

sugarcane, sugar beets, and in-process beet sugar.

(3) The quantity of sugar that would provide for reasonable carryover stocks.

(4) The quantity of sugar that will be available from carryover stocks for human consumption in the United States during the quota year.

(5) Consistency with the obligations of the United States under international agreements.

(c) EXEMPTION.—Subsection (a) shall not include specialty sugar.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section, the terms “quota year” and “human consumption” have the meaning such terms had under section 359k of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938 (7 U.S.C. 1359kk) (as in effect on the day before the date of the enactment of this Act).

SEC. _____. APPLICATION.

Except as otherwise provided in this subtitle, this subtitle and the amendments made by this subtitle shall apply beginning with the 2012 crop of sugar beets and sugarcane.

FLOOD INSURANCE REFORM AND MODERNIZATION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Madam President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 250, S. 1940.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 250, S. 1940, a bill to amend the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, to restore the financial solvency of the flood insurance fund, and for other purposes.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I have managed a few bills during my time here, quite a few bills. It is always so gratifying, after the work that goes into the work you have done on a committee or a subcommittee, to have that matter come to the floor. It is a terrible disappointment to not be able to move forward as you anticipated.

So I say that for Senator STABENOW and Senator ROBERTS. No one has worked harder than they have in bringing the bill to the floor. It is bipartisan. It is important not only for the State of Michigan, the State of Kansas, but it is important for the country.

I wish we could proceed in another way to have amendments heard and voted on. But even though this is something awkward, we are going to move forward with this bill. We are going to bring up some amendments. They are big amendments. They are crucial to Senators being able to issue their opinions on this legislation. One deals with sugar, one deals with food stamps, both very controversial and very important.

We are going to have those amendments, and, hopefully, we will have a good debate on those matters. We can move forward on this bill in other ways. I have not given up hope. I know Senator STABENOW and Senator ROBERTS have not given up hope to have a universal agreement so we can legislate on this bill.

As I have indicated, we do not do this very often in this manner. But it is important because we have an issue that

needs to move forward. A lot of times when the tree is filled we just walk away from it. We are not going to walk away from this. This bill is far too important. It affects the lives of millions of people—about 16 million—in America.

The reforms have been made in this bill—I remember when I came from the House of Representatives 26 years ago, we wanted to make the reforms that are in this bill. So they have done remarkably good work. We hear everyone, Democrats and Republicans, talking about: Let's do something about the debt and the deficit. Here we have done it.

What they have done is bring to this body a bill that reduces our debt by \$23 billion. We have a long ways we need to go beyond that. But, gee whiz, this is a big deal, \$23 billion. So I commend and applaud the two managers of this bill. They are fine Senators. They have done a service to our country by getting us to the point we are now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, first I want to thank our leader for his strong support and helping us bring this to the floor. We would not be here without the Senator from Nevada, our leader. Frankly, there are many demands, many things on his plate and our plate in the Senate. He understands 16 million jobs are affected by what happens in agriculture in this country. So I thank Senator REID for his willingness to support us and continue to support us as we move forward to get this bill done.

I also want to thank my partner and my ranking member, the Senator from Kansas, for his continued leadership as we move the bill forward. We would have liked to have begun the unanimous consent agreement to move forward on six different amendments, not the universe of amendments. Certainly, anyone could come down and say: Why isn't my amendment part of the first six?

We wanted to get started as we worked with colleagues to bring up other amendments. So we have put forward something that involves, first of all, a technical amendment we need to do for the bill, a perfecting amendment, and then two Democratic colleagues' amendments and three Republican colleagues' amendments, including the Senator from Kentucky who just entered the objection, an important debate that involves an amendment he is involved in.

So our first step was to try to do this around unanimous consent. But understanding that we do have an objection, Senator REID has offered us another path to do this by creating a way for us to at least have the debate on two of the issues we had put forward in the six amendments before us.

One involves the Sugar Program for our country, and we have a number of Members who have different amendments. We have one that will be in

front of us. It is an opportunity for everyone to say their piece. I can tell you as someone who represents a lot of sugar beets that I care very deeply about this issue and certainly support the Sugar Program. But it is an important debate to have, and Members deserve to be heard on all sides.

The other relates to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Many Members have feelings on all sides about this, and so we think it is an important debate to have to give people an opportunity to give their opinions.

I certainly, as this goes forward tomorrow, will be doing that myself and certainly feel very strongly that what we have done in the bill on accountability and transparency to make sure every dollar goes for families who need it is very important. But we want Members to have an opportunity to be able to debate what is important policy for our country.

