

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

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, it is very hard to believe that today marks exactly 2 months since I first came to the floor to advocate passage of the Senate's version of the Violence Against Women Act. I was very encouraged to see our body finally come together and eventually support this important legislation. The Violence Against Women Act has helped provide lifesaving assistance to hundreds of thousands of women and their families, and it certainly was a no-brainer to make sure all women had access to that assistance.

However, I was very disappointed to learn that, a day after we passed it, House Republicans pulled an immediate U-turn and introduced their version of the bill that would undo the commonsense progress we made. The House Republican version of VAWA is a giant step backward for victims of domestic violence. It is dangerous and irresponsible and leaves women across the country more vulnerable to domestic abuse. Not only do they remove important protections that would be created by the Senate version of the bill, they actually strip existing protections already provided by this important law. In fact, it removes critical protections for LGBT victims, does little to address the epidemic of domestic and sexual violence in tribal communities, removes critical protections already in place for students on college campuses, and it rolls back protections for immigrant victims.

We have made a lot of progress since VAWA was first passed back in 1994. I hope no one will insist on putting partisan politics ahead of protecting victims of domestic violence. Where a person lives, whom they love or what their citizenship status may be should not determine whether their perpetrators are brought to justice.

The Senate bill that we passed last month builds on what works in the current law, it improves what doesn't, and it continues on the path of reducing violence toward women. It certainly should not be controversial.

Mr. President, it is time for the House Republicans to come to their senses and support our bipartisan bill so that women and families in this country can get the resources and support they need.

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

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

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF USDA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, I would like to recognize what Abraham Lincoln referred to as "the people's department"—the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

On this day 150 years ago, President Lincoln signed legislation to create the U.S. Department of Agriculture. At the beginning, USDA's focus was on agriculture research, farming techniques, and keeping statistics. Today, more than ever, the USDA is "the people's department." The USDA covers a broad range of issues that touch people's lives, from soil and water conservation to the school lunch program and from agriculture trade to expanding rural broadband services.

Through the efforts of USDA over the past 150 years, agriculture has become one of the most successful sectors in the U.S. economy. Agriculture accounts for 1 in 12 American jobs and provides our country with 86 percent of the food we consume. In 2011, agriculture trade set records by exporting nearly \$140 billion in U.S. farm exports.

The USDA has worked to develop rural communities, conserve the environment, and ensure that people across the country have access to safe and healthy food choices. In rural communities, USDA has given money to improve health care facilities, grants to assist families purchase or refinance homes, and investments to secure broadband services. USDA has worked to protect critical wetlands habitats, National Forests, and water and soil. And USDA ensures the health and safety of Americans by providing nutrition assistance through SNAP payments, reforming the school lunch program, and adopting tougher standards for E. coli and Salmonella in animal production.

Illinois has played a large part in the evolution of agriculture policy. President Lincoln gained his respect for agriculture from his time spent on farms and in rural communities around the state of Illinois as well as in Kentucky and Indiana. The same year President Lincoln began USDA, he also signed into law the Homestead Act and the Morrill Land Grant College Act. Illinois has also had two Secretaries of USDA—John Block, who served from 1981 until 1986, and Edward Madigan, who served from 1991 through 1993.

Over the past 150 years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has lived up to Lincoln's vision as a department for

the people. I hope USDA continues its commitment to improve agriculture, nutrition, and rural communities around the country and across the globe in the Department's next 150 years.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, today I wish to congratulate the U.S. Department of Agriculture on 150 years of service to the people of America.

On this day in 1862, President Abraham Lincoln created the Bureau of Agriculture and with it, America's commitment to an abundant supply of food and fiber. Lincoln grew up on a farm, and he understood the long hours of hard work that men and women like his parents spent working the land. Farming in those days was a very different proposition—much of the work was done by hand or animal labor. He rightly called it the People's Department because 90 percent of Americans at the time worked, like his folks, on farms.

Lincoln created the USDA at a time of great change in agriculture. Machinery was being introduced that lessened the workload and made farming more efficient. Families were heading westward and expanding the frontier. It was only 5 days later that Lincoln signed another important law that would have a dramatic effect on the future of agriculture in this country: the Homestead Act. That same year, Lincoln would also sign the law creating the Transcontinental Railroad, as well as the Land Grant Colleges Act, which has special meaning for me as a Michigan State University graduate.

But here is the most amazing thing: he did all of this during some of the worst fighting of the Civil War.

