagues, that is serious. In many parts of my district, and Congressman ETHERIDGE has the map there with him in the well of the Chamber, these conditions are so dry that the soil at the bottom of drainage ditches has started to crack, and water in streams and creeks has ceased to even move. For many, the water table has also dropped to the point where there is virtually no water in the ground. The drought also means that there is less water available for our cattle and horses and other uses. At this point, some farmers will likely have to abandon their crops, particularly our peanut farmers. The consequences will be even more serious if there is no significant rainfall between now and February.

Our U.S. Department of Agriculture declared 85 North Carolina counties disaster areas last month, making farmers eligible for low-interest emergency loans. And we are certainly thankful for that. But our farmers still need more help, and that is what Congressman ETHERIDGE was talking about a few minutes ago. We are facing the kind of disaster that could push many of our farmers out of business and off of their farms. Congress must move quickly to avoid worsening this natural disaster.

So, I am confident, I am extremely confident that the Democratic majority will rise to the occasion. We will certainly encourage the leadership to do that. We will make the resources available for our citizens. And I pray, Mr. Speaker, that the President of the United States would not veto that legislation, that he will sign it into law.

Thank you, Mr. ETHERIDGE, for your extraordinary leadership, and thank you for what you mean to North Carolina.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I thank the gentleman, and I couldn't agree more that, you know, when you look at our State, really, all this whole region is suffering, but according to the numbers by the Drought Monitoring Council in the Department of Agriculture, if you look at North Carolina specifically, North Carolina is still reporting more drought impact than any other State from the mountains to the coast. Now, all these in the Southeast are hurting. But in North Carolina, as one farmer said to me the other day, and I mentioned this earlier, he said, "You know, if you can't water your lawn, that is an inconvenience. If you can't wash your car, you can drive it a little dirty. You can cut back on the shower. But my ponds are empty, so I can't irrigate my fields. So I am facing the forces of nature, and I could lose everything I have got." That's a sad situation to be in. But it is a reality. When that happens, you know, farmers are the last ones to sort of stand up and say, "We want the government to help us." They usually want to say, as you well know, "If you just leave us alone, we can get our jobs done." But this is one of those times that many of them won't make it without help. And it is certainly true in your area as it is in mine.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. ETHERIDGE, are you beginning to hear from our farmers across North Carolina? Are they calling your office like they are calling my office?

Mr. ETHERIDGE. They are.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. I discern a sense of desperation among our farmers. They are looking to their Federal Government for a response. Is that what you are finding?

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I am. I thank the gentleman for yielding. I do. And it is one of those things where, as I said earlier, it didn't start this year. It really started last year, as you remember. We had a dry winter, then a late frost that hurt the spring crops, and then we had a dry summer that led into the fall, and now they can't plant the fall crops because there is no ground moisture. So there is a level of desperation that I can't remember having seen in my lifetime. Certainly we are hearing from farmers on a daily basis just saying, "What can we do? What kind of help can we get to get through this?" because they know they have no ability to make it rain.

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Mr. BUTTERFIELD. If we don't do it, it won't happen.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. That's exactly right. If we don't get it done, it won't get done. I appreciate you being here tonight. Thank you for coming and joining us.

According to the National Drought Monitor Center, North Carolina is still reporting, as I said, the largest drought impact in the United States at this time. The crop conditions are devastating.

Let me just share with you an example of a farmer from Autryville, North

Carolina. He grows watermelons. He said, We have suffered at least 25 percent for our early summer crop and an 80 percent loss of the later plantings in August and September. We had over 500 acres of watermelons.

Now for the people who go to the grocery store, they are going to feel that impact because not having products produced close to home, that they don't have a lot of transportation in, that they know where it comes from, they get a good, fresh product at a reasonable price. That won't be there. He said, All of our ponds ran out of water in both the watermelon and the cantaloupe fields even though we only used drip irrigation. You say, Why would the water run out? Because we had the hottest summer on record. When you have a hot summer, you get a lot of evaporation. If you get no rain, you get no opportunity to replenish it.

