

tax burden as a result of being in a foreclosure or in the middle of the mortgage crisis. And the FHA reform that we passed earlier today says: We want to make it better by providing you alternatives and help to be able to keep your home.

I particularly want to thank, first, my cosponsors of the legislation that is the underlying legislation that has resulted in this action today—my Republican cosponsor, Senator VOINOVICH, who has been just terrific. Both of us come from the Midwest, Michigan and Ohio. We both find ourselves in many similar situations economically, with families who have been faced with the issues of mortgage foreclosure and challenging refinancing situations. I want to thank Senator VOINOVICH, who is key to the place we are today, in getting to this point. He has played an incredibly important role, and I am grateful to him for that. Senator JOHN KERRY has also been very helpful, and his staff; Senator LEVIN, my partner, who is always there, both of us working on behalf of Michigan; and Senators SNOWE, BROWN, HATCH, COLEMAN, SCHUMER, HARRY REID, NELSON, KLOBUCHAR, LIEBERMAN, HARKIN, and SALAZAR.

Of course, we would not be here without our leader, Senator HARRY REID. I know this is a personal concern to him in Nevada. I know that in his State there is a real challenge, as in mine, as it relates to the mortgage crisis, and he has made this a personal priority, and I am very grateful for his support.

Of course, Senator BAUCUS, our chairman of the Finance Committee, without whom, also, we would not be here, if it was not for his leadership, and his partner, Senator GRASSLEY, without their bipartisan working relationship—they are so extraordinary—we would not have an opportunity to address this issue and pass this legislation.

We held a hearing earlier this week, and I want to thank again our Finance Committee chairman for focusing a bright light on this mortgage crisis, what is happening not only in the subprime lending market but in the general economy as it relates to the ripple effect in the housing crisis, and his commitment has brought us to this point. I want to thank him.

I also want to thank Senator JUDD GREGG, who brought this issue to the debate on the farm bill and, frankly, was very instrumental in bringing this focus to the Senate floor, very articulate in explaining what the problems are that families are facing, and he, too, deserves a lot of credit for being a part of the effort to get us to this point and getting the actual bill passed this year.

Finally, I want to thank the White House. I think it is fair to say that there are not a lot of issues in which I find myself on the same side as our President, but this is one of those on which we have worked very well together. I appreciate his staff's good will in working with us to be able to get this done.

This was an important bipartisan effort from top to bottom, and I think we can all be pleased and grateful that we have the opportunity to work together to really get something done. That is what people want us to do. I know our Presiding Officer understands that, that people want us to work together, they want us to understand what is going on in their lives and that it is not just a game, that there are real things that need to be fixed, that we need to solve problems. I know that is why we have come here. The examples today, working together on the Mortgage Debt Forgiveness Act and FHA, are two examples of what happens when we work together.

I am a member of the Agriculture Committee and proudly have worked with our chairman and ranking member and all of the members of the committee to get a farm bill passed, a Food and Energy Security Act that is good for the country, not just for rural America but for all Americans and for our economy.

So this is a day—we have the Department of Defense authorization that was passed—this is a day of good cheer, a day of showing what we can do with the right kind of leadership, and I again thank Senator REID for providing that leadership. He and Senator MCCONNELL, working together on the efforts that we were able to pass today, have made a real difference.

We have, in fact, as it relates to families who find themselves in a very difficult crisis or on the verge of a crisis related to losing their homes, said to them: We not only hear you, but we are going to step up and we are going to help. That is what this bill does. That takes away the tax liability for families. That is what we did earlier today with FHA modernization, and it is a good way to end a very hard-fought week, a very difficult, challenging week, to come together on this Friday to be able to get work done for the American people, and I am very proud we have been able to do that.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I wish to thank the Senator from Michigan for summarizing the important issues we worked on today that help the American people. We are grateful for her work on these issues and her great leadership.

