

I now yield to the gentleman from Montana (Mr. DAINES).

Mr. DAINES. Mr. Speaker, whenever I drive across Montana, I see signs of our State's strong ag heritage in about every turn in the road. From the fields of sugar beets and wheat to grazing cattle and sheep, these are visual reminders of the importance of agriculture to our State and everywhere across this country.

Agriculture is the backbone of Montana's economy. And as a fifth-generation Montanan, I have a deep appreciation for the value of this industry to our State. Agriculture injects several billion dollars into Montana's economy every year, and one in five Montana jobs rely on agriculture.

But agriculture is more than the economic driver of our State. It is a way of life for thousands of Montana families who have lived off the land for generations. My own great, great grandmother came to Montana as a homesteader. In fact, she homesteaded up in the Golden Triangle of Montana, north of Great Falls, in the heart of Montana's wheat country.

I know how important it is to ensure that young Montanans have the opportunity to continue working on family farms and family ranches. And that is why Montanans are so frustrated and I am so frustrated by Washington's persistent failure to pass a long-term farm bill that provides Montana's producers with the certainty they need and deserve.

Montanans are sick and tired of the political games that have long delayed the passage of a 5-year farm bill. This critical legislation is long overdue, and it is unacceptable that Congress continues to stand in the way of providing our ag producers and rural communities with a long-term solution.

Agriculture is not only an important part of Montana's economy, but it is a critical industry that impacts each and every American. And as Montana's sole voice in the U.S. House of Representatives, I am committed to being an advocate for Montana's farmers and ranchers. We can't wait any longer. We need a farm bill now.

Mr. DENHAM. I thank the gentleman from Montana.

I now recognize the gentleman from California (Mr. VALADAO).

Mr. VALADAO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1947, the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013.

Over the last 4 years and after more than 40 hearings, the House of Representatives has produced a bill that implements needed commonsense reforms for America's farmers.

The FARRM Act is like any other farm bill previously passed. It has strong bipartisan support and makes substantial reforms, repealing outdated policies while streamlining and consolidating over 100 programs.

□ 1545

Advancing a new farm bill into law this year is crucial to the entire coun-

try, especially to those in California's Central Valley.

The legislation makes critical reforms to traditional farm programs. The Market Access Program, MAP, will improve export market development and assistance to programs that promote U.S. agricultural products overseas, allowing our specialty crop farmers here in the Valley to expand their businesses.

We eliminate direct payments. We move to a more market-oriented approach where we provide more risk management tools, instead of making payments regardless of market conditions. Many farmers in my district have questioned these economically unfeasible \$5 billion payments that go out every year, regardless of market conditions.

The bill makes improvements to the crop insurance program through successful public-private partnerships that ensure farmers have skin in the game. This will eliminate some of the unrealistic requirements that crop insurance agents face every day, such as asking an agent to verify his or her customers' income.

The legislation relieves farmers of unnecessary burdens by including multiple regulator relief provisions. FARRM eliminates the duplicative permitting requirements for pesticides that are already federally regulated. Failure to remove the additional permit requirement will result in an administrative and financial nightmare for agriculture producers, public health agencies, and Federal Government and State agencies.

The FARRM bill makes even more important changes that substantially affect California's 21st Congressional District:

Reauthorizes, strengthens, and fully pays for livestock disaster assistance;

Continues to support specialty crops, just as the 2008 farm bill did, by fully funding core specialty crop industry priorities such as Specialty Crop Block Grants. These grants will fund innovative research for my district's fruit, vegetable, and nut farmers to combat disease and promote consumption across the U.S., and that is important for food security. A nation has to be secure in its food.

The FARRM Act of 2013 will implement the most significant reforms to traditional farm policy in history, while maintaining commonsense, fiscally responsible policies. Passage of this legislation will provide America's farmers and ranchers, especially those in the Central Valley, the certainty and resources they need to produce an adequate and affordable food supply for our country and the entire world.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting this much-needed legislation.

Mr. DENHAM. I thank the gentleman from California.

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

PASS THE FARM BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, thank you, and thank you to my colleagues who have joined me here today to talk about an important piece of legislation that seemingly has gone by the wayside, like many, many other important issues, because of the dysfunction of Washington right now: a farm bill.

Many here in America don't realize that our current farm bill has expired. But we have an opportunity to pass a food, nutrition, and jobs bill that Congress is supposed to authorize every 5 years. But since it expired on September 30, the good news, though, is that there is still an opportunity to get this 5-year farm bill passed; and when we do, we are going to be able to give our farmers and producers the tools they need to do what they do best. We can do this before next planting season.

Why do we need a farm bill? To promote and grow our economy, to provide certainty to our farmers and producers, and to give them the tools they need to succeed.

For example, crop insurance. Mr. Speaker, crop insurance is working. I even had the opportunity to talk to Secretary Vilsack in one of the hearings on our Ag Committee, and he agreed with me that crop insurance is working. This farm bill strengthens crop insurance, which strengthens our economy, because it strengthens agriculture.

Ag is one of the bright spots in our Nation's economy right now, Mr. Speaker. That should not be forgotten, which is why it is crucial that we pass this farm bill.

We have other policies within that bill that are very crucial to my district and many districts throughout this Nation: conservation, ag research, and trade.