He said, Our cantaloupe crop wasn't hurt much more than 25 percent totally. However, a 25 percent loss starts to eat up our profit when you have over 300 acres of cantaloupes that were early. Pumpkins. We experienced 100 percent loss on our 100 acres of pumpkins. Even though we were able to irrigate some of them, we ran out of water. The excessive heat caused very poor pollination, which resulted in no fruit set.

Now, for those who are listening this evening here in the Chamber and those who may be watching on C-SPAN, what they are really talking about is you have to pollinate those flowers, and if they don't get pollinated and don't set, you get no fruit. So all of a sudden, after all the work he put in, the expensive inputs, there's no money at the end of the year.

He said his wheat crop was about a 65 percent loss due to the drought conditions as far back as February and March. Remember, I said earlier we had a dry fall last year, it went into the winter, and then we had the early frost that hit the wheat and the oats and a lot of our late grains. So he winds up with a 65 percent loss there.

Then his other crops, and this is just one farmer, and I will share with you in a minute what these products mean in terms of dollars just in North Carolina. I could use other States, but since North Carolina is my home, I am going to use that State. It has an impact because roughly 25 percent of North Carolina's gross domestic product is really tied up in agriculture. Peanuts. Our loss ranged anywhere from 30 percent to 75 percent below normal yields due to drought. That was just a plain lack of rainfall.

Now, some of you might say, Well, why would the rains be so great between 30 percent and 75 percent for a farmer who had peanuts. You have got to understand, the rain, what little rain we got this year, and, remember, I said earlier it rains, depending on where you were in the State, 10 inches below normal, to as much as 20. If you happened to be in one of those 20-plus

inch areas, then your peanuts didn't do much of anything, or anything else. So that was part of the problem. It could happen within any given county. This is one of those unusual drought years.

He said, I planted soybeans. Even though we haven't started harvesting soybeans yet, there is nothing there to harvest. We have 500 acres of soybeans. So those of you who don't have an idea how much 500 acres is, I will just share with you that if you had a good yield on 500 acres, and you yielded say 40 bushels an acre, you can figure it up right quick if soybeans are \$7 a bushel. You can see how much prospective income you have just lost. You have already got all the expenses of getting your land ready, buying the seed, putting the chemicals on it if you had to spray it for pesticides or something. This year they probably wouldn't because it was so dry. Any time you have a dry year, you're more likely to have pests eat it. That is a real problem.

Just this past Monday I was in the field with a gentleman who actually farms in Johnston in Wake County. Mr. Jordan carried us into one of his grain fields of soybeans, showed us his sweet potatoes. Let me just read to you what he said when I visited him. He is a hardworking guy. He has farmed all of his life. His dad farmed the land; his son is now with him.

He said, I just had a third of a crop of sweet potatoes come in, and the ones we harvested, and for those of you who know what I'm talking about, number one potatoes are the ones you get your money for, and the others don't turn out too good. They're good potatoes, but people go to the grocery shelf and they may not buy them. Most of them were not number ones.

Then we went to his soybean field, and in that field, and I grew up on a farm, my son still farms, I participate in it a little, and I would venture to say we opened some pods on some of the soybeans, and those of you who ever had a BB gun know how big a BB is, and a soybean is supposed to be a lot bigger, like a pea. And they were like BBs.

Of course, when they go through and harvest, they will go right through the harvest and wind up back on the ground. They are great to help the birds a little bit, but it's going to be devastating for Mr. Jordan and farmers like him. He said, The heat has been as big a factor as the drought. Of course, all of you know the heat contributes to the drought, because it was the hottest summer on record in the State of North Carolina and in the Southeast.

He went on to say he has cattle. He said there is not enough hay to cut to justify running the machinery, so we are to spend a lot of money for feed to help these cows get through the winter. We have farmers in North Carolina hauling hay great distances, others that cannot even buy it, hay that was \$20 and \$25 for a big bale has now gone from \$40 to \$50, and in some cases they can't even get it. This is why they are

asking for help. This is why this Democratic Congress, and I hope my Republican colleagues, and I pray the President, will do the right thing and sign legislation to help.