When he put pen to paper to create the Bureau of Agriculture, there had already been more than 100,000 casualties in the Civil War. He created all of these institutions that would have a lasting impact on this great Nation at a time when many people wondered how long this Nation could survive.

Mr. President, 150 years ago, in his address to Congress, Lincoln said, "Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us in honor or dishonor to the last generation."

President Lincoln rose to the challenge. He saved the Union, and he created lasting institutions that are still with us and making a difference today.

If he could do all that in the middle of the Civil War, with enemy troops camped just across the river, what challenge can't we face today?

In the Agriculture Committee, we came together last month to pass, with an overwhelming bipartisan vote, the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act, or the farm bill. This is a bill we pass every 5 years to renew America's agriculture policy and to continue the important work of the Department of Agriculture.

It is critical that we pass the farm bill before the current bill expires in September. We passed a very strong

bill out of committee, with real reforms that cut the deficit by \$23 billion, and we did it in a bipartisan way.

We evaluated every program, eliminated duplication, and streamlined programs to save taxpayers money while getting better results on the ground, and we did it in a bipartisan way.

Change is never easy, but we came together because the farm bill is so important to the 16 million men and women whose jobs rely on American agriculture. They work hard every day producing the most affordable, healthy, and abundant supply of food, fiber, and energy in the world.

President Lincoln understood how important our food supply is—it feeds the Nation and can be the difference in times of war. The leadership and innovation of those 16 million Americans have made our Nation the world's leader in agriculture. With an ever-growing global population, our farmers are truly feeding the world. It is critical for our national security that we pass this farm bill to continue our leadership.

It has been 150 years since President Lincoln created America's commitment to agriculture, and we have come a long way since then. We have been through floods and famines, dust bowls and depressions. But we have also seen great advances as we have learned to overcome these challenges with better risk management, conservation practices, and a commitment to fighting hunger.

Passing the farm bill will continue this great American success story.

The 150th anniversary of USDA's creation is a great time to celebrate farmers and rural communities. It is also a strong reminder that we here in Congress need to do our jobs too and pass the farm bill soon. Our country's future depends on it.

Mr. LEAHY. Today marks the 150th anniversary of the United States Department of Agriculture, and I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to USDA's mission and day-to-day work and to all those involved in the agriculture industry—from farmers and ranchers and foresters, to producers and manufacturers and researchers.

The Department of Agriculture is pillar and post in American agriculture, fostering durability while enabling innovation; bridging old and new, rural and urban. Agriculture has long been a centerpiece of Vermont's economy and way of life. The impact of agricultural industry is felt in every State, and in every household. In fact, one in every 12 Americans is employed in an agriculture-related industry, and in Vermont, the importance of our agricultural working landscape to tourism, to recreation and to the identity of our State is beyond measure.

One hundred and fifty years ago today, on May 15, 1862, with the stroke of President Abraham Lincoln's pen, the Department of Agriculture was established, with the purpose of acquiring

information through "scientific experiments" and finding, collecting, and disseminating "new and valuable seeds and plants." It is worth noting that the establishment of the USDA was the first in a series of the foundational acts of Congress that helped to develop our modern agricultural system.

Among these other landmark laws is the Morrill Act, named for Vermont's own Senator Justin Morrill, which established our land grant colleges, and which also is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. Senator Morrill rightly believed that college education should expand beyond arts and classical studies to include agriculture and life sciences. In the last 150 years, our land grant colleges have provided the foundation for agricultural research and have helped give the United States a competitive advantage in the global market, in addition to becoming inarguably the best public institutions of higher learning in the world.

Thanks to the hard work of our Nation's agricultural producers, to the research done at our land grant colleges, to the dedication of U.S. Department of Agriculture employees across the country, and to the policies and programs overseen by the Department of Agriculture, American consumers enjoy a safe and plentiful food supply. We Americans spend, on average, less than 10 percent of our disposable income on food, the lowest in the world. This would not be possible without the science, policies, and vital programs advanced by the USDA in fostering our modernized agricultural and food systems.

The Department of Agriculture also manages some of the Nation's most significant ongoing conservation and environmental quality efforts.

Farming is hard work. Farming also is an inherently risky venture, subject to the whims of nature, as well as the volatility of the commodity marketplace. The programs USDA manages at the local level have helped make risk manageable for farmers—especially when it comes to small family farms. These programs have been a steadying element—a balance wheel, smoothing out major risks, allowing America's farmers to harness the earth's bounty and giving American consumers access to unrivaled food security and variety.