As we are moving forward on both of these amendments tomorrow, we will also be working, our staffs and ourselves, to come together on a larger package, a universe of amendments to offer to the body of the Senate to be able to move forward so we can come up with a finite number of amendments that will allow us to complete the bill.

Many amendments have been offered. We are going to spend our time going through those just as we did in committee where we worked across the aisle. We had 100 amendments and whittled that down to a point where we could come forward with agreed-upon amendments. We are going to do the same thing. We are going to put together a universe of amendments to move forward on the bill.

But while we are doing that, we will have an opportunity—we invite Members who care particularly about either of the issues that will be voted on tomorrow—the leader will move forward with a motion to table on those, but we want everyone to have an opportunity to come to the floor and be able to be heard on both of those issues.

So we are moving forward. We would have liked to have done it with a larger group of amendments that we could have started with while we continue through. Our goal is to allow as much opportunity for discussion and debate as possible. But, frankly, I have to say, before yielding to my friend from Kansas, our goal ultimately is to pass this bill.

I mean we have 16 million people who are counting on moving forward wanting certainty. Our farmers and ranchers want to know what is coming for them as they are in the planting season, going into harvest season in the fall. They need economic certainty. We need to make sure we have a policy going forward that makes sense and is put in place before September 30 of this year when these policies run out and very serious ramifications to the budget take place.

Frankly, I think all of us have said at one time or another that we want to

see deficit reduction. I do not know of another bill that has come before this body with \$23 billion in deficit reduction, bipartisan, and a number that was agreed to in the fall with the House and the Senate.

We have an opportunity to tell the people we represent in the country that we meant it when we said deficit reduction. We meant it when we said reform. We meant it when we said we were going to work together to get things done. We have been doing that with a wonderful bipartisan vote in committee, with a very strong vote to proceed to this bill last week, and we know the hard part is getting through it and coming up with the list of amendments we intend to do.

We are asking for our colleagues to work with us on behalf of the people of this country who have the safest, most affordable food supply in the world because of a group of folks called farmers and ranchers who have the biggest risk in the country and go out every day to work hard to make sure we have the national security and the food security we need for our country.

They are looking to us to get this done, along with children and families across this country. We will do that. We will begin that process between now and tomorrow with a debate on two important issues.

I see my distinguished colleague and friend here, the ranking member. I also thank another distinguished colleague, the Senator from Iowa, who has made very significant contributions in this legislation on reforms—reforms he has been fighting for for years. We have stepped up to back him up and support him. We need to get this done—these reforms—and get this bill done. We are going to work hard to make sure we do that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Madam President, this isn't exactly the trail I had hoped we would take to get to a successful conclusion on a farm bill that we need so vitally in farm country, for all the reasons that the distinguished chairwoman has outlined. I need not go over all of those reasons. I will mention that we have a September 30 deadline in which the current farm bill expires. The alternative is to go back to the current farm bill, which we know is outdated, and it has a payment system that is also outdated.

The other alternative, if you don't extend the farm bill, is you go to the 1949 act, which is not sustainable. It is not really an alternative. I had hoped we could start considering this. We had three Republican amendments, two Democratic amendments, and also the perfecting amendment. But that is not the trail we are going to go down.

Basically, I think about the only thing I can add is that we are not giving up. We can't. We will keep working as hard as we can to accommodate all Members. I know there is a lot of talk on both sides of the aisle about a global

agreement. That seems to be a little bit of an exaggeration, more especially for this body. At any rate, that agreement would encompass every Members' concern at least, and we would go back to what the Senate used to be and have everybody offer amendments and debate them and then vote and have a conclusion. That is exactly what we did when we marked up the bill with over 100 amendments in 4½ hours. That was a record. That is not what we are going to do as of tomorrow. At least there is some degree of movement.

I know the Senator from Iowa has several amendments that are extremely important to the future of agriculture program policy. I commend him for his leadership in the past and for being such a successful partner in working things out not only for his State but for the country.

We will persevere and we will get this done. I guess we are like John Paul Jones—we have just begun to fight.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I know my colleague from New Hampshire wishes to speak, but for the purpose of Members' understanding, I would like to let everyone know what is happening now.

We do have two amendments that will be voted on tomorrow morning. The majority leader has at his disposal the ability to have a motion to table, which he will exercise in the morning. But we want anyone interested in either of these two topics or amendments to come forward with the opportunity to debate tonight. Senator SHAHEEN has an amendment that I know is very important to her and many other Members, and we want everyone to have the opportunity this evening to do that.

