

New York, programs have been forced to eliminate vital transportation services. This much needed increase in funding will finally give Head Start agencies the resources they need to maintain enrollment, improve quality service levels, and provide for the necessary cost of living increase for teachers.

The Head Start Improvement for School Readiness Act of 2007 enhances teacher quality. Research has shown that the right teaching training and successful instruction lead to successful Head Start programs. Right now, about a third of Head Start teachers hold a bachelor's degree. This bill will help increase the skills and training of more Head Start teachers and increase the quality of instruction for Head Start children. I am also pleased this conference report retains the important roles parents have always maintained in Head Start programs, including ensuring parents' voices are heard in Head Start's daily operations.

The bill also increases a portion of the income eligibility guidelines from the current 100 percent of poverty level to children in families with income up to 130 percent of poverty. This is particularly important for States like New York, where the cost of living is higher than most States'. Many programs need flexibility in serving these families earning just slightly above the poverty line, including the ability to assist families who have moved off welfare and are now working and struggling to make ends meet. For New York City, this provision means thousands more children will be able to participate in Head Start programs. This bill will give those hard working families support as they become self sustainable.

This bill also terminates use of the National Reporting System, NRS. I have expressed my concern about this test for several years now. In 2003, I joined my colleague Senator BINGAMAN in offering an amendment during the markup of Head Start to suspend NRS. In 2005, the Government Accountability Office produced a report underscoring our concerns when it called into question the validity and reliability of the NRS. I am pleased this bill suspends the unfair NRS test and asks the National Academy of Sciences to make recommendations on an appropriate assessment for young children.

Head Start is critical to ensuring our most vulnerable children enter school ready to learn. Head Start has provided comprehensive services to low-income families—from health and nutrition, to academic skills and family literacy. I am pleased that we were able to move this bill forward in this session in a bipartisan fashion. The Senate passage of this bill is a victory for our neediest children and the Head Start community that serves them.●

Mr. KENNEDY. I move to reconsider the vote and to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, H. Con. Res. 258 is adopted, and a motion to reconsider that vote is considered made and laid on the table.

The resolution (H. Con. Res. 258) was agreed to.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SALAZAR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

FARM, NUTRITION, AND BIOENERGY ACT OF 2007—Continued

Mr. REID. Mr. President, it is my understanding that we are on the farm bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I send a cloture motion to the desk on the substitute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Harkin amendment No. 3500 (Substitute) to H.R. 2419, the farm bill.

Tom Harkin, Jon Tester, Daniel K. Inouye, Dick Durbin, Patrick J. Leahy, Patty Murray, Bernard Sanders, Kent Conrad, Ben Cardin, Debbie Stabenow, Ben Nelson, Byron L. Dorgan, Max Baucus, Ken Salazar, Claire McCaskill, Bob Casey, Jr., Sherrod Brown.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I send another cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on Calendar No. 339, H.R. 2419, the Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act of 2007.

Tom Harkin, Harry Reid, Kent Conrad, Ben Nelson, Amy Klobuchar, Frank R. Lautenberg, Daniel K. Inouye, Bernard Sanders, Russell D. Feingold, Patty Murray, Claire McCaskill, Byron L. Dorgan, Max Baucus, John Kerry, Debbie Stabenow, Richard J. Durbin, Sherrod Brown.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I indicated this morning that sometime today, unless something changed, I would file a cloture motion on the Dorgan-Grassley

amendment and, as I have indicated, on the bill, which I have just done. I had a long conversation with the distinguished Senator from North Dakota. Very few people know the farm bill as well as he does. Certainly his partner in this amendment, Senator GRASSLEY—no one can dispute his knowledge of the farm bill.

It is the feeling of Senator DORGAN, after having conferred with Senator GRASSLEY, that it would not be in the interests of the Senate, the farm community, and the country to go forward on cloture on that amendment at this time. I have followed their suggestion and that is why I did not go forward with this.

Unless something is worked out, it appears very clear—we have heard the debate all day on the farm bill. Tremendously difficult, hard work has gone on. The bill was reported out of the Agriculture Committee. Every Senator there voted for it. There was not a recorded "no" vote, but that only says part of the story. The rest of the story is numerous Senators worked for weeks and weeks to arrive at a point where a bill could come out of that committee. It came out here to the floor. It came out last week and we have tried to move forward on it. That we have been unable to do that was unfortunate.