Despite—and, in some cases, as an unintended result of—the great advances in agriculture in the last 150 years, there is more work to be done. Too many Americans still endure hunger, with almost 50 million Americans living in food insecure households, while at the same time two-thirds of Americans are overweight, and obesity-related disease is fast becoming an epidemic in this country. Globally, 1 billion people—out of a population of 7 billion—are hungry and food insecure. As the world population increases, we must continue our scientific effort in agriculture research and innovation, and we must not simply produce more food; we must also improve access to

and consumption of healthier foods. These goals need to be achieved while we work to restore natural ecosystems that are fundamental to sustaining life on earth.

My home State of Vermont has placed itself at the forefront of developing and implementing the agricultural and food systems that the planet will depend on in the 21st century, and the USDA is a critical partner in this essential venture. The USDA is providing needed technical support to enhance the efficiency of our dairy and diversified farms; the USDA provides the financial and risk management tools that farmers need to diversify and survive in a changing climate and volatile markets; the USDA supports cutting-edge research at the land grant University of Vermont; the USDA is vitally important to rural communities and businesses; USDA conservation programs are the lynchpin of our work to improve water quality; and the USDA Organic program has kept Vermont at the forefront of this fast-growing and promising sector. In fact, in Vermont, and across the Nation, the Department of Agriculture manages some of the Nation's most significant ongoing conservation and environmental quality efforts.

The USDA has deep and longstanding roots throughout rural America and in our communities. Being in and being of the communities that the USDA serves makes a crucial difference, as we saw last year in Vermont through the many ways that USDA's diligent workforce became an integral part of the response to the disastrous damage wrought by Hurricane/Tropical Storm Irene.

We face many challenges today, but with smart, effective and sustainable agricultural policies, the United States is in a prime position to lead the war against global hunger and toward public health while also protecting our water, air and open spaces for generations to come.

As a lifelong Vermonter, I value my State's farming traditions and I am proud of the hard work of Vermont's farmers who have persisted in a difficult economy, embracing innovation and change. Some are transitioning to organic operations, and others focusing on direct marketing opportunities or value-added products. Farming is not an easy way of life, but it has remained a cornerstone of Vermont's economy, and the Nation's, because of the dedication our farmers and producers, the research of our land grant colleges, and the policies and support of the Department of Agriculture. I am proud to see so many young people returning to the farms of Vermont. Some are continuing their family's farming legacy, while others are the first in several generations to turn back to the land. All of them have a deep dedication to the stewardship of Vermont's natural resources and to the working landscape that is helping to strengthen our economy.

I am proud to be a member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry and to have had the opportunity to serve as its chairman. I also consider it a great privilege to be able to offer Vermonters a seat at the table when policy matters affecting our State's farmers and our State's economy, such as our current work on the 2012 Farm Bill, are written and considered.

Agriculture is part of the lifeblood of the American economy then, now, and in the future.

I wish the Department of Agriculture a "Happy 150th Birthday" and continued success in the USDA's vital missions that are so important to each and every American family, and to the world.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the marking of an historic event. 150 years ago—on May 15, 1862—President Abraham Lincoln signed into law an Act establishing what our Department of Agriculture is today.

Agriculture has come a long way in 150 years. Through science, innovation, ingenuity and plain old hard work, America's farmers have gone from producing enough food for their individual families to producing enough to meet the needs of 150 people per farmer—that's what I call the miracle of modern agriculture.

Some may have a romanticized view of agriculture production 150 years ago and pine for a return to the days of the past. But let me assure you, those were hard days. And if today's farmers and ranchers only produced the same yield and quality of food as the farmers and ranchers of yesteryear, we'd be in a world of hurt.

Today's farmers and ranchers produce the safest, most abundant and affordable food and fiber supply in the world—all while facing increased input costs and tightening regulations.

As if these challenges weren't enough, our producers face a challenge of worldwide significance. As the global population tops 9 billion in the next several decades, agriculture production must more than double to meet the expected demand for food and nutrition.

In addition to the sheer population expansion, global food demand will shift toward higher value proteins and commodities as economies develop and prosper. For example, in 1985 the average person in China consumed roughly 44 pounds of meat. This increased to 90 pounds per person in a short 15 years. That number is expected to double again by 2030.

That's no small task. It will take advancements in technology, efficiency and in some cases simply getting government and regulatory roadblocks out of the way. Doubling agriculture production will only occur through production techniques that combine the use of important conservation practices with the use of improved seed varieties that increase drought and disease resistance while increasing yields.