As we stand on the floor today, many of the farmers I represent are out in the field. Mr. Speaker, it is harvest time. That is why we are down here today: to let our producers know we have not forgotten and that we are still fighting for that 5-year farm bill.

Farmers used to just have to worry about the uncertainty of the weather. Now, Mr. Speaker, they have to worry about the uncertainty of Washington. That is unfortunate, but it is something that we can correct when we work together.

Mr. Speaker, I came here to govern. I sought a seat on the Ag Committee because I knew we would have an opportunity to leave our mark on this jobs legislation. We want to get this job done so that our farmers can continue to get their job done.

I appreciate the many colleagues who have already spoken before me and the rest who are down here today for this

farm bill Special Order, as well as many others who have helped move the farm bill forward. And before recognizing my colleagues so that they may share with those watching why we must advance a new farm bill, I want to talk about why the farm bill is important to the district that I represent.

In central and southwestern Illinois, agriculture is key to our local economy. It is 14 counties in central and southwestern Illinois that I am proud to serve here in Congress on their behalf, and it is home to some of the most productive and costly farmland in America.

It is also home to many in the agribusiness sector: ADM, the University of Illinois. My district is home to the largest gathering of ag producers and agricultural-related products in the country.

This is the Farm Progress Show that was just completed in Decatur, Illinois, in July, a whopping success. Sloan Implement is in the 13th District of Illinois. GSI, another global leader, one of the largest employers in my district, and it happens to be the largest employer in my home county of Christian County. Kraft Foods in Champaign, Illinois. The National Corn-to-Ethanol Research Center in Edwardsville, at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, also plays a crucial role for jobs, innovation, and energy independence in our area. These are just some of the reasons that Congress needs to keep working together to advance a 5-year farm bill.

And let's not forget, again, what a bright spot agriculture has been on our Nation's economy. Every \$1 billion in ag exports supports nearly 8,000 American jobs. Earlier this year, the USDA, they projected \$139.5 billion in ag exports. That is more than 1.1 million jobs supported by American agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from the great State of Michigan (Mr. BENISHEK), my good friend and my colleague.

Mr. BENISHEK. I thank my colleague from Illinois for allowing me to speak here today, and I want to thank you for hosting this Special Order hour in general.

Mr. Speaker, although we speak today at a time when Members are very busy working to resolve the government shutdown, it is critical to remember that, while the government may have stopped, the work of our farmers certainly has not. Farmers in each of our districts, whether they are busy picking apples or harvesting fields of corn, are busy at this time of the year; there is no doubt about it. Autumn is the time that farmers in our districts normally look forward to. That is when they have the chance to reap the bounty of the great work that they have done this past year planting and tending to the land.

Our farmers, producers, and agribusiness owners deserve better. They

have put in the hard work. They are feeding not only Michigan's families, but America's families and much of the world. We owe them certainty. We owe them a farm bill.

As the only Member from Michigan on the Agriculture Committee, I regularly speak with farmers, not only from my district, but from around the State. Over the last year, they have continually expressed the need for certainty. While they have different ideas on some specific provisions of the overall farm bill, they all agree that we need to get this done.

Mr. Speaker, I have worked hard with my colleagues to move the farm bill forward. I have worked with many local stakeholders in Michigan to ensure that their concerns are addressed in the bill. Now is the time to move forward to a conference.

This afternoon, I come to the floor to say, simply, let's get this done. Let's go to conference, work out our differences, and get a farm bill done. We owe it to our farmers. We owe it to the hardworking families around the country that rely on the food that our farmers produce.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the farmers of northern Michigan for the outstanding work that they have done this season. Now let's get this farm bill done.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Thank you to my colleague, Mr. BENISHEK.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for again allowing us this opportunity to talk about how important ag is going to be in our economy.

Let's talk about how important this farm bill is to get passed and how we are not that far apart when it comes to the differences in the funding levels with the Senate bill that should be conferred. And let us not also forget—let us not forget that agriculture isn't just important to the Midwest. It is also important to States like Michigan, where my colleague who just spoke was from. We have heard from individuals from California, from Georgia, from Montana. Ag is a nationwide issue, and we have seen nationwide success in agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, I yield as much time as he may consume to the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. YODER), my good friend and colleague.

Mr. YODER. I appreciate my friend from Illinois for putting together this hour for us to be able to come down and have a conversation about how we protect the American farmer.

For months and months now, we have been having a debate in the United States House and Senate about how we can put together legislation that will ensure that the men and women who bring in the crops, who tend to the livestock, who create the food source for our Nation and the world have certain policies that are predictable and that encourage farming as a way of life to continue in the United States.

So I join my colleagues here, those from down in southern Illinois to—we

just heard from my colleague, DAN BENISHEK from Michigan, who believes passionately in agriculture and protecting farmers. We are here together today united, standing on behalf of the farmers in our country.

So I call on my colleagues to help us get a farm bill done. Farmers have been waiting a long time for Congress to work together to find a solution. We are obviously divided on a lot of things, but we ought to be united on helping protect the American farmer and our American food supply.

In Kansas, farming is not just a means to make money, and certainly, it is a significant part of the Kansas economy. Along with several other parts, farming and agriculture is a key component of the Kansas economy. But it is also a way for Kansans and Americans to put food on the table for the world. Kansas is the number one wheat producer in the country, wheat that ends up feeding hungry Kansans, hungry Americans in all 50 States, and on most continents. They put in long, hard hours to bring in millions of bushels of grain, grain that will end up on the tables of the entire Nation and the entire world.