Mr. Jordan has estimated that his gross loss will be somewhere between \$115,000 and \$200,000 on his fall harvest. He is a large operator. He might weather it. But it will take him years to recover, because the machinery he uses has got a year's use on it and it is getting worn out and he has no money to make it happen. He said, I hope we can salvage some of it. We will try to save what we can. And I just say thank God for people like him and other farmers who are willing to continue to get up early in the morning, work in the hot sun, and take the huge risk that it takes to provide food and fiber for all of us in America.

Let me share with you something about what is happening with what we call the "green industry." The green industry, of course, is our nursery industry and a host of those things tied to it. These numbers are for North Carolina.

The green industry contributes more than \$8.6 billion to the economy of North Carolina. The green industry alone employs roughly 151,000 people. Due to the drought thus far this year, the green industry has laid off 30 percent of their labor force and revenues are down 40 percent. Let me repeat that again: 40 percent.

Now, that will be felt not just this year. That is going to be felt for a number of years, because that means, number one, you can't expand. Number two, you can't buy new equipment, and all of those people that they buy trucks, tractors and equipment from, they are going to feel it.

As you can see from the map here, as I said earlier, the situation in North Carolina and the entire region is dire. Fifteen more counties were just moved into the worst category of drought, exceptional, this week. We talked about 85 already. Fifteen more have been moved into it. We hope to get some rain this weekend. Every time we get promised rain, it tends to split and get away. We hope we do. But more is needed to make it. When you have as much area having drought as we do, it just seems that it gets tougher and tougher.

Let me share with you one other thing. I think it was my good friend Mr. BUTTERFIELD was talking about how he saw streams that were cracking. I was up toward Siler City about a month ago in the Upper Piedmont, western part of my district. It was the first time in my lifetime I have seen trees along streams that were dead. Not the leaves falling off, trees were dead, because the streams had long since dried up. And anyone who knows anything about forestry, a tree near a stream tends to have its roots fairly shallow and in the water or close to it. These streams had been dry so long, the trees didn't have deep roots so

whole trees were dying. You could see long strips of trees along streams that were dead. Farmers had been feeding hay since late July.

I keep repeating this because this is a critical situation. You know, you can be in Washington and you can come into this nice building and you can have plenty of food every day, but one of these days, if we don't take care of the people who provide food and fiber, we might face that challenge too.

So I hope my colleagues understand how serious this situation is, and I hope the people at the White House understand. I pray that the President will send a request to help not only our folks in the Southeast that are going to take a long time to recover, but also those on the west coast that we see on TV tonight, and it looks like it is going to be awhile, who have lost a great deal as well.

These things, if they do not deserve an emergency appropriation, I pray ask, what does? If we can't help the people in this country, who can we help? When can we help them, if we can't help them when they are hurting?

Mr. Speaker, almost 85 percent of the land area of my State is now designated as being either extreme or exceptional drought. To my knowledge, that has never happened in my lifetime. I have talked with people who are almost 100 years old, and they never remember it.

Fifty-four percent of the land area is in the exceptional category. That is up from 38 percent just last week. And, as I said, all of the State is in at least severe drought, with the last three counties in the moderate category now moving into severe.

On October 18, the North Carolina Drought Management Advisory Council Web site listed the number of North Carolina counties in each category as follows: D-4, that is exceptional, 71; D-3, extreme, 18; and D-2, severe, 11.

□ 2030

We talked earlier about the challenge we face with water. And water is important to sustain life. I mentioned earlier about Siler City. I want to talk about that again because that county has probably suffered as much or more as any county in the district, agriculturally as well as the city of Siler City. They are down to 60 days of water. Tonight I want to thank the Governor of our State, Mike Easley, and his staff and some of the folks from USDA who have worked together to try to make sure that the town has water. They have been hauling water with trucks to keep roughly 1,500 to 2,000 people working. As I said when I began to speak, they are now down to 3 or 4 days a week. It looks like they are going to break ground, because of the hard work of the Governor's staff, on a waterline that will hopefully get them over the hump. But we still need rain and we need help.