The importance of agriculture's mission cannot be overstated. It is also a matter of national security. A well fed world is a much safer and stable place than a hungry world. Full bellies lead to stability, economic growth and peace. Hungry bellies lead to discontent, instability, and extremism.

The more nations we can help to feed and bring economic prosperity, the more stable the world as a whole will become.

Now I don't know if 150 years ago President Lincoln knew how important the role of agriculture would become to global stability or what USDA's role would be in answering these challenges. But this anniversary provides us a unique opportunity to thank our producers for their efforts in bringing agriculture this far, and to let them know that we stand beside them in meeting the challenges ahead.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, on this day, May 15, in 1862, President Lincoln signed into law an act establishing our nation's Department of Agriculture. This 150th anniversary is an important opportunity to recognize and celebrate the success and achievement of the many Americans who are involved directly or indirectly in producing, processing, and distributing food, fuel, and fiber for our nation and for export to foreign consumers.

The specific purposes of the new department mentioned in the 1862 act are "to acquire and diffuse among the people of the United States useful information" concerning agriculture, broadly and comprehensively defined, and "to procure, propagate, and distribute among the people new and valuable seeds and plants." The responsibilities and authority entrusted to the Department of Agriculture have of course been enlarged over the course of the past 150 years, but this initial legislation contains the core elements of the Department's mission and role that have continued to this day.

You will notice in the act the emphasis on disseminating among the people of the United States information, knowledge, and technology that would be helpful and useful to them as in their pursuits in agriculture. In doing so, the new Department would help to create, foster, and develop new, broadly-available opportunities among the people of the United States. Individuals and families could then capitalize on these opportunities through applying their own efforts and talents to create and grow farms and ranches, and in the process also to build and strengthen our nation. Some 2½ years later after signing the act, President Lincoln noted in his fourth and last message to Congress the success of the new Department of Agriculture in responding to and serving the needs of the people of our Nation: "It is peculiarly the people's department, in which they feel more directly concerned than in any other."

Two other landmark pieces of legislation in 1862 also reflect this approach

of the Federal government offering a helping hand to the people of our nation in developing American agriculture. On May 20, 1862, President Lincoln signed what is commonly known as the Homestead Act in order to provide people who would otherwise not have the chance an opportunity to own land. And on July 2, 1862, President Lincoln signed into law the first Morrill Act to donate public lands to the states and territories to support education "related to agriculture and mechanic arts". This act was the first Federal assistance to higher education, and its purpose was to make this education widely available to multitudes of people who otherwise never would have obtained it.

Over the ensuing years, our Nation has benefited tremendously from these policies. The productivity of America's farmers and ranchers, along with those working in associated businesses and industries, is a foundation for our national economy and our way of life. We have been blessed in this country with a richness of natural resources to which Americans have applied their hard work, knowledge, and talents. The abundance of America's agricultural output has been instrumental in supporting our people and enabling them to pursue and to excel in many other fields. To be sure, our Nation's history has proven the wisdom of Daniel Webster's observation in 1840, "When tillage begins, other arts follow."

The responsibilities of the Department of Agriculture have of course grown over the years as the circumstances and needs of our Nation and its people have changed. The Department continues to play a critical role in supporting research, education, and extension involving food, agriculture, and related topics. It helps agricultural producers survive unpredictable economic losses from market fluctuations and damaging weather. The Department provides critical assistance to farmers and ranchers in conserving and protecting soil, water, wildlife, and other natural resources for future generations. And USDA nutrition assistance enables American children to eat healthy lunches, breakfasts, and snacks and low-income families to put food on the table. The Department of Agriculture also provides important assistance toward developing new sources of rural renewable energy and biobased products. Rural communities benefit from USDA programs that support vital facilities and foster the creation and growth of businesses and jobs. Of course, consumers rely on USDA to protect and ensure the safety of their meat and poultry. And its trade promoting efforts boost our agricultural exports.

On this anniversary of the Department of Agriculture, it is also important to recognize and commend the dedication, talent, and hard work of all of the people working in the Department of Agriculture wherever they may be—in local, county, State, or regional offices, here in Washington, or

in a foreign country. I am also of course proud that several Iowans have very capably led the Department of Agriculture, including our present secretary, Tom Vilsack.

