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Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 27, 2011, at 11 a.m.

House of Representatives

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CRAVAACK).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
October 26, 2011.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHIP CRAVAACK to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2011, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

“GROWING OPPORTUNITIES: FAMILY FARM VALUES FOR REFORMING THE FARM BILL”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. This is a special moment for American agriculture as well as an opportunity to address the major challenges America faces: our long-term government spending, our budget deficit, environmental protection, and the health problems of our families. It is also key to improving the economy, which should be our number one priority. Helping more people at less cost by reducing subsidies to large agribusiness also speaks directly to the frustrations of protesters from coast to coast, whether they are occupying Wall Street or they are Tea Party protesters.

Now, there is no doubt that America’s massive investment in farm support—hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayer money—the special rules and regulations, and tariff protections have all contributed to the success of American agriculture. It has boosted productivity and made a difference in providing plentiful low-cost food. Left unaddressed is whether this expensive patchwork of complicated and excessive programs is the best we can do.

The answer from independent analysts is overwhelming. We can do far better for less money and help more farmers and ranchers and especially those Americans in need of food. Today, I am releasing a report entitled “Growing Opportunities: Family Farm Values for Reforming the Farm Bill,” which brings together that big picture and illustrates a better way.

The core principles are to reduce the flow of money to the largest agribusiness interests, which shortchanges the majority of farmers and ranchers

who receive virtually no assistance from direct commodity payments, an expensive web of programs to shield farmers from market forces and, of course, the unusual program of crop insurance, which pays more to insurance agents than to farmers.

It would, instead, concentrate assistance for people who need help the most, make healthy food more affordable and give assistance to new farmers, which is so necessary to deal with the turnover in American agriculture, where the average farmer today is 55 years of age.

It would stop the inappropriate and expensive subsidization, which compromises our international trade responsibilities, which not only gives these large agribusinesses a leg up but helps them get bigger at the expense of small- and medium-sized farmers and ranchers.

It would stop the insanity of giving a billion and a half dollars to Brazilian cotton farmers over the next 10 years because we don’t have the courage and the political will to stop giving support to American cotton farmers, which has been deemed illegal.

We must make the production of food, not commodities, more affordable and more nutritious for all Americans but particularly for our students, our young families, and the elderly.

Redirecting money away from incentives to pollute and paying more to farmers and ranchers to protect water quality and wildlife habitat will give real benefit to American communities, which are the neighbors of our farmers. It fits our economic and recreational

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Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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opportunities and reduces the cost of the cleanup of our waterways from animal waste, pesticides, and fertilizers. Help with research, marketing, and environmental protection will allow our farmers to be more productive and better stewards of the land while putting money in their pockets—in turn, increasing benefits and reducing costs for everybody else.

Now, I don't pretend this report contains any silver bullet. It's a collection of what I've learned in dealing with these issues in my 15 years in Congress but, more importantly, by spending a lot of time with Oregon farmers and ranchers, people in the nursery industry, the vintners, who are all short-changed by the current system and deserve better.

Joining me in the release of this report are Representatives who advocate on behalf of the taxpayers, who deal with deficit spending, who are environmental advocates, and people who care deeply about America's farmers and ranchers. There is across this country a grand coalition that is forming and coalescing behind a unified vision for American agriculture at exactly the time when the taxpayers need it, when most farmers and ranchers deserve it and when advocates on behalf of better health and nutrition for all Americans demand it.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Americans deserve a better Farm Bill. Current agricultural policy spends too much money supporting large corporations, doesn't adequately help the majority of small and midsize farmers, and subsidizes manufactured food at the expense of fruits and vegetables. This report outlines a series of reforms to make the Farm Bill more accountable, more affordable, and fairer to taxpayers, farmers, ranchers and consumers alike.

Commodity Programs: The report advocates for eliminating direct payments and storage payments, and placing limits on counter cyclical, market assistance and ACRE payments to save taxpayer dollars and create a more level playing field for America's farmers.

Conservation Programs: While recognizing the important role that conservation plays for farmers, ranchers and the public, the report supports a shift to performance-oriented conservation programs, giving farmers and ranchers flexibility while ensuring that taxpayers get cleaner air and water, and healthier soil.

Research and Development: The report acknowledges the important role that research and development dollars have played in boosting America's farm and ranch productivity, and supports increasing or at a minimum keeping level research funding.