I hope Senators, when they are called upon to vote cloture on this matter, would understand that the work of the committee was very good work. Does that mean there should not be amendments to improve it? Probably not. But if we did nothing more than pass the bill that came out of that committee and took it to conference with the House-passed bill, we would be way ahead of the game. I hope that is what Senators will understand.

I am confident virtually every Democratic Senator will vote for cloture on the farm bill, even though there are many Democratic Senators whose No. 1 industry in the State is not agriculture. But they recognize that agriculture is an important business for this country. It is an important business for this country for so many reasons, one of which is the farming and ranching industry in this country is exemplary. We are able to compete with the rest of the world, without any question. We have modern techniques that have gone into farming that have made our production extraordinary.

We now have, as represented by Senator TESTER from Montana—one example—we have now a thriving business in America of organic farming. There are many people in this Senate who, when they go shopping, will only buy organic produce. That is part of this bill. Part of this bill recognizes that. It is very unfortunate that we have been stopped from going forward on this bill because people want to vote on immigration matters, they want to vote on tax matters, they want to vote on issues that are not related. I went over that entire list this morning, of all the nonrelevant, totally nongermane amendments that have been given to us.

I have said we Democrats will agree to five amendments. Five amendments; that is all we want. We don't expect the same from the Republicans. If they want more amendments—fine, give them to us. I said to SAXBY CHAMBLISS and to TRENT LOTT, we will even take a look at some of the nonrelevant amendments. If you want to meet the standard that has been in the last three farm bills and come up with one amendment—that is what has been the average—but come up with some non-relevant amendments that people believe they have to offer, we will be happy to consider that. But let's agree to a finite number of amendments. We will take a few. The Republicans have more than we have.

This is something we want to do. We want to do the farm bill. As I have said before on the Senate floor, the farm bill is not the most important bill for the State of Nevada. When I go shopping at Smith's or one of the other grocery stores in Las Vegas, I am impressed with all that I find on those shelves: food produced in America. There is no question we import some food. I always look at the labels. We get some mangoes from other places and a few things, but we in America do well. Even though I am from Nevada—and I am very proud of the white onions we grow. The largest white onion producer is in Nevada, in Lyon County. I am happy about the garlic we grow and I am happy about the alfalfa we grow, but the driving force is tourism and gold. We produce 85 percent of all the gold that is produced in America.

But I think I represent the Democratic caucus. We are not all pushing forward on this farm bill because it is the most important thing in our State, directly. But indirectly, it is one of the most important things this body can do.

There can be all the statements made about: he will not take down the tree, and we never did do this before, and the last bill we had 240 amendments, the one before we had 196 or whatever it is. Of course there are a lot of amendments filed on bills, but we don't deal with that many of them. We have been stopped for 10 days from dealing with these amendments.

I reach out to my Republican colleagues and I say this with all sincerity: You want to bring down this bill? That is what you are doing. Yes, maybe we can take it up some other time, and I will certainly try to do that, but I think the time is slowly evaporating here. We need to get this bill done. We could still complete the bill before we leave here. If we couldn't complete the bill before we leave here for Thanksgiving, we certainly could get it teed up so we could finish in a day or so when we get back.

I hope above all hope, with the hard work that has gone into this bill on a bipartisan basis—this is not a Democratic bill by any stretch of the imagination; this is a bipartisan farm bill—I hope somehow we can work our way out of this.

I stand willing to do whatever I can, to be as reasonable as I can be. I am sure I have Senators on my side of the aisle over here who are not happy with the proposal I have made—five amendments. But I have done that because I believe it is that important to get the bill done.

This is a bill where there will be a conference. We have had bills that passed here and passed the House and we have not had a conference. This is a bill that will be conferenced.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Will the majority leader yield?

Mr. REID. I will be happy to yield to my friend from Kentucky for a question.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I believe I heard my good friend say what we needed to do was get a list of amendments and a starting place. I remind my good friend from Nevada, the majority leader, we were prepared to do that yesterday. We are prepared to do that now, if we could enter into an agreement to have a finite list of amendments, which I offered to do yesterday. That would at least define the universe, and at whatever point we get back to beginning to make progress on the bill, it would be a good starting place.