These two plants, Pilgrim's Pride and Townsend, provide a lot of jobs, but

they also provide an opportunity for our farmers to have income who produce a lot of poultry in our State. They provide a lot of food for the table of a lot of Americans who don't want to think about it, who don't want to know about it, who really aren't interested in it. They just want to go to the meat counter and have good, safe, plentiful, affordable food supply.

Mr. Speaker, to do that it is incumbent upon every Member who took the oath of office in this Chamber and the other body across the hall and the President of the United States, if we can get together a bill, pass it, and we should, for him to sign it, to make sure that these folks continue to make it.

I saw on Monday the sad commentary of what a major drought can do. I was on our farm with our son Saturday. We spent an hour or two and were going to put a cover crop in. We actually put some in last Saturday. He said to me I probably made a mistake; it might not come up. He is probably right. This Saturday we decided not to plant anything because the ground was so dry it wouldn't germinate.

I happen to believe our food supply is part of our national defense. It is part of our homeland defense, and Members of Congress I think will rally. Farmers face some of the toughest perils that I can imagine when they invest their money in the spring and depend on weather to make it. Make no mistake about it, somewhere in America almost every year there is some catastrophic event tied to agriculture. Some of it is tied to our beaches with hurricanes. It is tied to tornadoes in the Midwest. It is tied to earthquakes. It is tied to a lot of things. We have always responded. We have always helped, and we should. Now is the time, Mr. Speaker, to help the people in the Southeast at a time when we have the toughest drought that we have ever faced.

And I am pleased that we are now joined by my colleague from Wake County who understands this. He represents some of the agricultural area, but we are very fortunate to have him chairing the Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, and he certainly understands that our agricultural production is part of our national security as much as protecting our homeland. If we can't have cotton and corn and soybeans and those things we enjoy having on our table, then we are challenged. And I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE). He can see from the map as well how North Carolina is the worst of all of the southeastern States by the drought monitor.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. I thank my colleague for yielding. That map before us is an all too familiar scene, I'm afraid. We have seen the drought areas growing and growing each week in the newspaper depictions of our weather pattern. It is very, very dry up and down the eastern seaboard. In the Washington, D.C. area, this is a serious situation as well. But my col-

league is right; no State has been hit harder than North Carolina. And the devastation started in the western part of the State at first, but has now swept across the State, and we have severe drought conditions, I think, in every one of our North Carolina counties. The situation is dire.

The gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) who serves so well on the Agriculture Committee and also the Homeland Security Committee, has done us a service in organizing this Special Order tonight and bringing this serious problem to the attention of our colleagues and to the attention of the country.

If anyone has spent any time at all in the Southeast this summer and fall, it would be difficult for the enormity of the drought not to catch your attention. We see it daily during our time in North Carolina. We are not simply talking about brown suburban lawns or needing to take shorter showers, although both of those are realities. The hot and dry conditions of the past several months have dried up our lakes and killed our crops. They are threatening the water supply of many communities, and they are irreparably damaging this year's agricultural output.

It is that damage to agriculture that brings us here tonight. North Carolina boasts one of the most diverse arrays of agricultural products in the Nation, yet crop yields in North Carolina and other southeastern States are down across the board. There is not a crop that is not affected.

Last month, following our Governor's recommendation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture designated 85 of North Carolina's 100 counties as disaster areas, and all 85 of these counties have lost at least 35 percent of at least one major crop.

Such losses are not confined to farming in rural areas. They may hit the smallest farming communities the hardest, but they inflict serious pain on the entire economy of an agricultural State like ours. They are felt throughout the country, seriously affecting the Nation's food supply and prices.

This may be a regional drought, a disaster that is centered in the Southeast and in North Carolina in particular, but there is no doubt it is a national problem and that national attention is called for. We need to focus attention on this challenge in this body.

Congressional attention and action are demanded. That is why we signed a letter to the President requesting that he include disaster assistance in any supplemental appropriations request. I am disappointed that yesterday's request failed to do so. I know my colleague shares that disappointment, and I suspect he has talked about it a good deal tonight already.