But it is also a way of life. Now farmers at home right now—I just spoke with a farmer earlier today. Farmers are bringing in—they are harvesting their soybeans. Some are still picking corn.

For generations, people have come to States like Kansas and Illinois and California and Michigan, and they have come to build a way of life. They have taken, in the case of Kansas, a prairie—it was undeveloped—and they came out there, and they brought their families and they took risk, much risk to carve a lifestyle out of the prairie. And through that hard work, through that determination, through that sweat off their brow, they tamed the wilderness and, in the process, they helped build the greatest nation the world has ever seen. And along the way, they asked for little in return. They built a nation with great bedrock values, good schools, good communities. It was all centered around the small family farmer.

So that is one of the things we are down here to protect and to talk about is continuing that American tradition of the small family farmer. And so they have worked hard. They work long days, sunup to sundown. Sometimes farmers will work through the night, 24-hour shifts even, to bring in the crops when the time has come.

I grew up on a farm myself. I remember going out, my dad going out in the middle of the winter and bringing a round bale to our cattle and ensuring that the livestock could have feed. And that meat that they produced, we produced and farmers produce all across the country, that ends up taking care of Americans everywhere.

So now those farmers, they are counting on us. When they plant their fall crops, they need predictability and

they need certainty. It is time to move past short-term bills. It is time to move past short-term promises. We need to move towards long-term policies that will create stability, that will allow farmers to plant, allow farmers to go back to doing what they do best: growing food, feeding a hungry Nation.

This fall, Kansas farmers are hard at work bringing in the autumn harvest, and they are planting the 2014 crop. They have patiently waited for Congress to act on a farm bill. Now is the time to move forward.

The farm bill provides farmers with crucial safety net programs that allow them to protect their operations from uncertainty and the sudden downturns that can occur when growing crops and raising livestock. These programs are essential in providing farmers with the certainty they need to be successful.

So as we have this larger debate about how to solve the debt crisis, I think farmers have been admirable in this debate. Farmers came forward and said, Look, you know, we receive direct payments. We know that is a burden on the Treasury. We know there are a lot of burdens on the Treasury. We hope that we can all pitch in to help solve our national debt crisis. We are going to voluntarily, we are going to give those things up.

And every other group that comes before Washington, most groups give up nothing. They want more. In fact, in Washington, when you don't get more than you got last year, it is a cut.

Farmers said, We are willing to take a cut. We are willing to take billions of dollars of cuts because we want to do our part to ensure that we are helping resolve the national debt crisis.

□ 1600

So they were first in line to give up support, and some of that support was very crucial to farms and has been crucial to farmers to keep them from ending up in bankruptcy or farms from going under. They are giving that up. No more direct payments. Those are the kinds of reforms we need to do.

Now, what they have asked for in return is a little protection of risk. The expense today to put out a field of crops like corn, soybeans, milo, or wheat, in Kansas, creates a tremendous amount of risk—risk that banks won't cover unless there is some sort of protection in the event of a flood, hailstorm, or a drought, and sometimes all of the above. You can wipe out a single crop overnight.

These farmers have invested their entire livelihood. They don't have a 401(k). They don't have a pension. They don't have some corporate plan to protect their retirement. Their future is in the crop they're laying out in that field, and the proceeds from that crop are going to go to investing in the next crop. And so if that crop goes under and there is no crop insurance, there is no protection for those farmers, then those farmers go under, they go bankrupt, and that way of life ends.

And so my heart goes out to those farmers that that may happen to, but it is a larger issue than just the farmers. Without crop insurance, without that protection, those farmers lose those farms and that means we don't have a food supply that we can count on. That means that the world doesn't have the food that they need to feed the hungry. I know most people get food from the grocery store these days, but it comes from the fields of Kansas and Illinois and places in between.

So it is my hope that Democrats, Republicans, House, Senate, and the President will work together in the coming days to put a farm bill on the floor that we can all get behind that can go to the President's desk and receive his signature. We've got a lot of divisions, but we would be united today—all of us—in protection, in fighting for the American farmer.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. My colleague, Mr. YODER from Kansas, brought up so many great points of why it is crucial to have this debate here on the floor of the House.

It seems as though farmers get a bad rap. There is a lot of talk on this floor about growing our economy; and, frankly, ag has been a bright spot in our economy, Mr. Speaker. It is just like Washington. Because of inaction of—a lot of times, Republicans and Democrats—we are not able to continue to allow them to grow their portion of the economy. It just seems like the right hand works against the left sometimes here in Washington. I just want to see us put some good Midwestern common sense that many of us learned right on the family farms in the Midwest, right here to work and into action in Washington, D.C.

Speaking of common sense, I want to introduce my good friend, my colleague from the great State of Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON).

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. I thank the gentleman. I couldn't agree more. I would like to see a little farm-country sense brought to Washington. I think if that were leading the charge on a lot of fronts, we could resolve some of these issues we have been facing pretty quickly.

I am real proud, Mr. Speaker, to be here to talk about agriculture. When I was first elected in 2008, sworn in in 2009, one of my first picks that I asked for on committee assignments was Agriculture. Today, I'm proud to serve as chairman of the Subcommittee for Conservation, Energy, and Forestry on the Agriculture Committee.