I was pleased to hear the majority leader indicate that is what we need to do and I say to him I am happy to do that.

Mr. REID. I say to my friend, as you can see, looking at our list, our list of amendments is mostly amendments saying, "If you offer one, I am going to offer one." I don't have the list before me. Well over half of the amendments we have are "relevant"—just relevant amendments. In the vernacular, that means I have an amendment but probably not. That is to protect them in case they want to offer an amendment.

I plead to my colleagues on the other side of the aisle—yes, you have given us a list. But give us a real list. I have made a proposal I think is very reasonable. We will take five relevant amendments. You give us a number of amendments that you have, relevant and non-relevant, and let's see if we can work something out. I talked with the distinguished manager of the bill and he said to me: I have no authority to do anything. So talking to my friend from Georgia, for lack of a better description, is a waste of my time. He says he has no authority to do anything. What kind of negotiation is that?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Will the majority leader yield?

Mr. REID. Of course.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Would the majority leader agree with me that it would be at least desirable to prevent there being a further proliferation of amendments? It strikes me the longer we are out here, the more the amendments would multiply. Why would it not be a good idea to enter into a consent agreement now to limit the universe of amendments, as I was prepared to do yesterday, at least to give us a first step toward preventing the multi-

plicity of amendments that have a way of coming out of the woodwork around here, so at whatever point we go back to the farm bill we have at least defined the universe? That is the way we almost always start on a bill of that magnitude. It is the way we started on past farm bills. At the end we, of course, will pass a farm bill. We have in the past and we will this year.

I ask my friend from Nevada, what would be wrong with locking in the master, the universe—the list that we both produced yesterday? I was happy to enter into a consent agreement to limit the amendments to that 24 hours ago.

Mr. REID. I say to my friend, there is no question, if you have to walk a mile, a few steps is better than nothing. Here is what I would be willing to do on behalf of the Democratic caucus. OK, we have your list, they have our list. We have two lists. I would have no problem entering into an agreement that that is a finite list. How we complete all those amendments is a different question. I am not going to take down the tree at this stage. I am happy to work on that at a subsequent time, to see what we can do in that regard, but I am willing to do that.

We have their amendments and our amendments. I agree to a unanimous consent proposal that that is the finite list of amendments and that we will try to figure out a way to move through that. Maybe, as I have indicated, each mile has to be done in short steps. This would be a short step. I would be willing to do that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, obviously we prefer the tree be taken down so we didn't have one Senator, in effect, dictating to the rest of the Senate what amendments get to be considered. But it does strike me that at least that is a place to start. Both sides are familiar with the list that was produced yesterday. I wish to ask unanimous consent that that list be adopted as the list that could be—we all know the vast majority of these amendments are never offered and will not be offered on this one.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I would say to my friend and friends on the other side of the aisle, we will continue to work. We have now a tentative arrangement, starting arrangement. This is not the end, we know that. But we will figure out a way that people can offer amendments.

I will be happy to consider—I do not like language like this, but that is what we use around here, "take down the tree." That kind of turns into a buzzword for—it is kind of like "earmarks" or something like it is real bad.

So I would be happy, at this stage, to accept the proposal that these two lists the staff has, these be the entire universe of the amendments that we will work on, on this bill. We will come back at a subsequent time to figure out

a way to take down the tree and work our way through these.

I think it is fair. I would say this to my friend, that these amendments would be subject to relevant second-degree amendments. I accept that.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Reserving the right to object, obviously I am not going to, I wish to make sure we do not have any misunderstanding. This is a little, small step forward. This does not mean we will invoke cloture on either the bill or the substitute.

But it does indicate there is an interest, on this side of the aisle and on the other side of the aisle, in preventing the further kind of proliferation of amendments that will go on a virtually daily basis until we define the universe.

At whatever point we go back to the bill and seriously try to go forward with it, we can have further discussions about some further limitation of amendments. We are certainly, in order to agree to any further limitation of amendments, going to want the tree to be unfilled so we can have a more free-flowing debate on this bill, as we have had in the past.

