

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Missouri (Mr. BLUNT), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Alaska (Mrs. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. TOOMEY).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN) would have voted "nay."

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 58, nays 34, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 38 Ex.]

YEAS—58

Alexander	Gillibrand	Murray
Ayotte	Hagan	Pryor
Baldwin	Harkin	Reed
Begich	Heinrich	Reid
Bennet	Heitkamp	Rockefeller
Blumenthal	Hirono	Sanders
Booker	Johnson (SD)	Schatz
Boozman	Kaine	Schumer
Boxer	King	Shaheen
Brown	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cantwell	Landrieu	Tester
Cardin	Leahy	Udall (CO)
Carper	Levin	Udall (NM)
Casey	Manchin	Walsh
Collins	Markey	Warner
Coons	McCaskill	Warren
Donnelly	Menendez	Whitehouse
Durbin	Merkley	Wyden
Feinstein	Mikulski	
Franken	Murphy	

NAYS—34

Barrasso	Grassley	Paul
Burr	Heller	Portman
Chambliss	Hoehen	Roberts
Coats	Inhofe	Rubio
Coburn	Isakson	Scott
Cochran	Johanns	Sessions
Corker	Johnson (WI)	Shelby
Crapo	Kirk	Thune
Cruz	Lee	Vitter
Enzi	McCain	Wicker
Fischer	McConnell	
Flake	Moran	

ANSWERED "PRESENT"—1

Hatch

NOT VOTING—7

Blunt	Murkowski	Toomey
Cornyn	Nelson	
Graham	Risch	

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 58, the nays are 34, and one Senator voted "present."

The motion is agreed to.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. PRYOR. Madam President, I ask consent that the Senate resume legislative session.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. PRYOR. Madam 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.

AGRICULTURAL ACT OF 2014

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I wish to discuss the Agricultural Act of 2014, otherwise known as the farm bill.

I sincerely appreciate the Agriculture Committee chairwoman's and ranking member's work in moving the process forward.

I have made it a priority to keep Pennsylvania's agricultural industry and our rural economies strong to support Pennsylvanian families.

Agriculture is the Commonwealth's largest industry. Pennsylvania's farm gate value—that is cash receipts to growers—is about \$5.8 billion. Agribusiness in Pennsylvania is a \$46.4 billion industry. Seventeen and one-half percent of Pennsylvanians are employed in the food and fiber system. What does this mean?

It means that we must have a five-year farm bill.

The farm bill creates economic opportunities in our rural areas and sustains the consumers and businesses that rely on our rural economy.

This farm bill would reduce the deficit by approximately \$23 billion through the elimination of some subsidies, the consolidation of programs and producing greater efficiencies in program delivery.

Furthermore, dairy farmers deserve the best dairy program possible. The Senate bill contains many improvements that I support. Dairy is Pennsylvania's No. 1 agricultural sector. The dairy industry annually generates more than \$1.8 billion in on-farm cash receipts, which represent about 32 percent of Pennsylvania's total agricultural receipts.

There are so many other important items that come out of having a five-year farm bill.

I am especially thankful to the chairwoman and ranking member for inclusion of a provision to establish cooperative lending pilot projects to aid administration of microloans. These projects will help provide business planning support and financial management expertise to farmers to ensure their success in order to foster economic development in agriculture and sustain farm profitability.

Making risk management and crop insurance products work better for Pennsylvanians, especially small farmers, specialty crop farmers and organic farmers, is very important. Providing funding through risk management, conservation and agricultural marketing agencies to underserved states, the Agricultural Management Assistance, AMA, program helps to make the farm bill more equitable among regions. I genuinely appreciate the chairwoman's and ranking member's work to enhance the Agricultural Management Assistance program, including support for organic transition assistance. The improvements in this bill to crop insurance delivery are important.

