

That hearing is today, Madam Speaker, nearly 7 months after the H-2B exemption expired. I can only hope that this Congress will give our small businesses a legal solution to their workforce needs.

□ 1030

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF FARM PROGRAMS

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5813) to amend Public Law 110-196 to provide for a temporary extension of programs authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2008 beyond April 18, 2008.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5813

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. ADDITIONAL TEMPORARY EXTENSION OF AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS AND SUSPENSION OF PERMANENT PRICE SUPPORT AUTHORITIES.

Effective as of April 18, 2008, section 1 of Public Law 110-196 (122 Stat. 653) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking “the Secretary of Agriculture shall carry out the authorities, until April 18, 2008” and inserting “the authorities shall be carried out, until April 25, 2008”; and

(2) in subsection (d), by striking “April 18, 2008” and inserting “April 25, 2008”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of H.R. 5813, a bill to temporarily extend the current farm programs until April 25, 2008.

Madam Speaker, since the House conferees were appointed last week, the conference committee has been meeting to try to work out the remaining unresolved issues between the House and Senate version of the farm bill. I'm pleased to report that on the core farm bill issues we have reached agreement, and there are only a few Member-level issues that must be resolved.

I want to take this moment right now to thank Chairman RANGEL, who

has devoted a great deal of his time and his staff's time to helping us to come to resolution with the Senate about how to fund the additional \$10 billion of new spending for farm bill priorities. Without his leadership and that of Speaker PELOSI and the leaders on the Republican side, we would not be so close to finalizing this bill.

The farm bill maintains and strengthens the safety net that helps farmers and ranchers stay productive and competitive. It also includes important new investments including \$9.5 billion for nutrition programs that are even more important today as food prices continue to climb. It contains \$4 billion for conservation programs that will help protect our land, even as crop reduction soars; \$1.2 billion for renewable energy programs that will help us address the rising cost of gasoline and help us get independent of foreign oil; and \$1.3 billion for new initiatives and programs to support fruit and vegetable producers, including new programs to help socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers.

All these important investments will be lost if we don't have time to finish this conference. This short extension will allow us to finish our work and bring back to the House a conference report that meets the needs of all of American agriculture and the consumers.

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to report that I've been in conversations with Chairman RANGEL and others that have been involved in the effort to identify the offsets, and can report that they have made significant progress, that we have been able to, apparently, convince the Senate to jettison the extraneous items, and so now we're talking about \$10 billion instead of \$12.5 billion, which is a major accomplishment and victory, and we are getting very close to being able to resolve the differences in the offsets because, where we've been at is the House has put out one set of offsets and the Senate has put out another, and we're trying to reconcile that.

I also, last night, had discussions with the Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. GOODLATTE and others, asking that the Secretary and the White House be brought into this negotiation to help us finish up. And from what I can tell, there appears to be an effort to get that engaged. So I think we're very close to having this offset issue resolved, hopefully, in a way that will have the bipartisan support in this body, as well as in the other body, and also hopefully have the support, at the end of the day, of the White House.

And that is what Mr. GOODLATTE and I have been struggling to accomplish since last July. We've made a lot of progress. We're not there yet, but we feel we've made huge progress in the last few days, enough to warrant another 1-week extension of the farm bill so that we can finish up our work.

I want to commend Congressman GOODLATTE for his outstanding leader-

ship in this effort, his outstanding leadership when he was chairman of the committee last session, and getting this farm bill process started. And I can tell you that, without a doubt, that we would not be at this point without him being willing to work with us and help us make some tough decisions to get to where we are. So I just appreciate very much he and his staff and the leadership that they've shown because, over in the House, what we're trying to do here is not only have a bill that we can be proud of, but also have a bill we can pass. And I think we're heading in that direction.

Madam Speaker, I urge passage of the bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the temporary farm bill extension that will extend some provisions of the 2002 farm bill just a little while longer so that we may complete the work on this farm bill. I believe we've made good progress on coming to agreement on the funding which has been the biggest obstacle preventing any real movement on the completion of a farm bill to this point. While we're not there yet, I do believe we are getting close.

The House and Senate conferees have been meeting every day this week, and we intend to continue our work throughout the rest of the week. We are committed to putting together a reform-minded bill that we can bring before this body soon and earn the support of our Members here and in the other chamber, and then go on to the President for his approval.

We all recognize the need for a new farm bill. This process has already been delayed enough, and while it is a long time coming, we shouldn't halt the momentum that is finally getting this process moving to a positive direction.

I urge my colleagues to support this farm bill extension to give us a little more time to work out the rest of the funding issues and wrap up the policy differences so that we can produce a good farm bill.