Mr. REID. I am happy to work with my esteemed colleague, the minority leader, to see how we can work our way through this procedure. We have taken a short step, but it is at least a very important step.

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

Mr. REID. I want to make sure I got the nod of Senator MCCONNELL's important staff person. The agreement says there will be unanimous consent that there be only relevant second-degree amendments.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Yes.

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

Mr. DORGAN. Reserving the right to object, I shall not object to a baby step, but let me try to understand exactly what we have.

I looked at the list that is before us. My name is not on that list. I assume that the Dorgan-Grassley amendment is now pending. And if the tree is taken—

Mr. REID. You are protected.

Mr. DORGAN. I wish to make sure there is protection for that amendment. I also would like, if I might for a moment, to say that the cloture motion you have filed does not alter or change the opportunity for Senator GRASSLEY and myself? The point that you had made was I did not want a vote on the Dorgan-Grassley amendment to be a cloture vote because there may be some who feel they have to vote with their leadership on a cloture, in a manner that would be different than if we had it straight up and down on the merits. It will still be pending, and we will intend to pursue that amendment.

The list of amendments is as follows:

Akaka—Amdt. No. 3538, Alexander—SoS: Broadband, Alexander—Increase Ag Research, Alexander—Strike renewable tax credit, Alexander—Wind energy tax credit,

Alexander—Wind energy property taxes, Allard—PART, Allard—Vet Food Systems, Allard—Forest Reassessment, Barrasso—Support project-7, Baucus—State assistance for beginning farmers (Amdt. No. 3598), Baucus—Ag Research, Baucus—Brucellosis, Baucus—Agriculture supply, Bingaman—1 relevant amendment, Bingaman—Ground and water surface conservation program, Bingaman—Regional Water Enhancement program, Bond—Food Stamps, Bond—Red-tape Reduction, Bond—Research.

Boxer—6 relevant amendments, Brown/Hatch—Crop Insurance, Bunning—Disaster Relief, Cantwell—Study on climate change and impact on wine industry, Cantwell—Increase funding specialty crop block grant, Cantwell—Minor oil seed crops, Cantwell—tree assistance program, Cardin—2 relevant amendments, Casey—crop insurance, Casey—agriculture inspectors, Casey—food stamp nutrition education, Casey—emergency funding for invasive pests and diseases, Chambliss—Farm Credit Service, Chambliss—Crop Insurance Fix, Chambliss—Trade-strikes section 3101, Chambliss—Biotech—PPV, Chambliss—Sugar technical fix, Chambliss—Ethanol/direct payments, Chambliss—Conservation AGI, Chambliss—5 Relevant.

Chambliss—2 Relevant to any on the list, Coburn—Waste, Coburn—Chinese garden maintenance, Coburn—Transparency, Coburn—Estate payments, Coburn—Federal hunger problems, Coburn—Crop Insurance, Coburn—Equip, Coleman—AGI Caps, Coleman—Drivers License, Conrad—3 relevant amendments, Corker—Coal gasification project credits, Cornyn—Child obesity study, Cornyn—Strike Disaster Trust Fund, Cornyn—New Budget P/O, Craig—Loan repayment, Craig—Land Preservation, Craig—Worker Housing, Craig—Biogas.

DeMint—Death tax, Dorgan CRP, Dorgan—2 SECA tax amendments, Dorgan—Secretary's rule regarding cattle and beef (Amdt. No. 3602), Dorgan—Amdt. No. 3508 (pending), Dorgan—payment limits, Dole—Tax Credit, Domenici—Renewable Energy, Domenici—Land Transfer, Durbin—Food Safety sunset, Durbin—McGovern-Dole funding, Durbin—ACR improvements, Durbin—Puppy information, Durbin—Low-interest financing to fight invasive species, Durbin—Food Safety, Ensign—5 Relevant Amendments, Enzi—Captive Supply, Feingold—13 relevant amendments, Feinstein—Ag inspectors, Feinstein—Energy market oversight, Feinstein—Leafy greens, Feinstein—Clementines.