So, today is a time to reflect upon and recognize the achievements of American agriculture and the contributions to that success from the Department of Agriculture. It is also a time to appraise and consider the huge challenges we face in the years ahead in producing the quantities of food needed to eradicate hunger in a growing global population and to do so in ways that conserve and sustain natural resources. Undoubtedly, our Nation and our Department of Agriculture will be called upon to continue our leadership in responding to and solving these crucial challenges.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to commemorate the 150 year anniversary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I am pleased that my colleagues in the Senate have agreed the occasion is worthy of a resolution honoring this milestone in our nation's history. On May 15, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed legislation to establish the USDA. It gave the agency general authority to acquire and spread useful information on agricultural subjects and to assist in the development and use of new and valuable seeds and plants.

For the past 150 years, USDA has lent a helping hand to our farmers and ranchers as they provide the food, feed, fiber, and fuel to Americans, as well as a growing customer base around the world. In the 1850s, there was 1 farmer for every 2 people in the United States. Thanks to ongoing improvements in technology and management practices, today's farmers and ranchers are able to produce even more with efficient use of resources. Currently, the average farmer in the United States feeds more than 150 people.

The history of Nebraska has been closely intertwined with this story. In fact, thousands of homesteaders settled in the Nebraska territory after President Lincoln signed another piece of legislation—the Homestead Act—on May 20, 1862. This influx of population led to Nebraska becoming the Nation's 37th State. Since that time, USDA has served as a resource to the many farmers and ranchers who continue to make agriculture the leading industry in Nebraska's economy—just as the department has done for producers nationwide.

As the 28th Secretary of Agriculture, I was proud to work with men and women who are still committed to USDA's original mission of spreading information and developing new technologies to increase agricultural production.

Today's Department of Agriculture conducts valuable research through the land-grant university system and institutions like the University of Nebraska. USDA also helps to minimize the risks of weather and commodity

price volatility for producers. And, the department helps to protect the health of our plants and animals. But, USDA's mission goes beyond helping producers. For example, those who enjoy a good steak, as well as other meat and poultry products in the U.S., have come to trust USDA's food safety inspection process.

Of growing importance is USDA's role in promoting exports of agriculture products. It is fitting that this anniversary falls in May—which is also world trade month. I think we can all agree that the benefits of trade are great especially to the agriculture sector.

Nebraska is a big agricultural State. And, in Nebraska alone, more than 30,000 jobs and more than \$7.6 billion dollars in revenue were directly tied to exports last year. And, these numbers will only grow as we continue to expand access to customers around the world.

In fact, the Colombia Free Trade Agreement goes into effect today. It offers great opportunity to both the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. The Colombia Agreement eliminates barriers for many Nebraska agricultural products, including beef, corn, soybeans, pork, and wheat. For some time now, goods from Colombia have been entering the U.S. tariff-free, while American producers still paid tariffs on exports to Colombia as high as 40 percent.

It is good news for our agriculture producers and manufacturers that trade agreements are finally being implemented. The South Korea Agreement has already gone into effect, and I hope Panama Agreement won't be far behind. These types of free trade agreements are sorely needed so we can level the playing field for our exporters.

We cannot ignore the fact that the fastest-growing opportunities for American businesses, farms, and ranches are outside our borders. They are overseas in rapidly developing countries. I am confident that Nebraska farmers, businesses and workers, and those across the country, can compete with anyone in the world. And, in doing so, we can create new jobs here at home.

USDA has played a key role in making sure our farmers and ranchers have the tools to take advantage of these export opportunities. Additionally, the department recognizes that American agriculture is intertwined with the health of our rural communities. USDA works to ensure small-town-America is not overlooked by a Federal Government that is often focused on big urban areas.

Over the past 150 years, President Lincoln's vision of “the People's Department” has expanded beyond America's farms and ranches and rural communities. His vision is alive and well in the health of our schoolchildren, in our ability to supply energy from home-grown sources, and in our leadership role in helping feed some of the

hungriest and neediest people around the world.

A key part of USDA's mission—one that consumes the largest portion of USDA's budget—is addressing hunger and meeting the nutritional needs of Americans. Whether through school lunches or assistance for hungry families, USDA plays an important role in supporting those in need.

USDA's mission is one of the most diverse of any department and in every area there are hard-working staff striving to meet the department's goals. On this day, I am happy to recognize the men and women of the “People's Department.” Their professionalism, dedication, and work ethic provide a shining example of why President Lincoln called the Department of Agriculture the “People's Department.”