I am proud to be from the Keystone State. I had a number of colleagues at that point in 2009 ask me why would I ever be on Agriculture when I am from Pennsylvania. The fact is, it is our number one industry in Pennsylvania. We have many commodities. We are one of the top providers and producers for the United States—and sometimes other parts of the world—in terms of our commodities that we raise and we grow. We can't speak enough about the importance of this farm bill.

There are a lot of reasons why we all, every colleague in this Chamber, should be supporting the farm bill. I have to say that there are fewer than, I believe, 100 of our congressional districts, out of 435, where we actually grow and raise the food to feed this Nation and much of the world. But the fact is every district has Americans that shake hands with a farmer at least three times a day every time they pick up a fork.

And so one of the principles that guides me, Mr. Speaker, in terms of my decisionmaking on any issue, I call it principle-based leadership. I always start and try to define what my principles are first. By the way, we have been working on this for 4½ years, actually. I remember having hearings. I was in the minority my first 2 years, and we had hearings. The first hearing was in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, specifically on the dairy title.

But the principles that have guided me since day one here in terms of agriculture is that America should always be the place where we have the most affordable, highest quality, and safest food supply anywhere in the world. So every decision I have made in supporting the development, the writing, and actually the passing of this farm bill has been to honor those three principles.

In addition to that, my good friend from Michigan talked about the importance of food security, and I agree with that. It's the biggest threat to our national security. And there are a lot of them out there, Mr. Speaker. I have got two kids that just got back from Afghanistan. I understand terrorist threats and threats to our financial situation, but the most imminent threat to our national security would be at whatever point we would begin to rely on another country for our food supply. This farm bill is the single most important piece of Federal legislation to make sure America has the most affordable, highest quality, and safest food supply.

There are a lot of things that this bill does. It repeals and consolidates more than 100 programs. This is a great example for the rest of government. This is exactly step one on how we begin to reduce our spending appropriately—looking at things that either don't work, things that are duplicative, things that are just not fulfilling the purpose for which it was designed.

It eliminates direct payments, which farmers receive regardless of market conditions.

I am not sure I would have supported past farm bills, to tell you the truth, that were passed before I came here; but I support this one because the reforms we have brought to the agriculture side and the nutrition side are very good. They are very good for the sustainability of our food supply and programs such as our SNAP program.

It streamlines and reforms commodity policy. We are also giving producers a choice in how to best manage

risk. It includes the first reforms to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program since the Welfare Reform Act of 1996.

Why is that important? Because the reforms we put in place, it preserves the future integrity of the food stamp program so that those in the future who need those programs, those men, women, and children who find themselves in poverty circumstances where they need that assistance, they will get it, if we protect the integrity of that program. It is only through these reforms that we are putting into place that we offer those protections so we will be assured that the food stamp program continues into the future to meet the needs of those who need.

It consolidates 23 conservation programs into 13, improves program delivery to producers, and saves more than \$6 billion. That's an area of the farm title that I chair. The subcommittee has jurisdiction on conservation.

There are at least four reasons I can think of why that move is extremely important. Number one is cost. This country is facing significant debt, and so we have to be conscious and careful with our spending. We knew that the farm bill—the pie itself—would be smaller. So I think that is just one of the realities.

Second is the need. We are a country that feeds not just 311 million Americans, but we are feeding a lot of the rest of the world. And to allow land to sit idle under the context of some government-funded conservation program is just wrong. We don't want people to go hungry, and so putting more land that is appropriate back into productivity is a very appropriate thing to do; and we do that with this farm bill.

Third is effectiveness. The fact is that under the existing conservation programs, before the reforms we proposed, we have had perfectly sound, tillable, very productive land sitting idle and sitting fallow and receiving some type of government support under a conservation program to do that.

I have met young individuals I am very impressed with that want to go into farming that have never been in farming before. Some have been in farming, but they can't afford to go out and purchase acreage; and so they have to rent acreage. And they are competing under the existing conservation programs with the government; and in competing with the government, they can't do that. They just can't pay that.

All the parts of this farm bill have been well thought out and well prepared. I am very appreciative of the work that has been done on the part of land grant universities, the fact that we are strengthening the role of science and technology when it comes to agriculture. A lot of people talk about STEM—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. I like to talk about how agriculture is all about science and technology.

And I shout out to my own alma mater, Penn State University, which is

a land grant university. Those universities help us advance that science and innovation and that technology.

I will finally talk briefly about we have probably one of the best forestry titles that we have ever had in this farm bill in maybe a hundred years. We've got great things in there in terms of making sure that timber is recognized and eligible for that biopreferred labeling.

Today, of all things, the original renewable resource of wood has never been eligible. You could buy a box of bamboo flooring—we don't grow bamboo in this country—and it has got a USDA stamp of approval, biopreferred. But if you buy a box of good hardwood cherry from the Pennsylvania Fifth Congressional District, it is not eligible. That changes in this farm bill that we passed out of the House and we are going to go to conference with the Senate on.

The categorical exclusion allows the Forest Service not to have to waste money during these NEPA analyses every time they do trail maintenance or clear power lines or just routine things that take money away from actively managing a forest in a healthy way.

Finally, the forest access road was a great amendment which basically reinforces that our forests are non-point sources of pollution. That goes a long way in terms of allowing our forests to be managed under State-adopted best practices.