Graham—Cellulosic Ethanol, Grassley—Agricultural mergers, Gregg—Mortgage Crisis, Gregg—Drivers License, Gregg—Firefighters, Gregg—Ag disaster funds, Gregg—Farm stress program, Gregg—Proper budget accounting, Gregg—Commodity subsidies, Gregg—Sugar Program, Gregg—Loss assistance (asparagus), Gregg—Commodity subsidies, Gregg—Gulf of Mexico, Gregg—Farm and rural healthcare.

Harkin—7 relevant amendments, Harkin—2 amendments relevant to any on the list, Harkin—School nutrition standards, Harkin—Packers and stockyards Act, Harkin—Managers' Amendments, Hutchison—Southwest Dairy, Hutchison—Land Grants, Hutchison—Rio Grande, Hutchison—Renewables, Inouye—Food for Peace, Inouye—Rail related, Inouye—Broadband Data, Inouye—Energy related, Inouye—Sugar/ethanol loan guarantee grant program, Inouye—Exemption for Hawaii, Inouye—Reimbursement payment to geographically disadvantaged farmers/ranchers.

Kerry—4 relevant amendments, Kohl—Revised membership/Federal Milk Marketing (Amdt. No. 3531), Kohl—SOS Rural Energy America Program (Amdt. No. 3532), Kohl—

Amdt. No. 3533, Kohl—Amdt. No. 3534, Kohl—Amdt. No. 3535, Kohl—Amdt. No. 3536, Kohl—Amdt. No. 3537, Kohl—Amdt. No. 3555, Klobuchar—AGI Limits, Klobuchar—Timber contracts, Klobuchar—Beginning farmers/ranchers, Kyl—Tax/AMT, Kyl—Relevant.

Landrieu—7 relevant amendments, Lautenberg—FRESH Act, Lautenberg—FEED Act, Levin—Energy Markets, Lincoln—4 Ag tax amendments, Lincoln—Bio Fuels, Lincoln—Small Procedure Credit, Lincoln—1 relevant amendment, Lott—Gulf of Mexico task force, Lott—Tax/AMT, Lott—2 Relevant, Lugar—Complete overhaul, Lugar—Trade, Lugar—2 Relevant.

McCaskill—Amdt. No. 3556, McConnell—4 Relevant, McConnell—Death Tax, McConnell—AMT, McConnell—Tax/Horses, McConnell—2 Relevant to any on the list, Menendez—4 relevant amendments, Mikulski—2 cloned foods amendments, Mikulski—2 H2B amendments, Murkowski—Exxon Valdez litigation, Murkowski—Specialty crops, Murray—2 Conservation amendments, Murray—Energy, Murray—Specialty crop, Nelson (NE)—Amdt. No. 3576, Pryor—Broadband (Amdt. No. 3625), Pryor—4 relevant amendments.

Reid—Amdt. No. 3509, Reid—Amdt. No. 3510, Reid—Amdt. No. 3511, Reid—Amdt. No. 3512, Reid—Amdt. No. 3513, Reid—Amdt. No. 3514, Reid—2 relevant amendments, Reid—2 amendments relevant to any on the list, Roberts—Technical, Roberts—Ag Fair Practices, Roberts—Definitions, Roberts—Regulations, Roberts—Conservation, Roberts—Conservation, Roberts—Trade, Roberts—Nutrition, Roberts—Rural Development, Roberts—Rural Development, Salazar—Cellulosic Biofuels Production Incentives (Amdt. No. 3616), Salazar—Colorado Good Neighbor Agreements (Forestry), Sanders—Amdt. No. 3595, Schumer—5 Conservation amendments, Sessions—Rural Hospital, Sessions—Farm Savings Accounts.

Smith—Americorp Vista volunteers, Smith—River Conservatory, Smith—Deschutes River, Smith—Wallowa Lake Dam, Smith—Oregon Subbasins, Smith—North Irrigation unit, Smith—Irrigation Districts, Smith—Fire sprinkler systems, Stabenow—Local farmer initiative—Buy America, Stabenow—CSFP, Stevens—Protecting Kids Online, Stevens—e911, Stevens—FSA operating loans, Stevens—Quarantine inspection fees, Stevens—Bloc Grant to seafood, Stevens—AQI User Fees, Stevens—Fishing Loans, Sununu—Biomass Fuel.

Tester—Amdt No. 3516, Tester—Live Stock Title, Thune—Biofuels, Vitter—National Finance Center, Webb—3 relevant amendments, Wyden—Illegal logging, Wyden—Biomass grants (Nov. 14, 2007).