There will be a vote. I am not sure of the time exactly, but I would think at this point it will be in the morning. So we want those who are interested in debating the Sugar Program or debating the question of whether to block grant the nutrition program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, to come forward to discuss and debate that this evening. There may be some time in the morning, but we will be moving forward on both of these amendments. So we want to let them know that if these are topics they are interested in, we would certainly welcome them coming to the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNET). The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I thank Senator STABENOW, who has done such a great job of chairing the Agriculture Committee. She and Rank-

ing Member ROBERTS really have done amazing work to bring this bill to the floor. It is bipartisan, and it is legislation that makes some significant reforms in the farm programs we have had.

In New Hampshire, many of the programs that are authorized in the farm bill are critical for our farmers and our rural communities, as well as for the protection of our natural resources. I hope we do have some agreement so that we will be able to actually have a full debate on this bill in the remainder of this week and in the upcoming week.

As I said, this legislation makes much needed reforms to our farm programs, and it helps to reduce the deficit. For all of that terrific reform and the work that has been done, Senator STABENOW and Ranking Member ROBERTS deserve real appreciation and thanks from this body.

However, there is one glaring exception to the reforms that have been made in the bill; that is, the bill contains no reform to the Sugar Program. The sugar subsidies we provide to farmers in America are really unique because what the Federal Government does is to artificially restrict supply and provide a subsidy that keeps prices for sugar in the United States at nearly twice the world average. These are high prices that hurt consumers. They hurt businesses. In fact, a recent study found that the program costs Americans \$3.5 billion a year.

Let me explain how the subsidy works. First, the Federal Government sets a floor on sugar prices through guarantees. So they guarantee how much is going to be paid for the price of sugar. These price floors ensure that sugar growers and processors will always receive a minimum price for sugar regardless of what happens on the world market. But sugar prices have been far higher than the minimum price for years now, and that is thanks to some additional, very egregious government controls on sugar. Under the sugar subsidy program, the Federal Government tells sugar growers how much they can grow. These restrictions are called marketing allotments, and they limit how much sugar is available on the market and restrict the ability of buyers and sellers to trade sugar freely. So this is not a market enterprise when it comes to sugar in the United States, and no other U.S. crop is subject to these same kinds of government controls. As a result, in the United States we have severe supply shortages which keep sugar prices artificially high.

The last component of the subsidy program for sugar is trade restrictions. The Federal Government severely restricts the amount of sugar companies can import into the United States. So only about 15 percent of sugar in the United States is imported at those lower world average prices.

Again, no other crop is subject to the kinds of restrictions and price controls I have just described. The result is a

subsidy that hurts hundreds of thousands of businesses and consumers and only benefits about 4,700 sugar growers. Unfortunately, the farm bill before the Senate, while it contains a lot of reforms, contains no reforms to this subsidy program.

I have introduced several amendments, but the one we are going to be voting on tomorrow is one that would repeal the subsidy so that prices are determined by the market instead of government controls.

For the past 1½ years, I have been working with our colleague, Senator MARK KIRK of Illinois, on bipartisan legislation—the SUGAR Act—which would phase out the Sugar Program over several years and eliminate government control of sugar prices. Unfortunately, Senator KIRK can't be here tomorrow for this vote because he is continuing his recovery, but I am pleased there is a bipartisan group of our colleagues who have joined in support of this sugar reform. In particular, Senators LUGAR, MCCAIN, DURBIN, TOOMEY, LAUTENBERG, COATS, PORTMAN, FEINSTEIN, and my colleague from New Hampshire, Senator AYOTTE, have all joined me in calling for elimination or significant reform of the Sugar Program.

This is a big concern for us in New Hampshire and other States around the country that actually make candy or other products that rely on sugar. In New Hampshire, we are the American home of Lindt chocolates. We also have a number of other small candy companies. As this chart shows, American manufacturing companies such as Lindt pay almost twice the world average price for their sugar. In fact, prices have gone up considerably since Congress passed the last farm bill in 2008.

We can see that this blue line at the bottom is the world price of raw sugar. This red line is the U.S. price of raw sugar. This green line at the top is the U.S. wholesale refined sugar price. So while we can see how much higher that raw sugar price is, we can also see what it does to the refined sugar price, and we can see how significantly it has increased since the last farm bill. Again, the sugar subsidy program is able to keep these prices so high because it distorts the market.