I wish to speak just for a few minutes, probably less than 2 minutes, about the farm bill. It is hard to do that because it is such a massive piece of legislation, but suffice it to say that I think when we came to this Congress a year ago—it was a brandnew Congress—we said we were going to focus on change in a new direction. I think the change we have tried to bring is a change of priorities, really. I think this farm bill is evidence of that. It is also

a bipartisan effort, the whole list of things you have already heard on the specialty crops for States such as Pennsylvania, a brandnew part of the farm bill, whether it is the help that our dairy farmers in Pennsylvania will receive—not nearly enough help; we have more work to do there but certainly some new changes there.

The energy title is so important to create the jobs of the future but also reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. The conservation and the reform efforts that were made here are important. To highlight something in the nutrition title in this bill, there is more than \$5 billion of new money for nutrition, so needed by families across America.

So I think we can be very proud, and I wanted to say how much I appreciate the work of the whole Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee. Chairman TOM HARKIN did a wonderful job. The ranking member, Senator CHAMBLISS, spoke before about Senator CONRAD's contribution as the Budget chair, also sits on our Agriculture Committee. I am grateful that so much work went into this for the people, in my case, of Pennsylvania but also for the people of America.

S-CHIP

Before I turn the microphone over to one of our fellow committee members, and, like the Presiding Officer, a fellow freshman, Senator KLOBUCHAR from Minnesota, who will be coming after me, I want to say one word about the President's veto this week, yet again, the second time, of the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

Once again, he is wrong. Once again, he is going counter to the bipartisan effort in America but especially here in Washington when it comes to parties trying to work together where we could cover 10 million American children. Once again, the President has stepped in front of that.

Unfortunately, in this season of hope, this holiday season, the President has made it much more difficult now to cover 10 million American children. It is a mistake. It is bad for the country. It is certainly bad for those children. But in the long run, it is bad for our future economy. I think the President should talk to members of both parties and try to work something out to get 10 million children in America covered.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

SENATE ACTION

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today first to thank my staff for their wonderful work on the farm bill: Hilary Bolea, who is a very smart young woman, who has been working with us in Washington, DC, and then also Dave Frederickson, experienced—he was the former head of the National Farmers Union who came out of retirement to join my staff in Minnesota. They are quite a pair. My favorite

thing this summer is when Dave Frederickson took Hilary Bolea to a tractor pull at the Minnesota Farmfest. So we have a great team, and I am proud of their work.

I am happy the farm bill passed today with its forward-looking provisions on cellulosic ethanol, the disaster relief, permanent disaster relief that we worked so hard to get, the strong safety net for our farmers. The reasons we had that safety net 75 years ago in the Depression with volatile prices, volatile weather, continue today.

As you know, I would have liked to have seen a little more reform in this bill. I would like to see some income eligibility limits as well as the subsidy limits set down in the Dorgan-Grassley bill. We are going to continue to push for that reform. We will work with Representative PETERSON, who is from Minnesota, the head of the Ag Committee in the House, and our great leader, Senator HARKIN, with our ranking member, Senator CHAMBLISS, as the bill goes to conference committee.

I am hopeful there will be some discussion with the White House about the reform in the bill. We have a very good start here and we need to continue that discussion in the months to come.

The other thing, I wish to commend the Senate for passing the Energy bill yesterday. I came out of the Commerce Committee. We worked on that gas mileage standard. We are now seeing a 10-mile-per-gallon increase, not only good for the environment but also, most importantly, good for the American consumer. They can save money by having less cost for gas. This energy bill is just the beginning of us starting to focus not on spending all our money on the oil cartels in the Middle East but instead focusing on the farmers and workers of the Midwest and our own energy independence.

Finally, on the FHA reauthorization and the work being done on the subprime issue, I had a roundtable with a number of people involved in this back in Minnesota. Minnesota is fourth in the country for subprime mortgage foreclosures. The chickens are coming home to roost in terms of predatory lending. We finally have started to work on the issue in Washington, and we see the problems it is causing not only for individual homebuyers but for entire neighborhoods and communities.

All in all, I believe we got some things done at the end of the week.