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to announce there will be no further votes on this today.

Unless someone has something else, I yield to my friend from Kansas.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I wanted to speak on the farm bill. I am glad to see we are taking baby steps forward. If the leaders have their things worked out, I want to go ahead and speak.

The farm bill obviously for my State is a very important issue. I appreciate that we are making some steps forward. I do think it would be wiser if we could start amending and start working as a legislative body and see how far we get. We have been on the bill now for 10 days. We have not had a vote. It seems it would be prudent to go ahead and try it. I realize the leaders are trying to work something out,

and I hope they can. But each day we do not get something moving, we are not moving forward on the farm bill.

I think we can trust each other in the process. I do want to recognize the work that has been done by the committee on the farm bill, the Agriculture Committee and their work. I think they have done a number of very nice things in the bill. I say that as someone from an agricultural State, from an agricultural family, who has been Secretary of Agriculture for the State of Kansas and has a degree in agriculture.

I can see some very positive things. I like the overall trend in certain areas of the bill and some of it not. I wish to comment on both of those and make one particular policy provision notice to my colleagues and friends in the Senate.

The Senate farm bill creates the Average Crop Revenue Program, a new safety net for farmers to utilize if they choose to do so. That is key for me, giving farmers the choice in how they manage their risk and not requiring that they take and use this program. Farmers may choose to stay in the current system or may opt into the new ACR Program. I think that flexibility is a good way to go forward.

Despite several threats throughout the year, the farm bill leaves direct payments at their current level. I think that is a victory and that is good for farmers in farm country. Direct payments are the only commodity title program that provides direct assistance to producers when they have no crop to harvest. Unfortunately, that happens all too often in my State.

It has happened in places of my State this year. In fact, 2 weeks ago, I was in a field of soybeans tilling them up. There was not enough there to harvest. It happens. There is nothing a farmer can do about it if the weather breaks that poorly against him.

So I am pleased to see those direct payments continue to exist, because when you have no crop, it does not matter how much the price is, it doesn't work, you have nothing to sell.

I also particularly appreciate the expanded research for energy coming from agriculture. To me, this has been one of the Holy Grails in agriculture for years and years, to expand the definition of the business from food and fiber, to food, fiber, and fuels. This effort recognizes our need to grow more of our own fuel to help in the environment in doing that, to help in the economy, the rural economy in doing that. It recognizes this fabulous chance we have in a world today to do things along that line.

If I could take a moment to set a root off to the side or shoot it off to the side, on this particular energy provision, I think there is another way we can also go that the managers have put in the base bill; that is, replacing oil-based products with starch-based products. This is again something the agricultural industry has worked at for a

long time, is doing a much better job of, but we still do not have many of the products on the marketplace.

For instance, I had a company from my State, Midwest Grain Products, in my office 2 weeks ago with now 100 percent starch-based plastic utensils. He gave me some spoons and chopsticks that were made 100 percent out of wheat starch. They had been going 50 percent out of starch and 50 percent out of oil-based products. But he is now at 100 percent.

Yet they have not been able to crack through the marketplace yet on this, a totally biodegradable product made out of agricultural commodities, better for the environment, certainly better for our economy.

One of the things we have put in this farm bill is a New Uses Expo, where we would showcase on an annual basis, almost like you do at an auto show, the computer shows, on an annual basis, the new widgets coming out of agriculture, replacing, in many times and places, oil-based products with agricultural-based products, but showcasing that, having the Secretary of Agriculture and indeed even the Secretary of Energy cohosting that event. I think that is something that can help us expand the marketplace and expand value added coming out of agriculture, which is key for rural communities in my State and many others.

There are problems in the bill. That is why I hoped we could get some amendments moving. First, the bill contains a ban on packers owning livestock. This is a very contentious issue in my State and many places around the country.

Under this packer ban provision, processors would be prohibited from owning, feeding or controlling livestock more than 14 days before slaughter. You can look at this, and as someone raised in a farm family, I look at this and say: Well, that sounds like a pretty good thing. I do not want packers owning livestock. I want the family farm, I want my dad and my brother to be owning that livestock rather than the packers.