In addition to the minimum prices guaranteed by the government, the Federal Government drastically restricts the supply of sugar in the United States, with only about 15 percent of sugar sold coming from abroad—thanks to those import restrictions. The government controls how much each individual sugar processor can sell, and that further restricts supply on the market. Again, the result of these government controls is to keep the artificially high prices for sugar that are reflected on this graph.

These high sugar prices hurt job creation. According to the Department of Commerce, for every one job protected in the sugar industry through this pro-

gram, we are sacrificing three jobs in American manufacturing. A recent study by an agricultural research firm called Promar suggests that the program—the sugar subsidy, that is—costs 20,000 American jobs each year. In addition, a recent analysis that I referred to earlier found that the program also costs consumers \$3.5 billion every year in the form of artificially high sugar prices. These really are pretty startling numbers, but I wish to talk about how this subsidy program affects just one of the small businesses in New Hampshire.

We have a company called Granite State Candy Shoppe. It is a small family-owned candy manufacturing company in Concord, NH, the capital of New Hampshire. Sugar is that company's most important ingredient. Jeff Bart, who is the owner, tells me that the artificially high cost of sugar has forced the company to raise prices on their goods but, more importantly, the subsidy has also prevented the company from hiring new workers as quickly as it would like to. So while Granite State Candy Shoppe would like to grow and expand, the sugar subsidy is really slowing down that expansion because of the high price of sugar. Granite State Candy Shoppe is just one of many companies that want to grow but are forced to slow down their expansion due to an outdated, unnecessary government program that benefits relatively few sugar cane and sugar beet growers nationwide.

High sugar prices also put American companies at a competitive disadvantage with foreign manufacturers. Since foreign companies can get sugar so much cheaper, it is tempting for American companies to look elsewhere to manufacture their candy. In fact, low sugar prices are a major selling point for foreign governments encouraging candy companies to relocate.

We just copied this cover of a brochure from Canada. It says:

Canada—North America's Location of Choice for Confectionary Manufacturers.

Consider these hard facts. Sugar refiners import the vast majority of their raw materials at world prices. Canadian sugar users enjoy a significant advantage—the average price of refined sugar is usually 30 to 40 percent lower in Canada than in the United States. Most manufactured products containing sugar are freely traded in the NAFTA region. So we are losing these jobs to Canada and to other places—20,000 jobs a year—in businesses that need sugar as a major ingredient.

This outdated program puts American companies at a competitive disadvantage, and it should go. That is why I hope our colleagues, as they are considering this amendment tomorrow morning to repeal the Sugar Program, will decide to support it. I hope we will not have opposition to voting on the amendment from any of our colleagues in the Senate.

We have had consumer and business groups calling for the repeal of the

Sugar Program for years now. The Consumer Federation of America and the National Consumers League have joined business groups such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers in support of this amendment. These groups support reforming this program because they recognize that these special interests are hurting consumers and they are hurting American businesses.

So I hope all of my colleagues will support this amendment tomorrow. Help us grow small businesses and create those American jobs. Let's reform the Sugar Program. It is long overdue.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I will take a few moments to speak about the two amendments we will be voting on with motions to table tomorrow and urge that my colleagues, in fact, do vote to table these amendments. I appreciate we have colleagues on both sides of the aisle who care about both of them, but I ask, in the interest of a strong agricultural policy and nutrition policy, that we not support the amendments that are in front of us. But I do appreciate the fact that we are beginning to talk about issues and amendments. This is very important.

We have many amendments and ideas that Members want to bring up. We are going to do our level best, within the framework we have to deal with in terms of procedure, to be able to bring up as many different topics and have as much opportunity for people to debate as possible because we want to move forward on this very important bill that we all know would reduce the deficit by over \$23 billion. It has major reforms. Yet it will strengthen agricultural policy—nutrition policy, conservation policy—and maintain and support 16 million jobs. That is why we are here.

I wish to take a moment to talk about our American sugar policy. We grow a lot of sugar beets in Michigan. Our first sugar policy goes back to 1789 in this country. I don't think either one of us was here. The Presiding Officer certainly was not here. Nobody was here. But in 1789 we began the first sugar policy. Our modern policy can be traced back to the Sugar Acts of 1934, 1937, and 1948. Sugar is not similar to other commodities. Both sugarcane and sugar beets must be processed soon after harvest—which is a key factor for them—using costly processing machinery.