The one last thing I commend the Senate for is the work on the pool safety bill. I have spoken on the floor a few times about something of maybe little note when you look at the larger scheme, but a very important note to one family, and that is the Taylor family of Edina, MN. Their girl Abby was severely injured in a wading pool this summer. She may never eat again. She is sick but she is so strong in spirit. Her family called me literally every 2 weeks to check on the progress of this bill. Because of Abby, we were able to

strengthen the bill. It was named after former Secretary of State Jim Baker's granddaughter when she was so tragically killed in a similar accident. This puts in a standard, a retroactive standard for public pools which includes apartments, any pools used by the public. It includes stronger drain covers, a vacuum suction system. It is a very good bill. The House bill is similar. I have every intention to get this thing done. I thank Senator PRYOR, Senator STEVENS, and others for their work to get this done on a bipartisan basis in the Senate. One of the proudest moments my year here was when I was able to call Scott Taylor last night at about 9 p.m. from the Senate floor and tell him that that bill had passed and to know we were going to go home to Minnesota and have a little Christmas present for that family, something we worked so hard on to make sure this wouldn't happen to another child.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SURVEILLANCE ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Madam President, as I have announced several times in the last few days, I am going to shortly move to proceed to S. 2248, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. This is such an important piece of legislation. I spoke briefly on this subject earlier, but I want to provide a more complete explanation of the process by which the Senate will consider this vital piece of legislation.

Earlier this year, the Director of National Intelligence came to Congress and alerted us to what he described as a significant gap that had emerged in our Nation's foreign intelligence-gathering capacity. Members on both sides of the aisle and from all sides of this important debate became convinced that this problem was real and that we had an obligation to address it. Although many of us differ on the solution, all Senators without exception, both Democrats and Republicans, want to ensure that intelligence professionals have the tools they need to keep our country as safe as possible. We all worked in good faith with the administration through July and August to provide those tools in a way that protects the privacy and liberties of law-abiding Americans.

Unfortunately, the bill signed by President Bush fell well short of that goal. I and many other Democrats opposed the so-called Protect America Act. That is why we made sure it had

a 6-month sunset, so we could come back and do a better job of ensuring judicial and congressional oversight of these sensitive activities. As we all know, had the President been operating as we have always operated in the past, he would simply have come to the Intelligence Committee, the Judiciary Committee, and told them the changes that were necessary. But they didn't do that.

As my colleagues know, the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Intelligence Committee share jurisdiction over the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. As a result of the President not asking us to act in a timely fashion, we find ourselves in a difficult position. But in spite of that, both committees have worked diligently over the past few months. This hard work has resulted in two different versions of legislation to improve FISA, S. 2248, reported out of the committees.

I consulted extensively with Chairmen ROCKEFELLER and LEAHY about the best way for the Senate to consider this delicate subject. I have determined that in this situation it would be wrong of me to simply choose one committee's bill over the other. I personally favor many of the additional protections included in the Judiciary Committee bill. I oppose the concept of retroactive immunity in the Intelligence bill. But I cannot ignore the fact that the Intelligence bill was reported favorably by a vote of 13 to 2, with most Democrats on the committee supporting that approach. I explored the possibility of laying before the Senate a bill that included elements of both committee bills. Earlier this week I used Senate rule XIV to place two bills on the calendar, first S. 2440, consisting of titles I and III of the Intelligence bill, but did not include title II on retroactive immunity. The second bill, S. 2441, consists of title I of the Judiciary bill and titles II and III of the Judiciary bill. Senator LEAHY and I favor the second bill, S. 2441. But for me to override Senate precedent and rules in this case would be wrong and unfair. After consulting with Chairman ROCKEFELLER and Chairman LEAHY, we recognized—these two veteran legislators—that the best thing to do would be to follow regular order. It is the right thing to do. It is not right for me to pick and choose. After the committee structure has been established—and I believe in it—to simply say it doesn't matter in this case, it matters in every case. If it doesn't matter in one case, then it doesn't matter in any case. We have to follow the rules we have here; otherwise, it becomes very unfair, and it becomes a situation where I am the one picking and choosing. That isn't the way it should be. Both chairmen, with their experience, agreed that this was the right approach, even though, as I repeat, Senator LEAHY and I would rather have the Judiciary Committee bill that we believe strengthens the position we had initially and not have to try to put them in at a subsequent time.