I am hopeful that the Appropriations Committee will pay attention to tonight's remarks and understand the

scope of this problem and take appropriate action. I am a member of that committee, and I plan to press for disaster relief wherever and whenever it can be achieved. I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Again, I commend my colleague for calling this Special Order and for his dogged persistence in looking out for our farm communities, but also understanding the implications of this disaster for the economy as a whole.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Let me thank the gentleman and thank you for your leadership not just on this, but other issues as well. North Carolina is one of those States, I couldn't help but think as you were going through the list, as you talk about the drought, and over the years being here talking about floods and hurricanes because North Carolina, as folks can see on this map, we sort of stick out in the Atlantic and we get whacked by hurricanes and we have had floods. I thank the gentleman for his leadership over the years. He has taken the leadership on the Appropriations Committee, and we will lean on your broad shoulders again as we work through this because it is important.

Let me share with my colleagues in the little time we have remaining what Brian Long, who is a spokesman for the State Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services had to say. He said, "We cringe a little more each month because it is going from bad to worse."

And I say that because every day that it doesn't rain it gets drier, and every day that it gets drier, it means that more and more farmers move closer to the edge. Don Nicholson, a State regional agronomist, said: "It's the worst I've ever seen. My mother is 76. She talks about how bad it was in the early fifties. That is the only reference point that I have." And what he was saying was fifties were bad, but 2007 is worse.

Mr. Speaker, as I close out tonight, I want to thank my colleagues for coming and joining me to talk about this issue, to call attention at the national level because truly this is a problem of national proportion. As the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. PRICE) said, it may now only affect the Southeast, but it really is a national issue. It is national in that we are all in this together, and it is national in that this will ultimately affect the table of families across this country in one way or another, because if cotton production is down, it will have an impact. And for all of the fruits and vegetables, it will have an impact. And soybeans and corn over the long haul, because if you have to pay more for feed for pigs and poultry, it is reflected on the tables of American consumers and people around the world.

Mr. Speaker, I trust we can get a bill through and I trust that ultimately the President will send us a request in one of the supplementals where he is asking for additional money from this Congress. And if not, that we will put

it in and that he will sign it. That's the least that we can do for the people in this country who work hard every day, who play by the rules, who are good folks and deserve an opportunity to continue to do the things not only that they love, but provide food and fiber for our tables.

DREAM ACT IS AMERICAN NIGHTMARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MITCHELL). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, as always, I very much appreciate the privilege to address you here on the floor of the United States House of Representatives.

Having sat here and listened to the discussion that was presented by our gentlemen from the Carolinas and talking about the drought in the Southeast, I am quite interested in the map that they have laid out for us to see.

Coming from an agriculture State and district myself, I will say I have significant empathy for the drought plight in that part of the country. That huge area of bright red tells me how tough it must be down there where it hasn't rained very much in a long time and gives me a sense before how long it will be before you can see green again in your part of the country, Mr. ETHERIDGE. We have lived through that in past years, and I can tell you, it goes deeper than just looking at a picture. It goes to the very lives of the people you represent.

I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I remember when we went out to South Dakota and through Iowa and how tough it was when it was dry. I will always remember with my good friend, JERRY MORAN, we flew into Kansas last year to do a hearing on the ag bill. Lo and behold, when we flew in, it was raining like the dickens. I said, "JERRY, you have been talking about how dry it has been for so long."

He said, "Yes, and all of a sudden we got plenty of water." Hopefully we will get back there, but you do understand. Thank you for your help. I think this is an issue where we have to pull together and help. I thank you for your leadership and help on the Agriculture Committee, too. I appreciate that.

Mr. KING of Iowa. And I thank you. We will work together on this issue. There is nothing your producers can do when it doesn't rain. Perhaps we can have a hearing down there and it will bring rain like it did in Kansas.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. That would be great. Thank you.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to express those sentiments, but I come to the floor tonight to discuss a different subject matter.

□ 2045

The subject that I've chosen to discuss tonight is the Dream Act, and I do so because a vote on cloture is scheduled on the floor of the United States Senate tomorrow sometime, I believe, in the afternoon.