And so I want to thank the gentleman for coordinating this Special Order on a subject that every American should be fully in tune to because of how important it is to have affordable, high-quality, and safe food. That is what our farm bill does.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Thank you to my good friend, the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to address something that my colleague from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) brought up. He talked about research. Research in agriculture is crucial to our ability here in America to continue to feed the world. We feed the world from America's farms, and it is under-appreciated and taken for granted.

Part of this farm bill is a research title, where the Agricultural and Food Research Initiative through the National Institute for Food and Agriculture was reauthorized.

Other ways we strengthen and promoted ag research in this bill are doing things like providing new research funding for specialty crops, beginning farmers, and organic agriculture. We have improved accountability and transparency of the ag research programs, and we have harmonized policies under the various competitive grants programs to improve program efficiency and reduce wasteful spending.

Many of my colleagues are talking about ag leading the way in reducing spending here in Washington. Our

farmers need to be congratulated for that.

The University of Illinois, in my district—another land grant institution—uses many of these public research programs. Our students are being trained on how to make our food supply safer and better; and through AFRI, the University of Illinois has conducted cutting-edge research aimed at improving food security, achieving more efficient crop production, and promoting animal health through livestock genome sequencing.

Let us not forget, Mr. Speaker, the Southern Illinois University Corn-to-Ethanol Research Center. This is an example of a public-private partnership that is working, where public funds were used in its initial construction; but private entities are doing cutting-edge research to make our Nation's fuel supply cheaper and make our Nation's security better.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield to my friend and colleague from the great State of Indiana (Mr. MESSER).

Mr. MESSER. I want to thank my colleague and friend from Illinois, Congressman DAVIS, for his incredible leadership on this issue. I know of nobody in Congress who is working harder for the American family farmer than Congressman DAVIS. This Special Order today is just one more example of your leadership.

Farming is hard work, and it is vital to Indiana. Ag industries contribute almost \$38 billion a year to the Hoosier economy, supporting nearly 190,000 jobs. The farmers who provide these jobs work from dawn until way past dusk and face great risks when withering droughts or excess rains threaten to wreck their crops.

Despite these challenges, Hoosier farmers manage to overcome adversity, succeed in their businesses, and feed the world. Too often, their work is made even harder because of uncertainties and inefficiencies in Federal farm policy.

□ 1615

The problems with Federal farm laws are many:

Price supports inflate the prices of some consumer goods; payments are made to people not actually farming; outdated and duplicative programs waste money that could be put to better use; rules regarding disaster assistance are too complicated; and they fail to provide enough certainty about whether and what return farmers will receive when they reinvest any profits in their family business.

Many are surprised that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, commonly called "food stamps," is administered by the Department of Agriculture, the USDA. Most agree the program is not well managed. It pays too many people who should not be eligible for help, diverting help from those who really need the assistance. There aren't enough incentives to encourage people to find work, and there is too much waste, fraud, and abuse.

That's why we need a farm bill.

The farm bill which passed the House is not perfect, but it would save \$40 billion over the next decade, in part, by repealing or consolidating more than 100 programs that don't work, could work better, or are duplicative in purpose. The bill would stop the nonsense policy of paying people not to farm. Instead, it would give farmers greater flexibility to utilize federally backed crop insurance to manage risk. It also would require food stamp recipients to work more, get drug tested, and become self-sufficient.

American icon Paul Harvey once said:

And, on the eighth day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, "I need a caretaker," and so God made the farmer.

Others have spoken about how important it is that we stand up and be a champion for those who farm. A defeat of the farm bill maintains the status quo. We need a conference, and we need a farm bill. A defeat would hurt farmers and taxpayers, but both need the certainty of knowing that farm and nutrition assistance programs work as they should so scarce taxpayer resources aren't wasted on food stamp fraud or on programs that just don't work.

We need commonsense farm reform policy to prevent waste and to make sure the next generation of farmers gets its chance to run the family farm.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Thank you to my good friend and colleague, Congressman LUKE MESSER, a true leader on so many issues here in Congress and for the Midwest. Thank you for being here today to talk about how important agriculture is to our economy.

I know much has been brought up about crop insurance. Some who don't represent agricultural districts think crop insurance is a program that is wasteful, that it is welfare for farmers. Let me remind everyone, Mr. Speaker, that before we had the crop insurance program, farmers didn't have to have skin in the game. They have to pay premiums just like we have to do for life insurance, auto insurance and other types of insurance. This is what makes America work. This is why crop insurance is working.

Before this program, we would have supplemental, ad hoc disaster assistance, and Members of Congress who served before many of us would come to this floor and pass bills to fund disaster assistance. Let me remind you, Mr. Speaker, that those weren't budgeted. At a time when decisions were made to basically put the financial future of our country in jeopardy decades before now, they were still passing disaster assistance bills that cost taxpayers billions. Crop insurance changed that. Farmers have skin in the game. They pay their premiums, and it stops us—it stops Congress right now—from spending beyond its means.

It has been said before that this farm bill is an example of how Washington

begins to work once again. We are looking toward our financial future, and we are looking to balance our budget through bills like this farm bill. We are going to begin to put a down payment on the unsustainable \$17 trillion of debt that your kids, Mr. Speaker, and my kids shouldn't have to pay.

With that, I yield to my friend from my birthplace State, the great State of Iowa. He is my good friend and colleague and a leader in ag policy, Mr. KING.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman from Illinois for organizing this Special Order here today and for committing one hour of floor time to the discussion of the farm bill and the need to get one passed.