I want to thank the chairman of the committee, Mr. PETERSON, for his kind words, and say that there is no doubt that no one, in this body or the other, I'll take the chance of saying that, has worked harder or longer in order to try to get to this point than Chairman PETERSON has. He has spoken to innumerable people in order to try to bring about the kind of consensus it takes to get here. He has been down many different avenues, and if one doesn't work, he comes back, starts over again and tries a different approach. And his persistence and his attention to the details in this farm bill and his knowledge of the wide range of issues that comprise the farm bill has enabled us to negotiate effectively with the Senate to negotiate effectively with Members in this body who have legitimate concerns that need to be addressed in the farm bill.

But with the limited resources and the differences of opinion that arise in any bill, particularly one of this complexity, he has done an outstanding job of listening to the concerns of many different people, and I am optimistic that we can move forward and reach a final farm bill to bring before this body and before the other body.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. I thank Mr. GOODLATTE for his kind words. I would just make one final comment, that we are extending this bill for 1 week at this point because we feel that's sufficient time to come to resolution.

I do want to warn people that we fully expect to have these things wrapped up by the 25th in terms of having the policy differences in the Ag Committee and the funding differences resolved. But everybody needs to understand that after that, we're going to need an additional extension probably of 2 weeks in order, this is a very complex, huge bill. It's going to take us time to pull together to enroll to get passed through the House and the Senate and get to the President in time for him to read it before he signs it. So people can expect that we're going to have to have another couple of weeks after next Friday, provided we get everything resolved, which I expect we will.

Again I thank my good friend, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE), all the other people that have worked with us, and encourage my colleagues to support the bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5813.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 5813.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested, a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 3221. An act moving the United States toward greater energy independence and se-

curity, developing innovative new technologies, reducing carbon emissions, creating green jobs, protecting consumers, increasing clean renewable energy production, and modernizing our energy infrastructure, and to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax incentives for the production of renewable energy and energy conservation.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5715, ENSURING CONTINUED ACCESS TO STUDENT LOANS ACT OF 2008

Ms. CASTOR. Madam Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 1107 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 1107

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5715) to ensure continued availability of access to the Federal student loan program for students and families. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and Labor. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. The amendment printed in part A of the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution shall be considered as adopted in the House and in the Committee of the Whole. The bill, as amended, shall be considered as the original bill for the purpose of further amendment under the five-minute rule and shall be considered as read. All points of order against provisions in the bill, as amended, are waived. Notwithstanding clause 11 of rule XVIII, no further amendment to the bill, as amended, shall be in order except those printed in part B of the report of the Committee on Rules. Each further amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such further amendments are waived except those arising under clause 9 or 10 of rule XXI. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill, as amended, to the House with such further amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. During consideration in the House of H.R. 5715 pursuant to this resolution, notwithstanding the operation of the previous question, the Chair may postpone further consideration of the bill to such time as may be designated by the Speaker.

□ 1045

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from Florida is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. CASTOR. For the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida, my colleague from the Rules Committee, Mr. DIAZ-BALART. All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

I yield myself such time as I may consume. I also ask unanimous consent that Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 1107.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. CASTOR. Madam Speaker, House Resolution 1107 provides for consideration of H.R. 5715, the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008, under a structured rule.

The rule provides 1 hour of general debate controlled by the Committee on Education and Labor. The rule makes in order four amendments in the Rules Committee report, each of which is debatable for 10 minutes. The rule also provides one motion to recommit, with or without instructions.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 5715, the Ensuring Continued Access to Student Loans Act of 2008, and the underlying rule. Under this act, the Congress will ensure that low-interest student loans remain available for college students and their families even in the face of the credit crunch. In doing so, the Congress will build on the new commitment to college and university students and their hardworking families that this new Democratic majority has provided.

See, our action today comes on the heels of the historic College Cost Reduction and Access Act that was signed into law a few months ago that saves college students an average of \$4,400 on student loan interest. We increased the Pell Grant, and we now will forgive student loans for students that commit to a 10-year career in public service.

This single largest investment in college financial assistance since the GI Bill in 1944 comes at no new cost to taxpayers. The new Congress promised to make college more affordable for all Americans, and we have delivered on that promise.

Our next step today is to ensure that families can continue to access the loans they need to pay for college. See, in today's economy, a college education is as important as a high school diploma was a generation ago. And with college costs growing by nearly 40 percent over the last 5 years, students are graduating from college with more debt than ever before. It is estimated that 200,000 students do not go to college every year because they simply cannot afford the costs. Well, our efforts today will restore the American dream for those families.