If farmers need to scale back production because of a sudden drop in price,

the processing plant shuts down and may never reopen. Because this processing is so capital intensive, it is imperative we give producers a stable marketplace so they do not experience a constant boom and bust, which is what we would see without the stability of the program we have today.

The current U.S. sugar policy has been run at zero cost to taxpayers for the last 10 years. Let me just say this again—zero; zero cost to the American taxpayer for the last 10 years. This policy helps defend 142,000 American jobs and \$20 billion in economic activity every year: zero cost, 142,000 jobs, \$20 billion in economic activity every year.

Two things come to mind. Even with our sugar policy, the United States interestingly is the second largest net importer of sugar behind only Russia. This is important because our policy has been viewed as a protectionist policy. Yet we are still an importer. We import sugar, the second highest only to Russia. What we are talking about is allowing a stable marketplace for American producers.

The price of sugar for consumers is among the lowest in the developed world. Despite many debates to the contrary, in the European Union prices are 30 percent higher than in the United States. When we look at the retail prices for countries such as France, Finland, Japan, Norway, and so on, U.S. sugar prices are actually very low. Again, zero cost to the taxpayer, and we are maintaining a stable price for our sugar beet growers and protection for our sugar beet and sugarcane growers. We are creating jobs and, at the same time, this is where we fall, with the blue line being the USA.

I know there are colleagues on both sides of the aisle who care about this. I argue our sugar policy is one that makes sense. It has made sense for the last 10 years at zero cost. I hope we will vote to continue to support this policy, which is a very important part to many regions of the country, an important part of the bill that is in front of us. This policy is supported by a host of corporations, including the American Sugar Alliance, the International Sugar Trade Coalition. We have the support of our country's two largest agricultural trade organizations—the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Farmers Union. It has made sense. It has zero cost, and I am hopeful colleagues tomorrow will support continuing this program.

Let me talk about another amendment now that goes to a lot of discussion on the floor and that goes to the nutrition parts, which is the majority of the bill that is in front of us.

All across the country the recession has devastated families. Certainly, I can speak for Michigan, where we have people who paid taxes all their lives, they have worked very hard, they continue to work very hard, and never thought in their wildest dreams they would need help putting food on their

tables for their children. They have had to do that during this recession, in a temporary way, to help them get through what, for them, has been an incredibly difficult time.

We know the No. 1 way to address that is jobs. We want to make sure, in fact, we are creating jobs, supporting the private sector entrepreneurial spirit to bring back manufacturing, making things, growing things, creating jobs. But we also know, as this has been slow to turn around for many families, that we have Americans who have needed some temporary help. That is what SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, is all about.

The amendment tomorrow that we will be voting on would turn this program into an entire block grant, making it much less effective in responding to needs—frankly, block granting and then cutting over half the current levels of support and funding needed to maintain help for those who are currently receiving SNAP benefits. Reductions at that level could exceed the total amount of supplemental nutrition help projected to go to families in 29 of our smallest States and territories over the next 10 years. It is extremely dramatic and makes absolutely no sense. I hope we will join together in rejecting this approach.

One of the strongest features of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is that, in fact, it can respond quickly when we have a recession or economic conditions that warrant it, when we have a nationwide recession, when we have a plant closure in a community. We have seen way too many of those, although we are now celebrating the fact that we have plants opening and retooling and expanding. But we have gone through some very tough times with plant closures where families have needed some temporary help. The important thing about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is that it is timely, it is targeted, and it is temporary. Approximately half of all of those new families who have needed help are getting help for 10 months or less, so this is actually a temporary program.

We have seen over the years that families receiving supplemental nutrition assistance are much more likely to be working families. This is important. We are talking about working families who are working one job or one, two, or three part-time jobs and trying to hold it together for their families while working for minimum wage. By about the second or third week of the month, there is no food on the table for the children. So being able to help families who are working hard every day to be able to have that temporary help has been life and death. I would suggest, for many families. This is actually a great American value to have something like this for families who need it.

According to the CBO—the Congressional Budget Office—we know the

number of families receiving supplemental nutrition assistance is actually going to go down over the next 10 years. It is going to go down because we are seeing the unemployment rate go down, and it tracks the same. In fact, in this bill we build in savings over the life of the farm bill because it is projected that the costs are going to go down—not by some arbitrary cuts but by actually having it go down because the costs go down. When people go back to work, they don't need the temporary help anymore. There are savings in this bill by the fact that the costs are going down because the unemployment rate is going down, and that is the most significant thing.