Together, we celebrate the growth and success of American agriculture and the health and well-being of the people of the United States. We honor the farmers, ranchers, and others whose ingenuity, adaptability, and skill have created the safest and most abundant food supply in the history of mankind.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I am pleased to help recognize the 150th birthday of the United States Department of Agriculture—USDA. As a member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry as well as the Committee on Foreign Relations, I understand the importance of agriculture to feeding our Nation and feeding the world.

One hundred and fifty years ago today President Abraham Lincoln signed the legislation creating the Department of Agriculture. This was followed in short order by the Homestead Act and then the Morrill Act establishing our great land grant college system, including The Pennsylvania State University. I suspect that few Americans at the time would have imagined that President Lincoln's leadership and vision in the area of agriculture would have such a profound impact on our country and the world.

Just recently, Dr. Rajiv Shah, the Administrator of the Agency for International Development said that the single-most effective way to eliminate world poverty was to increase agriculture yields. That is an extraordinary statement. It means that Penn State and the other agriculture research universities have a critical role to play in eliminating hunger, assisting in global food security and political stability.

The world's population just passed seven billion people and is on the way to nine billion people by 2050. This means we must double world food production by 2050 in order to meet the challenge of feeding this increased population.

As noted recently by Bob Stallman, President of the American Farm Bureau Federation:

The importance of science and innovation . . . to agriculture will be significant as we

face several challenges in the years ahead. . . . Further, we must accomplish this hefty goal while realizing that our Earth is fragile. To take care of our environment, we must embrace agriculture research, science, innovation and biotechnology. When it comes to medical care, communication and transportation we accept the importance of innovation. We need to do the same when it comes to the production of food.

Last year, net farm income and farm exports set a record and played a key role in helping to grow the U.S. economy. In order to ensure the food security of our Nation, I believe strongly that Pennsylvania farmers will continue to be productive, competitive and successful and supply food to communities in Pennsylvania, throughout the country and the world. Pennsylvania's proud agriculture tradition helped to build the Nation and agriculture continues to drive our economy.

We live in a nation that is as diverse in agricultural production as it is in the people who consume the products that farmers grow. As we reflect upon agriculture's past, and look toward agriculture's future, I hope we can continue to ensure that we have a safe, stable, secure supply of food. Agriculture is not just a nostalgic reflection of the past; it is critical to the U.S. economy and all Americans as we move forward. Therefore, I am pleased to extend birthday wishes to USDA, the land grant colleges and universities, and all those in the food value chain.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am here today to commemorate the United States Department of Agriculture on its 150th anniversary.

Our country has changed dramatically since 1862, when President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill into law creating the Department of Agriculture.

Despite all the changes we have seen in the last century and a half, the USDA remains true to its original mission as "The People's Department," administering critical programs that touch the lives of all Americans.

So as we celebrate this important milestone for the USDA, I think we should also take a moment to recognize the men and women who are putting its programs to use—the farmers and agriculture leaders who grow our crops, produce our food and power our homegrown energy supply.

Sometimes, people forget that food doesn't just magically appear on grocery store shelves. But the truth is that behind every aisle—whether it's dairy or produce—there is farmer or a rancher who has made it their livelihood to produce nutritious, abundant food.

In Minnesota, our economic strength is anchored in the soil of our land and the sweat of our farmers. Agriculture is our State's leading export, accounting for \$75 billion in economic activity every year and supporting more than 300,000 jobs. And while we are 21st in the country for population, we are the sixth largest agricultural producer.

Minnesota is number one in turkeys, green peas, and oats, number two in

spring wheat, number three in hogs and soybeans, and number four in corn.

I have spent the last year traveling across our State as part of an economic tour that has taken me to dozens of communities and businesses throughout Minnesota. And no matter where I go, I am always reminded of the critical role that farming plays in our State's economy.

For generations, the Department of Agriculture has stood behind our farmers and rural communities and made sure they had the tools and resource to move forward.

The USDA may be best known for administering the farm programs that help agricultural producers manage risk and recover from disasters—everything from floods to market failures. But programs such as crop insurance, which provides a safety net across 254 million acres, are just one component of the USDA's larger portfolio of priorities—everything from clean energy development and conservation to export promotion.

In terms of research, the USDA has helped our farmers and ranchers remain the most productive in the world. It has funded research that not only shields our food supply from pests and dangerous diseases, but also increases the productivity of farmers growing everything from wheat to watermelons.

Anyone who has visited a farm using modern precision agriculture can tell you just how far we have come. And in terms of the economic benefits, studies have shown that for every dollar spent on agricultural research, it returns over \$20 to our economy.