Mr. Speaker, we don't get very many debates on agriculture here in the House of Representatives, and fewer and fewer people actually represent agriculture districts. There has been not so much a migration of people from the farms, although that has happened, but a concentration of people in the cities, and they lose track of where their food comes from and what it takes to produce that food.

So we are here at this point, and I want to start off with the remarks of the gentleman from Illinois with regard to crop insurance. I am going to pull these numbers from memory, and anyone can go back and check them, but they're going to be conceptually accurate and, perhaps, even precisely right.

If my memory serves me, back during some of those years when it couldn't rain—and that existed back in the eighties—it seems to me that, in 1988, we had 13 percent of the producers who actually had crop insurance. Since that time—from that time forward until this modern era—there were disaster payments after disaster payments. For any place that had a drought, for any place that had a flood, there was a discussion in Congress, and sometimes those disaster areas got rolled up together. Let's take a disaster out West and add that to a disaster in the Midwest and add that to a disaster in the South, and there might be a flood and two droughts packaged together with a disaster payment to bail people out.

I remember, when I first came here in 2003, there was a drought out West in Nebraska. And was there going to be disaster money? We looked at that, and we looked at aerial photos. Gee, it looked like here were these really beautiful, green circles from the air, and they were going to be in areas that got disaster payments. You all know what those are if you come from farm country. Those were the pivot irrigation systems. You're not going to have a drought if your irrigation system is running, but in the corners where they didn't have the boom to lay down and irrigate the corners, they were burned out. They said, Gee, we ought to get a disaster for the corner of our 160—the four corners of it—even though we've got a good crop, 200 bushels of corn, underneath the pivot system.

Those kinds of things were discussed here in this Congress, and I want to thank the Representative from Nebraska, Tom Osborne, who also was a pretty good football coach, for saying, This isn't right, and let's get that part correct.

We don't have those discussions anymore because, back in '88, there was the 13 percent who had crop insurance. It's back up to the point now where, I believe, the number is 88 percent due. We suffered through the worst flood in my lifetime in 2011 when the Missouri River ran hill to hill from mid-June until mid-September and flooded out, according to the Secretary of Agriculture, 500,000 acres. 500,000 acres were under water. Of course, all of that was a complete wipeout. You could fly over it, and you could see corn. As we say, you could row corn that was in 3 feet of water and corn that was about a foot and a half tall when it got covered by the flood. We didn't have a disaster payment for that because the crop insurance covered the flood out. In the following year of 2012, there was an epic drought. It was the same situation in that the crop insurance covered it.

In many of these States—and let's start out with my State, which I know—the premium reflects the risk. Now, it shifts from State to State and history to history, but it's hard to do that calculation. You can't do a snapshot of 1 year because, of course, 1 year might be a drought year, and the next year might be a flood year, and the next 25 years might be excellent, and I hope they are. So, if you look over a span of time—a decade is a minimum, and maybe a generation is a better way to look at this—and are able to frame the kind of experience we have with weather, the premium needs to be moved in a direction in which it better reflects the risk, but it has been a very good thing, the crop insurance piece of this.

Then, as I look at this farm bill, I want to remind the people, Mr. Speaker, that, for years, there have been direct payments, direct payments that went in to the producer who signed up per acre—roughly, a \$20 per acre payment might be reflective of that era—and we saw this: we saw commodities prices going up, and we saw profitability in agriculture. When that happened, our producers came to us, people like the Farm Bureau, the Corn Growers, the Soybean Association, and they said the time comes when we need to just let go of these direct payments. They came forward and said, Here. Will you take my direct payments? I don't need them.

Hats off to anybody who has got Federal dollars coming into their operations. They gave up direct payments willingly. That's in this bill. It's in this bill, and it makes it permanent, putting an end to direct payments. By the way, in the last farm bill—the 2008 farm bill, it turned out to be—I tried to rename the direct payments then as

the “conservation compliance payments” because that’s what they actually were. If they existed, I would say “they are.” It’s a way to say to producers that all of us are invested in the future productivity of our soil. We are going to ask you to be good stewards of the soil, and this is, actually, in many cases, a token incentive that you do that. So that’s going by the wayside.

This bill also eliminates several existing programs and rolls into two separate programs a shallow loss and a deep loss program that, I think, is a prudent use of the resources. We also said we are going to cut money out of this ag side, not just the direct payments, but we have dialed this thing down to the tune of \$20 billion. There are \$20 billion in cuts out of this bill on the agriculture side.

To draw a comparison, Mr. Speaker, one could think of the other part of this farm bill that is not much discussed—I don’t know today—which is the jurisdiction of the subcommittee that I chair, the Nutrition Subcommittee. Now, the numbers were that about 78 percent of the previous farm bill went to nutrition and a little better than 20 percent went to agriculture and then some miscellaneous along the way. So we just rounded it. For easy talking purposes, it is 80 percent to SNAP—food stamps—nutrition programs and 20 percent to farmers. We call it the “farm bill,” but it is 4 to 1 nutrition. When I came to this town, there were 19 million people who were on food stamps, and we called them “food stamps” then. By the time Barack Obama became President, that number was about 28 million people who were on food stamps, and now that number is north of 47 million people—on its way to 48 million people—who are on food stamps. Now, it is partly because this administration believes and has said openly—in fact, I will just quote our Secretary of Agriculture:

For every dollar that you hand out in SNAP benefits—that would mean food stamps, Mr. Speaker—you get \$1.84 in economic activity.