Turning supplemental nutrition assistance into a block grant won't make the program more efficient or more effective. Instead, we are likely to see States shifting dollars out of SNAP to look at other budget priorities in very tough times. If it is a block grant, they are not required to use it for food to help families. We all know that States are under tremendous pressure on all sides, so it is not even clear—it wouldn't be accountable in terms of where those dollars are going in terms of food assistance.

It is also harder to fight fraud and abuse across State lines with this kind of approach. The Department of Agriculture has been working hard to accomplish this. We have already reduced trafficking by three-quarters, 75 percent, over the last 15 years, and we want to be able to continue to do that as well.

So we know that nutrition assistance is a lifeline to the families who need it, but let me conclude by saying that I also want to make sure every single dollar goes to the families who need it. That is why this reform bill, this bill that cuts \$23 billion on the deficit, also focuses on waste, fraud, and abuse in the nutrition title because we want to make sure every dollar goes to those families. It is to ensure that every family and every child who needs help receives help, and we want to make sure that not one dollar is abused in that process.

So what do we have in the underlying bill? Well, we have had at least two cases in Michigan where we have had lottery winners who, amazingly, continue to get food assistance, which is outrageous. We stopped that, period. Lottery winners would immediately lose assistance. And hopefully we wouldn't have to say that, but the way it has been set up, we have to make that very clear. It would end misuse by college students who are actually able to afford food and are living at home with their parents. Students going to school are not those who would be the focus of getting food assistance help, so we would end the misuse by college students. We would cut down on trafficking. We don't want folks taking their food assistance card and getting cash or doing something else with it that is illegal. We prevent liquor and

tobacco stores from becoming retailers because we want people going into the grocery store or farmers market and being able to get healthy food with their dollars. We also deal with a gap in standards that has resulted in overpayment of benefits as it relates to States. So we deal with what has been an effort by some States to go beyond legislative intent, and we address that in a very strategic way.

The bottom line is that we are making sure we increase the integrity in the food assistance program. We increase the integrity and the accountability because we want every single dollar to go for help for those families who worked all their lives, paid taxes, and now find themselves in a place where the plant closed or where they lost their jobs and need some help on a temporary basis to put food on the table.

Let me just share one more time where the dollars go in terms of children and adults. Nearly half of those who are getting help right now are children; 47 percent of those who get food help are children. Then we have those who live with children, who are another 24 percent, senior citizens are 8 percent, and disabled people are another 9 percent. So the vast majority we are talking about are children, families, parents caring for children, the disabled, or seniors.

The amendment we will be voting on tomorrow is an extreme amendment that would take away temporary help for families and children who need it. Rather than taking that approach, we take the approach of accountability. So as we look one more time at accountability, we can see we are tightening all of the areas where there has been abuse. We want every dollar to go where it should go, but at the same time we don't want to forget the children or the families of this country who are counting on us.

We have several different kinds of programs that relate to disasters in the farm bill. We have one called crop insurance where if there is a weather disaster or price disaster, we want to be there. We don't want any farmer to lose the farm because there are a few days of bad weather or some other kind of disaster beyond their control. It is called crop insurance, and we strengthened risk management tools in this bill.

Well, there is another kind of disaster assistance in this bill, and that is for families across this country. It is for children, it is for seniors, and it is for the disabled. It is called the nutrition title, and that is why it is there in case of a family disaster. We have too many middle-class families who are asking for help now. They are grateful, didn't want to ask, and mortified they have to ask, but they are in a situation where they need temporary help, and that is why it is here.

The good news is that with the unemployment rate going down, the assistance is going down. The budget will be

going down through the life of this farm bill and the costs will be going down because people are going back to work. That is the way it should be.

I would urge tomorrow that we vote against what I consider to be a very extreme amendment that would cut and block grant the nutrition program and vote instead to support what we have done to increase the accountability and integrity of our food assistance programs.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. UDALL of Colorado). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, it is a great privilege to be here tonight with the senior Senator from Colorado because the topic I come to the floor to talk about tonight is the West. Similar to the Presiding Officer, I have been thinking a lot about our home State of Colorado because we currently have a terrible wildfire burning just west of Fort Collins. Susan and I and the girls went up to Jamestown this weekend—I think I told the Presiding Officer this earlier—and dropped them off at camp, and that is far away from where this fire is. It is on the other side of Estes Park. But even from there, we could see an incredible plume of smoke, and in the 45 minutes or so we were there, I would say the volume of that plume of smoke increased by three- or fourfold and we could tell something terrible was going on.