We have worked to address the unique concerns of specialty crop farmers and beginning farmers, and we have

done so in a bipartisan way. Specialty crops are very important to Pennsylvanian agriculture. The Specialty Crops Research Initiative, SCRI, Specialty Crops Block Grant program and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program all advance the specialty crops industry, playing a key role in ensuring that this important agricultural sector receives continued acknowledgement in the farm bill. These programs remain strong under this bill.

In addition, the Nation's organic industry has grown exponentially from \$3.6 billion in 1997 to \$29 billion in 2010, with an annual growth rate of 19 percent from 1997–2008. In 2008, Pennsylvania was ranked 6th in number of organic farms with 586 and 3rd in sales at \$212.7 million.

I also support the improvements in promotion programs within the farm bill.

Through research, we develop more efficient and effective farming methods. Research also helps producers maintain a competitive edge in the global market by fighting threatening diseases and pests.

I am pleased that the farm bill invests in relevant and targeted research and maintains the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service programs that work to eradicate the invasive species that threaten our nation's forests and farms.

The farm bill's forestry programs are essential for assisting forest landowners in managing threats and enhancing stewardship. I am pleased that the farm bill continues important forestry programs so that forest owners can continue to create new economic opportunities. I am also grateful to the chairwoman and ranking member for working with me to fix USDA's Biopreferred program to even the playing field for Pennsylvanian forestry products. Revenues from Pennsylvania's forest products industry exceed \$5.5 billion annually. Over 10 percent of the State's manufacturing workforce is involved in the forest products industry.

I am appreciative to the committee for the inclusion of my provision directing USDA to work with the Food and Drug Administration toward the development of a standard of identity for honey, a tool which will promote honesty and fair dealing and serve the interest of consumers and Pennsylvania's honey industry. The majority of our honey is imported, but because there is no standard, contaminated, low-quality honey continues to pass through customs and undercut our domestic product. Pennsylvania is a major player in the honey industry. Honey bee pollination can be directly attributed to the production of about \$60 million of agricultural produce in Pennsylvania annually.

I am committed to keeping Pennsylvania's rural communities strong and support rural development programs that provide access to capital for rural businesses to provide economic opportunities and create jobs. A

rural community's viability in attracting and keeping businesses is often directly related to the condition of its infrastructure and facilities. USDA's Rural Development programs empower rural communities, transform local economies and preserve the quality of life in small towns across the Commonwealth. A rural economic development program that saves and creates jobs in rural economies and improves rural life is extremely important for Pennsylvanian families.

Farmers are the original stewards of the land and continue to lead the charge in protecting our natural resources. I believe the voluntary conservation programs in the farm bill provide important tools to help farmers comply with Federal and State regulations while keeping farmers in business. I am committed to making conservation programs more efficient, effective and relevant to farmers.

Conservation programs are an extremely important resource for many Pennsylvanian farmers. I worked with my Senate colleagues to support enhancements to conservation programs through this process in an effort to ensure that these remodeled programs would better serve the needs of Pennsylvanians.

Pennsylvania's watersheds contribute more than half of the fresh water flowing to the Chesapeake Bay. While Pennsylvania does not border the bay, activities in the Commonwealth profoundly affect the bay's health. The bay's tributaries, such as Susquehanna and Potomac Rivers, are important to the region's economy, culture and outdoor recreation.

Under the 2008 farm bill, the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative, CBWI, provided essential support to farmers facing Federal and State regulations concerning water quality and helped to meet demand for conservation programs. In advance of the Agriculture Committee's consideration of the 2012 farm bill, I introduced the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Fairness Act, which among other things reauthorized the CBWI, because I know Pennsylvania farmers used this program very well.

I am grateful that the 2014 farm bill contains portions of this legislation which are aimed at equipping farmers with the tools necessary to better meet water quality goals. To reduce the number of conservation programs, the farm bill consolidates four different programs into one that will provide competitive funds to regional partnerships and will also provide conservation funding directly to producers. CBWI was one of the programs that got folded into this new program.