But then you start looking at the marketplace and the changes taking place in the marketplace and say: Wait. This is going to disrupt some good things happening. Ten days ago, I was on a ranch, a feed yard in Lyons, KS. They are raising certified Angus beef, natural, no artificial hormones, no antibiotics in the livestock, and then direct marketing that to consumers on the east coast, a great innovative product they have got coming out. They are getting a premium then for farmers when they can market this product that way.

But to do it, they had to enter into a contractual agreement with the packers that are set to process the animal and to deliver it to the end consumer, to the stores that they are going to directly to the consumers with.

So with this packer prohibition ban, this innovative market technique that

is getting more in the pocketbooks of my farmers, because they are working with the packers, going straight to the consumer with a product they want, certified Angus beef, that is all natural, you are going to break that supply chain.

They are not going to be able to work with the packer on a contractual arrangement to do this. They are saying: Look, this is going to hurt us. We are not going to be able to do this. Now your ban that you are doing to try to save family farmers is going to hurt family farmers. So this is kind of the law of unintended consequences, that something people are trying to do on a positive basis to help family farmers is, in the end, going to hurt many of them in being able to increase the income they get from their livestock.

That is what they need. They need to be able to get more income from their livestock, and here is a key marketing tool and a way to be able to do that. I would hope that would be something we could deal with and something we can get passed.

Overall, I do not want to take a lot of time of my colleagues, other than to recognize the importance of getting this bill through. I would urge them on the Democratic side to let us start doing some amendments and working this bill through. I think we have a good base bill to work from. I think we can make some sensible decisions around here and get a farm bill through that is important to my State, important to the country, important to the future of the industry, and important to security in the United States on energy security.

But to do that, we need to get the process going. I would urge my colleagues to allow that to move on forward.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I want to express my support for the tribal forestry provisions in title VIII of S. 2302, the Food and Energy Security Act of 2007, also referred to as the 2007 farm bill. These tribal provisions make important and needed improvements in the U.S. Forest Service by authorizing direct tribal governmental participation in State and private forestry conservation and support activities, and by providing the Secretary with flexible authority to enhance and facilitate tribal relations with the Forest Service and activities on National Forest System lands. The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry is to be commended for its bipartisan development and adoption of these provisions.

There are nine federally recognized tribes within my home State of Oregon, and it is my pleasure to serve on the Committee on Indian Affairs. Indian tribal governments are separate sovereigns that have a unique government-to-government relationship with the United States. That relationship embraces special duties to tribes that extend throughout the Federal Government, including the Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Forest Service.

Within the Forest Service, State and private forestry programs authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act are intended to conserve and strengthen America's non-Federal forest resources across the landscape. However, the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 does not authorize direct support to tribal governments, and the Forest Service has found that tribal forest land participation is inconsistent and low. The new authorities in title VIII will help rectify these matters by establishing a more appropriate and equitable relationship between tribal government and the Forest Service. In so doing, it will also enable State and private forestry to better meet its mission among all stakeholders across the landscape.

The tribal provisions in title VIII authorize direct tribal governmental participation in a new Community Forest and Open Space Conservation program and in the established forest legacy conservation easement program. The title also authorizes Forest Service support directly to tribal governments for consultation and coordination, for conservation activities, and for technical assistance for tribal forest resources.

Additional tribal provisions in title VIII facilitate the Forest Service's interaction with tribal governments on National Forest System lands. In Oregon, all nine of the tribes in the State have deep historical ties and active current interests in the National Forests around the State. From time immemorial, the tribes have drawn physical and spiritual sustenance from what are today Oregon's national forests, and they continue those activities to this day. Of course, the modern conduct of those activities involves both the tribes and the Forest Service, and the Senate's farm bill provides the Secretary and the Forest Service new authorities that will enable these two stewards of our forests—one ancient and one contemporary—to work in closer cooperation. The bill gives clear authority for the reburial of tribal remains and cultural items on National Forest System land, and it allows free tribal access to forest products from the national forests for cultural and traditional purposes. It also allows the Secretary to temporarily close National Forest System land for the tribal conduct of cultural and traditional activities. Finally, it enables the Secretary to preserve the confidentiality of sensitive tribal information that has come into the possession of the Forest Service in the course of its collaborating with tribes.