The USDA is also making great headway with conservation programs. By working with hundreds of thousands of farmers and ranchers and implementing conservation practices on tens of millions of acres of private land, the USDA is helping reduce soil erosion and ensure clean drinking water.

And in preserving our natural resources, USDA is also strengthening key industries like fishing and hunting, which are so much more than just hobbies in my State—in Minnesota, sportsmen put \$3.4 billion into our economy each year and support 55,000 jobs.

On the energy front, USDA is moving us closer to oil independence by encouraging the development of homegrown sources—like cellulosic biofuels, methane digesters and other renewable and energy efficient solutions. Altogether, those solutions are expected to save enough energy to power nearly 600,000 homes a year.

At a time of spiking gas prices and volatility in foreign oil markets, I believe we should be investing in the energy innovators of the Midwest—not the oil cartels of the Mideast.

With the right tools, America's farmers can develop the next generation energy sources that will power the world.

We are already feeding the world, and the USDA has helped make that possible through its work to lift export

barriers and open new markets for agricultural goods. In 2011 farm exports reached a record high of \$137 billion, which support 1.5 million jobs here in the U.S.

Finally, so much of the USDA's work boils down to strengthening rural communities. That is why programs to help finance everything from broadband to infrastructure for clean drinking water are so important. They are critical to ensuring a kid who grows up in rural America can stay in rural America and doesn't have to move somewhere else to find a job, raise a family or start a business.

In this sense, the USDA truly is the "People's Department." This only underscores the importance of the work we're doing in the Senate to craft a strong and successful farm bill—one that builds on the success of existing programs while also making key improvements and accounting for challenges created by the current budget environment.

The Agriculture Committee took the first step by passing the farm bill out of committee in April, on a strong bipartisan vote of 16-5, that should pave the way for full Senate action.

The legislation strengthens and continues many vital programs that farmers rely on in States across the country.

It maintains a robust farm safety net which makes several improvements to the crop insurance program, including changes to ensure the program works better for fruit, vegetable and organic producers.

I sponsored an amendment that will give beginning farmers better access to the crop insurance program by making it more affordable for them to purchase coverage.

And because I believe we should do more to invest in the future of American agriculture, I worked to make sure the bill included provisions for the Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Program and for promoting public-private research opportunities.

Importantly, the bill we passed in the Committee also streamlines and strengthens the conservation programs that farmers rely on to keep our soil healthy and our water clean. It preserves the essential nutrition programs that millions of families and children rely on every day. And it includes a strong energy title for encouraging homegrown energy production.

Every single American has a direct stake in the success of our farms and food businesses. Through the food we eat, the water we drink, the fuel we put in our cars and the air we breathe, each and every one of us is personally invested in the success of American agriculture, and that is why the USDA is such a critical resources.

I congratulate all my friends with the USDA on a remarkable 150 years, and I want to thank my colleagues on the floor today for their great work

and dedication to supporting our farmers and rural communities. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues in the Senate to pass a strong Farm Bill that supports vital services at the USDA and gets the job done for our Nation's farmers.

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize American agricultural producers on the 150th anniversary of President Lincoln signing legislation establishing the U.S. Department of Agriculture on May 15, 1862.

As President Lincoln said in his last annual address to Congress, "[The Department of Agriculture] is precisely the people's Department, in which they feel more directly concerned than in any other." Many don't realize it, but USDA plays a unique role in the daily lives of every single American, ranging from the programs available that assist rural small businesses to providing the support system that makes it possible for our farmers and ranchers to produce the most affordable and abundant food supply of any country in the world.

As the main economic pillar and No. 1 industry in my State of South Dakota, it is important that we acknowledge and celebrate the economic importance of agriculture and the role that the USDA has played in implementing and supporting policies that have assisted our farmers and ranchers in becoming a leader in feeding, fueling, and clothing the world.

USDA's work on food, agriculture, economic development, science, risk management, natural resources conservation, and a whole host of other issues has enabled the agriculture industry to establish itself as a critical component in our economic success while having an influence on the lives of every single American. The Department, in coordination with our Nation's farmers and ranchers, has helped allow families to put nutritious, healthy food on their tables at a lower cost than almost anywhere else in the world. On average, less than 10 percent of American consumers' disposable income is spent on food.