The DREAM Act, Mr. Speaker, you will remember is an act that's been pushed for several years here in the United States Congress and also pushed at the State level. What it is about, it is a bill with a wonderful name, and once you read through it and think about the ramifications, it's not such a wonderful bill. It has actually meant the demise of a number of public figures. People who have served in this Congress, people that have served in the State legislatures and people who have aspired to serve in this Congress have found themselves enamored by the wonderful name, the DREAM Act, but also trapped up in and captured in the pitfalls of the reality of what's behind this DREAM Act.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you will permit, I will describe what the DREAM Act does, and that is, it provides, let me say it this way, an opportunity for in-state tuition discounts to go to people who are otherwise unlawfully present in the United States, usually younger people that have graduated from high school. It gives them in-state tuition discounts, or allows the States to do so, and then gives them a conditional legal status in the United States provided they enter into college or enter into the uniform services, not always our military, but some type of uniform services.

This sounds good over the top of things, but it works out to be this: it defies a current Federal law. In fact, it has to amend a current Federal law, a law that's been defied by at least 10 States, and it's a law that was in the 1996 Immigration Reform Act, sponsored by now-ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, LAMAR SMITH of Texas.

This legislation in 1996, current Federal law, Mr. Speaker, prohibits a State and institutions of higher learning from granting residency in-state tuition discounts, breaks on the costs of the education, to students who are unlawfully present in the United States, that's a nice word for illegal aliens, Mr. Speaker, unless those universities and those States that set that policy grant that same tuition discount to all students who are lawfully present in the United States wheresoever they might reside.

So let me just draw an example, being from Iowa. Let's just say, for example, that there is a student that grows up on the east side of the Mississippi River and a resident of Illinois who wants to go to college at Iowa State University. And if Iowa had the DREAM Act as a policy, and they defeated it in the State legislature a couple or 3 years ago, actually let it die in committee as I recall. But if that student who grows up and goes to a high

school in Illinois, a resident of Illinois, chooses to go to college at Iowa State, they will pay an out-of-state, non-resident tuition of about \$16,000 a year; and by the way, a resident of Iowa will pay about \$6,000 a year. So not quite three times as high if you're a non-resident student.

And by anecdote, I can tell you that in California the numbers are comparatively about \$3,000 a year to go to school at a California institution if you're a resident, and I believe it's about \$23,000 a year if you're a non-resident. You pay that kind of premium if you come from out of state to go to school in-state. Each State sets their own policies. These numbers aren't hard; but, conceptually, they're accurate numbers, Mr. Speaker.

So the out-of-state student, the non-resident student, pays a premium to go to college at an institution in a State that they're not a resident of. That's been a longstanding practice so that the State can encourage, foster, and subsidize the education of their residents in the hopes that they have highly educated students that will stay at home and grow the economy of the State that pays the taxes to support those institutions of higher learning.

But that's a little too convoluted, Mr. Speaker. I'll just say that States want to help their own residents. So they've set these policies, and that's why it costs more money to be an out-of-state student going to school in another State than it does to go to school in your own State, a longstanding practice.

The DREAM Act turns that all on its head, and for illegal alien students who have come into the United States in violation of the law, whom if ICE, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, were to be required to deliver this in-state tuition discount, let's call it a voucher, it's not, it's a discount, but if they had to deliver it in the form of check or a voucher and if ICE had to deliver that, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, they would be compelled to pick up that prospective student and send them back to the country from which they came so that they could be legally residing in their home country.

That's the law, Mr. Speaker, and the Dream Act turns this on its head. It grants people who are here illegally, all the way up to age 30, if they will enter into a school and start their studies on a 2-year study program or if they will go into the uniform services, not necessarily our armed services, then they get conditional residency or conditional legal status in the United States. And then, if they keep their nose clean, they get a green card which is lawful, permanent residence, and it's about 5 years to citizenship. And the formerly illegal immigrants have access then to all the chain migration tools that anyone else has who comes here legally for those who have respected our laws.

Now, that means they can bring in their siblings. It means they can bring