The tribal forestry authorities in title VIII of S. 2302 are a historic step forward for the Forest Service and tribal governments. They are supported by Oregon tribes and I am pleased they are in the bill. Once again, I want to express my support, and I urge the support of all my colleagues as well.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CANTWELL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NUCLEAR TERRORISM

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, the United States today faces a broad set of national security challenges, so many of them, but just to name a few: initiating a responsible redeployment of U.S. combat troops out of Iraq, preventing the Taliban from making a comeback in Afghanistan, addressing the current turmoil in Pakistan, responding to antidemocratic trends in Russia.

Our whole country has a full plate of national security challenges. So today I wish to speak about one of those, but I think it is at the top of the list, and I think it is an issue that has not received nearly enough attention in the Senate or in the other body. It is a longer term threat that has not received the attention it deserves, but I believe this issue is the single greatest peril to this great Nation, and that is the prospect that a terrorist group, possibly with the active support of a nation state, will detonate an improvised nuclear weapon in an American city.

I commend those who have displayed outstanding leadership on this issue, many of these individuals over several years, if not, in some cases, decades. Former Senator Nunn, of course, has been a leader on this issue; Senator LUGAR, a colleague of ours and the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, a committee on which I have the honor to serve; and, of course, the chairman of that committee, Senator JOE BIDEN. All of these individuals and others have worked on this issue for many years.

In the weeks following 9/11, a lot of Americans know our intelligence community picked up a very frightening report from an agent. It was rumored that al-Qaida had acquired a Soviet-era nuclear weapon and had managed to smuggle it into New York City. The response of our Government, although secret at the time, was swift. Teams of experts were deployed across New York City with state-of-the-art detection equipment in an effort to track down this bomb before it exploded.

The threat was ultimately discounted. There was no nuclear weapon inside the United States at that time. The intelligence community's agent had bad information. But what is so frightening about these events is that it is entirely plausible that al-Qaida could have smuggled a nuclear weapon into our Nation.

One can only imagine the retrospective questions that would have fol-

lowed such a horrific attack. What could our Federal Government have done to prevent such a detonation, we would ask. What policies or programs did we fail to prioritize? And, thirdly, how could we not have appreciated the urgency and the magnitude of the threat of nuclear terrorism?

I hope we never have to ask and answer those questions. But here we are 6 years later and neither the United States nor any other nation has been forced to confront the aftermath of a terrorist attack involving a nuclear weapon. Yet I regret to say we cannot rely upon good luck continuing indefinitely. The threat of nuclear terrorism persists, and the United States and the international community are failing to move quickly enough to neutralize this threat.

Why am I so concerned about nuclear terrorism and the challenges that it poses, not just for the world of today but for the world of our children and the world of our grandchildren? Some may ask that, and in response I just will cite a couple examples as to why I and everyone in this body should be concerned.

No. 1, last year a Russian citizen was arrested in Georgia on charges of seeking to smuggle 100 grams of highly enriched uranium on the local black market in that country, with the promise made that he could deliver another 2 to 3 kilograms of highly enriched uranium at a later time.

This arrest on smuggling charges is only one of hundreds involving fissile material that have emerged since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991. The good news is the quantities detected so far have been very small. The bad news is, just as with drug trafficking, those transactions come to our attention only after a fraction of what may actually be occurring.

No. 2, too many facilities across the globe do not yet have the security safeguards we should demand for stockpiles of fissile material. Today, as many as 40 nations—40 nations—possess the key materials and components required to assemble a nuclear weapon. Surprisingly, we don't fully understand the magnitude of this problem. Among other experts, Dr. Matthew Bunn, a leading expert on nuclear terrorism, reports that neither the United States nor the International Atomic Energy Agency—we know from the news as IAEA—has a comprehensive prioritized list assessing which facilities around the world pose the most serious risk of nuclear theft.

Finally, the third example I would cite in terms of why this is such an important issue and important question is, a columnist by the name of David Ignatius, with the Washington Post, reported last month that a senior Energy Department intelligence official had briefed the President and other administration officials that al-Qaida is engaged in a long-term mission—a long-term mission—to acquire a nuclear weapon to use against the United