As the Presiding Officer knows better than anybody in this Chamber, this devastating fire has destroyed over 100 structures and has tragically claimed one life and endangered many others. In fact, as we stand in this Chamber tonight, there are many endangered by this fire. At over 43,000 acres and growing, it is the third largest fire in Colorado's history.

Today, I think I can say for both of us, our thoughts go out to the family who lost a loved one and to the hundreds of firefighters who are bravely working on the ground as we are here tonight. We wish them well and we wish them success in battling this blaze.

As the Presiding Officer knows, wildfires are simply part of life in the West. Managing our land to improve resiliency needs to be a focus of ours in this Congress. That is why I am pleased, as a member of the Committee on Agriculture, to say the farm bill reauthorizes stewardship contracting, which allows our Federal land management agencies to implement high priority forest management and restoration projects. Much of the Presiding Officer's career has had to do with these programs. I thank him for his support,

and I have been pleased to be able to carry on his work as a member of the Agriculture Committee. This is a critical tool for initiatives that restore and maintain healthy forest ecosystems and provide local employment. The Presiding Officer, I think, was on the floor maybe yesterday talking about the importance of this to our timber industry in Colorado and across this country.

Another truly western aspect of this bill I would like to focus on tonight is conservation and specifically the stewardship of our western landscape. In my travels around Colorado, I have been heartened to see over and over farmers and ranchers arm in arm with conservation groups and with sportsmen, all in the name of proper stewardship of the land, of protecting our open spaces. They all share the recognition that keeping these landscapes in their historical, undeveloped state is an economic driver—as family farms, as working cattle ranches; for tourism, for wildlife habitat, and to preserve our rural way of life and our rural economies.

Every citizen knows the American West is a destination for those seeking wide-open spaces—a “home on the range,” as they say, a way of life that is focused on working the land and the wise stewardship of our natural resources. We also know that as we have grown as a country, there has been increasing development pressure on this way of life and on the landscape. That pressure is exactly why the farm bill's conservation title is so vital to people in the West.

I serve as chairman of the Conservation Subcommittee of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and through the dozens—literally dozens—of farm bill listening sessions I have held over the last 18 months, farmers and ranchers were always talking about the importance of conservation; conservation of their way of life and conservation of their land, particularly the use of conservation easements which help landowners voluntarily conserve the farming and ranching heritage of their land, a heritage that is so important to our State and to the entire West.

So I wished to spend a few minutes sharing some of the stories Coloradans have shared with me and, maybe more important than that, showing our colleagues what this looks like. Of course, we live in the most beautiful State of all 50 States, in Colorado. This photo is from the Music Meadows Ranch outside Westcliffe, CO, elevation 9,000 feet. On these beautiful 4,000 acres, Elin Ganschow raises some of the finest grass-fed beef in the country. Thanks to the Grassland Reserve Program, Elin's ranch now has a permanent conservation easement. So this beautiful land will likely always have someone running cattle on it.

This photo I have in the Chamber is from the San Luis Valley, where my predecessor, Ken Salazar, is from. Fifteen different conservation easements—finalized by the Colorado

Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust—protect nearly all of the private land over a 20-mile stretch in the valley.

The great work of the Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, aided by the programs in the farm bill conservation title before us, is protecting our western way of life in Colorado.

This beautiful picture is also from the valley. This is not a movie set, by the way. This is how we live our lives in the great State of Colorado and why these programs have been so important.

Finally, I want to share one more Colorado story about preserving our State's fruit orchards. Most people do not know this, as I have traveled the country—and I imagine Senators ISAKSON and CHAMBLISS from Georgia might even be surprised to hear—Colorado is a national leader in the production of peaches. This picture is of a peach orchard in Palisade.

My friends from California might also be interested to know that Colorado has a burgeoning wine industry as well. In Colorado's Grand Valley, pictured here, conservation programs have been efficiently employed to protect 14 family farms growing peaches and wine grapes among other things.

The Federal investments made available to protect these lands have not only ensured they will stay in agricultural production, but the resources provided from the Natural Resource Conservation Service, NRCS, help these family farms acquire new land to plant and new equipment to plant it.

Mr. President, as you can see—and as you already know—conservation is an integral part of what we are all about in the West. It helps define who we are. Sometimes people only focus on conserving public land in its undeveloped state, and that is an important endeavor in Colorado and across the West. But private land conservation—the type aided by the farm bill—is critical for so many reasons: to protect the agricultural heritage of the land, and for wildlife habitat: elk, bighorn sheep, pheasant, Colorado cutthroat trout—the list goes on and on—so many of the prized species that are important to our Nation's sportsmen and nature lovers.