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Programs: Recognizing the importance of engaging younger Americans in farming and ranching, the report advocates for small changes to current programs to support beginning farmers and ranchers.

Crop Insurance: While the last negotiation of the Standard Reinsurance Agreement made some improvements to the crop insurance program, most economists agree that it is still in need of reform. This report advocates for several principles that should be used to guide the creation of any new crop insurance agreement.

Nutrition: The report recognizes the opportunity to improve the outcomes of nutrition

programs and local farm economies by coordinating the two. It also advocates for increased local flexibility so that communities can take steps on their own to increase access to fresh, local food.

H.R. 674, REPEALING THE 3 PERCENT WITHHOLDING ON PAYMENTS MADE TO VENDORS BY GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DOLD) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DOLD. I came to this body as a small business owner, as someone who employs just under 100 people. For me, that's 100 families. I decided to run for Congress because it felt to me as if the Federal Government was making it harder and harder for me to put the key in the door and to open up my business each and every day. Frankly, they should be doing quite the opposite. We here in this body should be making it easier for American businesses to grow their businesses—to be able to hire more people, to invest back in their businesses and to grow.

I am pleased to say that we have an opportunity this week to vote on a bipartisan piece of legislation to end some of the barriers that are preventing businesses from investing back in their businesses. We're going to have an opportunity to vote on H.R. 674, which would repeal a provision that would force government entities to withhold 3 percent from the vendors that they do business with.

Earlier this year, we took care of some legislation that was some overburdensome regulation on 1099s for small businesses. This was going to be paperwork that was going to, in essence, cost small businesses hundreds of thousands of dollars and, in some cases, millions of dollars just to comply, just to cross the T's and dot the I's. Not a single bit would be added to their bottom line or would be helping provide services to consumers.

There is no question that this bill would help small businesses. It would also help governments and municipalities that would be forced to withhold. This withholding requirement is particularly harmful to small businesses, to contractors; and it would undermine our efforts to spur job creation. This requirement needlessly ties up the cash flow of small businesses, and that's exactly what we don't need to do at this particular time.

This is a commonsense piece of legislation, and I am confident that we will be able to pass it. We've got over 269 cosponsors today. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman who was just up here is, in fact, the lead cosponsor, Mr. BLUMENAUER, along with my colleague WALLY HERGER from California. It enjoys broad bipartisan support. It's commonsense legislation.

We do not need to be taking dollars out of the economy at this point in time. It increases costs for goods and services. It increases the burdens on

administrative requirements. It increases the costs for recordkeeping. This is another instance of unintended consequences of legislation and ones that, I think, we cannot afford.

We must focus on how we can help small businesses across this land. We in this body need to create an environment where small businesses can have more certainty because, when I talk to businesses all across the 10th District of Illinois, the one thing I hear over and over and over again is that the uncertainty out there is preventing people from investing in their businesses, from moving forward. This would be yet one more burden. We don't need to do that.

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So I'm pleased to see that Members on both sides of the aisle are coming together to try to solve some of these issues. It's certainly what the American public is looking for us to do, to be able to find some common ground, to move forward, so that we can eliminate some of these barriers. The number one issue we face, without exception, is jobs and the economy, so it seemed like common sense to me that we try to enable small business to be able to have the tools necessary to forecast, invest in their businesses and to grow.

With 29 million small businesses in our Nation, if we can create an environment where half of those businesses can create a single job, think about where we'd be then. We've got 9.1 percent unemployment in our country. In Illinois it's at 10, and certain areas even in the 10th District we've got unemployment of 20 to 22 percent.

We've just been recognized as the number one manufacturing district in the country. We've lost 750,000 manufacturing jobs in Illinois. We have to step up and allow small business to be able to invest back in their businesses and to grow.

I'm delighted to see that we were able to come together 2 weeks ago on trade legislation to be able to help those manufacturers, to help farmers, to be able to increase exports and grow jobs right here in America. Those are exactly the efforts that we need to do.

So I want to encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to come together on H.R. 674 to help small businesses move forward and get America back to work.

HONORING MAYOR STEPHEN L. LUEKE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. DONNELLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DONNELLY of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to an outstanding citizen of South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Steve Lueke, who devoted his life to the service of our community. Raised in Freeport, Illinois, Mayor Lueke made South Bend his home over 30 years ago after graduating from Fordham University. He