I’ve heard STENY HOYER, the minority whip, say to us:

The best stimulation that you can get—the quickest you can get in your economy—is food stamps and unemployment checks.

Now, that’s an economic development plan for you, isn’t it, Mr. Speaker, if you could just hand out more food stamps and hand out more unemployment checks? That’s the best bump you can get to grow your economy? What kind of a country are we if they think that’s what is going to drive our economy?

People on that side of the aisle resisted their reduction in the food stamp program, and we brought categorical changes into it. So, as it has grown into an over \$800 billion program—that’s over 10 years, roughly, a number that approaches about \$83 billion a year—we have gone from 19 million people a year on food stamps to 28 million people when Barack Obama be-

came President, up now to nearly 48 million people on food stamps, with millions of dollars being spent by the USDA to advertise food stamps in order to get more people to sign up on food stamps—millions—and minions are going out there who are, actually, physically signing them up. That’s what is going on.

We don’t need to be expanding the dependency class in America. We need to expand the independency class in America, and we want to make sure that we get those resources to the people who need them. That’s what this bill does. It changes the categorical eligibility in such a way that those who need those resources still have access to them.

One of those categorical eligibility changes has to do with, if a child qualifies for a free and reduced lunch, it isn’t automatic that the family gets food stamps any longer under this bill. People on the other side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, have used that to argue that we are going to kick 120,000 kids off of food stamps. It is not true. That is the most extreme example they can come up with to embellish a number to try to scare people off of the reform that we need. What it really means is, if that number is right, they have to go reapply in a legitimate way. If they are eligible, they are eligible, and they will still get their food stamps.

□ 1630

But they found a little sliver to make an argument that is not the objective vision on what is going on.

We see that EBT cards, the Electronic Benefits Transfer cards, have been used for tattoos. They have been used at the massage parlor. You can see the neon signs that say, “We take EBT.” That is just straight up. That is not talking about the 50 percent discount that is the going rate for cash that you can get for your EBT card.

We need to be responsible with the taxpayers’ money. We need to move these reforms in place. We have seen our agriculture producers step up and say, I am going to give up my conservation compliance/direct payments. And we reform some of the programs. We keep the pieces in place that we need so that there is a predictability in agriculture.

Our producers need predictability. There is no guarantee when it comes to agriculture. You are taking a risk. But at least we can predict the Federal Government’s policy. We need to give 5 years of policy guarantee for our agriculture producers.

We need to start the long march to start to reform the expansion of the dependency class that has been a political calculation on the part of the administration. Do the responsible thing for the taxpayers. And, by the way, slow down on this burden that is being heaped upon those children yet to be born called our national debt.

That is the picture. There is an urgency. Let’s get this done.

I thank the gentleman from Illinois for his leadership here.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. KING of Iowa. I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania for a question, absolutely.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. As chair of the nutrition jurisdiction, are the school lunch programs within title IV of the farm bill?

Mr. KING of Iowa. In response to the gentleman’s question, no, school lunch programs are not.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. That was my reading. I have read the farm bill, yet I hear my colleagues on the other side of the aisle talk a lot about the changes to the reforms.

As I mentioned in my remarks, and you reaffirmed, we are trying to preserve this program for people who truly need it who meet the eligibility by filling out an application. But I guess I get confused when I hear my colleagues on the other side of the aisle use rhetoric that they claim that somehow school lunches are impacted or the school breakfast program is impacted by our work on the farm bill.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Reclaiming my time, I would say that there are times when people that are in the political business will intentionally conflate terms and arguments because it suits their agenda rather than informs their constituents, Mr. Speaker. That is what I believe is happening here.

If anyone is looking for proof positive that the school lunch program is not part of title IV—any part of this farm bill—all they have to do is look at the record of the committee and they can see that this person right here, STEVE KING, offered no amendment to the school lunch program that would have prohibited the Secretary of Agriculture from rationing calories to our kids in the school lunch program.

I wish we had that language for us here on the floor of the House of Representatives. We would have an engaging debate.

In fact, a year and a half ago, if I have got my dates right, the First Lady had an idea that she wanted a Let’s Move program to go. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act was passed during a lame duck session in 2010 by the then Speaker of the House Speaker PELOSI. They passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act. That gave no authority to the Secretary of Agriculture to ration calories to kids in the school lunch program, which is not part of this farm bill, but they did it anyway. Now we are starving kids in school. That ought to be something that outrages the other side. But they will not show any outrage because they defend the First Lady’s Let’s Move, which, by the way, is a critical service and it was not shut down in the shutdown.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. I thank the gentleman from Iowa.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do we have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MESSER). The gentleman has 3 minutes remaining.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I love the discussion about school nutrition programs. I have spoken to many superintendents in my district who used to run programs in their cafeterias where kids would eat the school lunches. Now those once profitable programs are not profitable anymore. Some school districts are opting out because of the stringent rules and requirements to reduce calories and serve food that kids won't eat.

Let me also, for the RECORD, Mr. Speaker, state that we are missing an important part of any equation in tackling childhood obesity, and that is exercise. Illinois, my home State, is the only State in the Nation that requires physical education in K-12. Maybe we make that part of the debate, too.