Moreover, agriculture is the economic engine that drives our rural communities. Without viable family farms and ranches our small towns and Main Street businesses throughout South Dakota and our Nation would face significant hardships. According to the South Dakota Department of Agriculture, the agriculture industry has a \$20 billion economic impact each year, accounting for one-third of the State's economic activity. The 46,000 agricultural producers on 31,500 farms combine with associated industries to employ more than 143,000 South Dakotans.

But the value of America's farmers and ranchers goes far beyond economic activity. Our producers are also the most productive in the world, providing the food, fuel, and fiber necessary to sustain us and millions of

others throughout the world. Each year, just one South Dakota producer raises enough food to feed 155 people both here at home and abroad. As the world's population continues to grow to a projected 9 billion people by 2050, the demand for our agricultural products will only increase, and we will have to continue improving our productive capacity to double food production on fewer acres.

The increased yields needed to overcome the challenges ahead cannot be accomplished without the full use of sound science and innovative technology. In providing public land for the establishment of colleges to further agricultural research and education, the Morrill Land Grant College Act, which was also signed into law by President Lincoln in 1862, gave us such institutions as South Dakota State University and will remain a lasting achievement for the ongoing progress of production agriculture.

Therefore, on the 150th anniversary of its establishment, I commend USDA, and the American agricultural producers they assist, for providing the food, fuel, and fiber that we each rely on. I congratulate them and wish a happy birthday to USDA and those throughout the food chain.

Senator KOHL. Mr. President, in the fall of 1859, just two years prior to his election to the presidency, Abraham Lincoln spoke to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society in my hometown of Milwaukee, WI. Lincoln concluded his speech saying, "Let us hope . . . that by the best cultivation of the physical world, beneath and around us, and the intellectual and moral world within us, we shall secure an individual, social, and political prosperity and happiness." Just 3 years later, President Lincoln created the Department of Agriculture with these words in mind.

May 15, 2012 marks the 150th year of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA. Perhaps more than any other department, USDA connects Americans to the land and to each other in ways seen and unseen. From its formation in 1862 through today, the Department has served millions of Americans in a multitude of innovative ways.

From the earliest years of our Nation, agricultural production has been front and center. Today, roughly 1 out of every 12 Americans is employed in an agriculture related industry. Whether a producer, researcher, conservationist, food safety official, or one of many other agricultural professions, each person, including those who work in USDA, plays an important role in producing and delivering a safe and healthy food supply to the United States and the world.

Colleges and universities around the country have produced research that has improved crop yields, plant and livestock health, and soil quality, among others. Research has also led to the widespread use of conservation practices on farmland. While there are

many different types of conservation efforts supported by USDA, they all share the same goal—to maintain the health and vitality of American farmland for future years and future generations. Once research and conservation efforts have been applied it becomes the job of agricultural producers to efficiently harvest and deliver their product to markets around the corner, or across the country. I believe American agricultural producers are the best in the world at what they do.

To help Americans sort through the incredible variety of their food choices at grocery stores or farmers markets, USDA provides critical guidance for nutrition assistance. Through the My Plate program and other nutrition education initiatives, USDA works to ensure that children, low-income individuals, seniors and the disabled not only understand what makes up a nutritious, healthy meal—but they create access to such meals year round, through programs such as the Special Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants and Children, or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. These programs and others help feed those who have trouble accessing healthy foods, but they do so in a way that reinvests in agricultural producers and their rural communities.

I believe USDA's most important achievement has been the fulfillment of Lincoln's vision—harmoniously using all the tools, resources and programs at its disposal to contribute to social prosperity and happiness through the cultivation of the American land and its people.

It is with pride and respect that I honor USDA and our Nation's agriculture industry today.

#### HONORING LOST DHS PERSONNEL

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, the mission of the Department of Homeland Security, DHS, is broad and diverse. The men and women of DHS protect our borders and modes of transportation; they guard our waterways; they protect U.S. and foreign leaders; they prepare for and respond to disasters; they manage our immigration process; and, they defend us against cyber attack. DHS employees provide selfless service to their nation and they do so with honor and distinction under an ever-present threat. With National Police Week 2012 commencing, I would like to pay tribute to the Department of Homeland Security's agents, officers, and military personnel who lost their lives in the service of our Nation. Fifty-five courageous men and women of DHS have died in the line of duty since the Department's inception in 2003. We owe them more than a tribute on this day, but our gratitude begins with that.

They are:

Lorenzo R. Gomez, Immigration Enforcement Agent, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, El Paso, Texas, End of Watch: November 8, 2003.