Finding open landscapes and the species that inhabit them are a fundamental part of what it is to be in the West. We need to preserve these open spaces. That is what this title does. I strongly support this new conservation title as reported out of the committee on a bipartisan vote.

I know some would look to amend this bipartisan consensus, to cut conservation resources in the name of deficit reduction or to apply it to some other purpose. I am the first to say we need to cut our deficit. We need to put the entire budget under a microscope—including agriculture—to cut waste and eliminate redundancies. And, by the way, we have.

This committee—the Senate Agriculture Committee—under the leadership of the chairwoman and the rank-

ing member, is the only committee I am aware of in this entire Congress—the House or the Senate—that has actually come up with a bipartisan consensus on deficit reduction. I thank the ranking member and the chairwoman for their leadership, for setting a model, an example for the other committees that are working—or should be working—to get our deficit under control.

I might say, \$6.4 billion of those cuts do come from conservation, not all of which I like. But we made difficult compromises at the committee level. We have a more efficient conservation title that won support from both sides of the aisle, and we ought to move this bill forward.

I know there has been a little bit of the usual back-and-forth about amendments that are not necessarily related to the topic at hand, and we have a habit of doing that in the Senate. I hope there can be an agreement reached by the leadership so we can move this critically important bill forward.

Again, at a time when so much partisan bickering is going on around this place, to have seen the fine work that was done by this committee—Republicans and Democrats working together—to strengthen this commodity title, create real deficit reduction, and actually end direct payments to producers—one of the most significant reforms in agricultural policy that we have had around this place in decades—it would be a shame—worse than a shame; it would be terrible—to let that work go to waste.

With that, Mr. President, the hour is late. I am going to stop so we can close. I thank the Presiding Officer very much and say again what a privilege it was to be able to talk about our home with him in the chair.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO DELFORD McKNIGHT

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Mr. Delford McKnight of Laurel County, KY, for his lifetime of contributions in business as well as his many years of public service to the State of Kentucky.

Delford McKnight is the founder of McKnight & Associates, a successful industrial construction company that built and renovated numerous structures in Laurel and surrounding counties.

Born in 1946, Mr. McKnight grew up on a small family farm 6 miles from London, KY. He attended Bush Elementary School and Bush High School, where he gained an interest in agriculture and construction. Taking classes in agriculture and woodworking, as well as other college prep classes, he earned the title "Boy Most Likely to Succeed" from his senior class.

After graduating high school, Delford went on to attend the University of Kentucky for 1 year before leaving to pursue a career in construction. In 1964, he married his first wife, Helen Owens McKnight. The couple moved to Lexington, where they ran a local Laundromat and managed an apartment complex. On the side, Delford also worked for a construction company. In 1965, the two moved back to their hometown, where Mr. McKnight took a job with the Hacker Brothers construction firm.

Three years later, Delford opened his first construction business, McKnight Construction and Blueprint Company, in London, KY, today known as McKnight & Associates. This construction firm is responsible for building and renovating many of the buildings in the community, including the Clay County Vocational School, the Board of Education building in Manchester, and the first building of the Laurel Campus of Somerset Community College. Along with these, Mr. McKnight also built North Laurel Middle School, as well as Hunter Hills Elementary School and the new Bush Elementary School. In the early 1970s, McKnight & Associates got the contract for the Kentucky Fried Chicken building in London, and later renovated Sanders Cafe and the Corbin KFC.

Aside from his construction work, Mr. McKnight also became involved with several other business ventures. He was the first to bring the idea of self-storage units to southeastern Kentucky, opening the first self-storage facility there in 1976. He also founded Lee-Mart Rent-to-Own Stores, which later sold to Aaron's, Inc., and he co-founded Cumberland Valley Office Suppliers, Inc., a retail office supply store. After becoming involved with the London-Laurel County Tourist Commission, Delford developed the idea of the "World Chicken Festival" in 1989 to highlight Colonel Sanders's cooking worldwide, a festival that is still joyously celebrated to this day.

Mr. McKnight has held many leadership positions throughout Kentucky. He is a past secretary of the Laurel County Chamber of Commerce, the first president of the Southeastern Kentucky Home Builders Association—from which he received the Time Award, and the current director of First National Bank & Trust in London, Kentucky. He also served as a