As I wrap up this Special Order, I want to thank everyone, all of my colleagues, for coming down and talking about the importance of this 5-year farm bill. It cannot be said enough that farmers have decided on their own to help us save billions in your tax dollars. Twenty billion dollars is what the farmers of this country have given up in direct payments to really allow us to balance our budget and put a down payment on the national debt.

There are some other crucial aspects of this bill, Mr. Speaker, that we don't talk a lot about in the ag sector, but it is about the rules and the regulatory process.

I was happy to introduce an amendment that actually gives the Department of Agriculture a seat at the table when those at the EPA decide to come up with rules like maybe treating milk spills like oil spills from the *Exxon Valdez*.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you one question: Which one of those spills could be cleaned up with cats? You know the answer and I know the answer, but when they come up with crazy ideas like this, we believe that the United States Department of Agriculture also deserves a seat at the table to say—in a good, commonsense, Midwestern way, Hang on a second here. Let's think about this. That is why an amendment like that is crucial to a farm bill like this, because it is crazy ideas like that that cost our farmers their livelihoods in some cases.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that is going to save taxpayers billions. It is reforming crucial agricultural programs. It is putting us on a path to certainty for America's agricultural future.

There are some in this body, Mr. Speaker, that believe we shouldn't be involved in ag policy in this country. Well, my response to them is: Do you want America to be a food exporter, like we are now, or do you want to import our food supply?

We know the answer to that, Mr. Speaker. The answer—the solution to

make sure that doesn't happen—is getting this bill through a quick conference committee, bringing it back to the floor of the House, and ensuring that all our family farmers and all those who rely upon the ag economy for their livelihood are put first.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I thank everyone who has been involved in this process—my staff, many interns that have worked for me to put this Special Order in place.

I yield back the balance of my time.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 30 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank the Speaker for his courtesies and thank my friends on the other side of the aisle who engaged in an hour-long discussion that I am sure many of my colleagues were certainly interested in.

I want to congratulate the organization in my constituency, Catholic Charities. Catholic Charities in Houston is 70 years old and has a storied history of service.

I had the privilege of being inspired by a wonderful mass led by Cardinal DiNardo that catapulted that special day into the understanding of who we are in this country and how our service is guided by the principles of our faith. I remember that, in his words to the congregation, he offered these phrases: "The just live by faith," "even a little faith can do great things." He added, "When you are acting in faith, you are serving."

I think those are powerful words for all of us, whether we are Republicans or Democrats or other in our political beliefs. That is what we are sent here to do. We are really sent here to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, to speak for the vulnerable, and to ensure that the United States of America remains an umbrella on a rainy day, for our country's principles are vested in a wonderful Constitution that says that we all are created equal, with a number of rights that allow us the pursuit of great things, such as liberty and health—if we interpret the term "happiness" to mean that we have a variety of rights, certain unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

So where we find ourselves on October 10, in the midst of this government shutdown, the 10th day, does not comport with the very principles of this Nation and our Constitution that says that we have organized to create a more perfect Union.

As I listened to my friends have a long discussion, they had some very vital points about the importance of the farm bill, a bill that we have not been able to bring to closure because the government is shut down. But even more importantly, we have not been able to put the phrases of "just" and

"acting by faith" in the midst of that legislative initiative.

Our friends did not take note of the fact that \$40 billion was cut out of food stamps. They didn't take note of that—\$40 billion for people who are hungry. Forty-six million Americans live in poverty. They are poor, but they are Americans. They deserve equality. Sixteen million of those are children. But yet someone says it is the dependency group. Maybe the 47 percent. I say those are the next astronauts, captains in the military, Presidents of the United States, teachers, inventors, scientists who may need food stamps.

So I would like to talk this afternoon in the short period of time that I have in finding the truth, also recognizing the difficulties that we are now in with the government shutdown.

Let me pause for a moment and say that I know, as I speak, Republicans are meeting with the President. We met yesterday and the President made it very clear and was very strong on wanting to see America move forward, but was very strong on the fact that we needed to come together around a clean bill, a bill that could be put on the floor with 200-plus Democrats here in the House and a sturdy amount of Republicans. That is just.

We know that Republicans were invited, the whole Conference. Of course, they decided that they wanted a few to come and meet with the President. Of course, it is their choice. In a sense of humor, I say there is an IOU to my other Republican friends that didn't make it to the White House today.

But I hope the discussion doesn't center around leaving the government closed. I hope it doesn't center around a 6-week raising of the debt ceiling, though I am open to any way forward; but I would hope in my discussion you would see why that is faulty thinking.

I do want to thank my original cosponsors who joined me today to introduce this very important legislation, H. Res. 375, which now makes a statement that this House will never—I want to say it again, never—I want to say it again, never—tie a nonerga legis legislative issue to the running and opening of this government.

What does that mean? We will never do what we have done, which is to defund a law approved by both Houses of Congress, the President of the United States, and the United States Supreme Court—the Affordable Care Act—and hold up the government while we are fighting against it because we don't like it.

H.R. 375 is legislation to have this House go on record to ensure that we do not ever do that and tie the government's hands and void the services that are relevant to my constituent who, again, I will call in a few moments, who is a cancer patient coming out of a hospital and is fearful of losing her disability checks because of the government shutdown.

□ 1645

We are getting any number of phone calls on that matter.