I worked very closely with other Senators from the watershed to strengthen the conservation title to better benefit our region. Together we secured significant policy improvements. The current bill focuses on the most critical conservation areas and will help farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed participate in conservation programs

so that they can help the region meet water quality standards.

Pennsylvania's agricultural producers and forest land owners use the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP, to implement conservation practices, which might otherwise be cost prohibitive, to protect valuable natural resources.

Further, the Farmland Protection Program, FPP, protects prime farmland from development. FPP is rolled into a new Agriculture Lands Easement, ALE, Program to help keep working lands preserved as farm land. I support USDA in its efforts to craft the rules of this program to allow flexibility so that States are allowed to use their own easement terms and conditions as long as they are consistent with the program purposes, in order to certify successful entities like the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Farmland Protection and improve the efficiency of this program.

While I do not mention all of the farm bill conservation programs, I do believe that each serves an important purpose.

My constituents, and all Americans, deserve some certainty and having a farm bill will put us in that direction. A comprehensive farm bill is something that I fought for years to enact and I certainly support the goal of a comprehensive Farm bill to provide long-term certainty for our farmers.

Chairwoman STABENOW deserves a lot of credit for her tireless work to get this bill across the goal line. She managed the very difficult task of negotiating a bill that advanced without some of the most egregious and draconian proposals, including \$39 billion in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP, cuts that the House had passed.

However, this farm bill contains cuts to SNAP that will be devastating for many of my constituents. There are 1.7 million SNAP recipients in Pennsylvania. I support changes in SNAP to increase accountability like stopping lottery winners from continuing to receive assistance and cracking down on retailers and recipients engaged in benefit trafficking.

But this farm bill will adversely impact many children, seniors, people with disabilities and working families in Pennsylvania.

According to the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger, the SNAP cut in this farm bill will cause 175,000 Pennsylvanian households to lose, on average, \$65 for food each month. These same households already saw a cut to their monthly benefits just 3 months ago when the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, ARRA, increase in benefits expired.

My guest for the 2014 State of the Union was Tianna Gaines-Turner, a Philadelphia woman who knows all too well the challenges working families face. Tianna lost her job in December and is the mother of a nine-year-old

and twin six-year-olds. Her husband works in a minimum wage job. Tianna participates in a research and advocacy project founded by the Center for Hunger-Free Communities at Drexel University: "Witnesses to Hunger."

In 2008, Dr. Mariana Chilton provided cameras to 42 single mothers in Philadelphia, simply asking that they use them to take pictures to tell us about their lives and their children. These Witnesses to Hunger, seeing the opportunity to spread awareness and create change, accepted Dr. Chilton's challenge and started documenting the poverty and hunger that they face on a daily basis. Living it each day, these remarkable mothers understand the trials of hunger and raising a family more than anyone else. The Witnesses to Hunger inspire me and challenge me to do more in the Senate. I am incredibly grateful for the guidance they provide.

Tianna wrote me a letter that said:

Our voices and pictures show our pain, struggles. When you're voting, close your eyes and think of the picture of my children. Their hunger pains rest in your hands.

Another Witness to Hunger, Angela Sutton's son Jahzaire wrote me a letter that said:

I was told that you were cutting food stamps and I want to know why? I need food stamps so I can eat to be big and strong. So I can become Senator one day.

Every child deserves adequate food so that the light inside them can continue to burn brightly. It is an impossible situation to raise a family and have to make the choice between heating a home or putting food on the table. Recent research from Children's HealthWatch demonstrated that improved SNAP benefit levels also have a positive impact on children's health. Children in families receiving SNAP were significantly more likely to be classified as "well" than were young children whose families were eligible but did not receive SNAP.

Hunger and food insecurity is an unfortunate and preventable reality for many Pennsylvanians. Hunger affects working families, children, and older Americans across the Nation and not one community across this country is Hunger Free. Nearly half of all SNAP participants are children and 76 percent of families receiving SNAP have at least one employed member. Cutting SNAP is not a way to address the deficit.

Moody's Analytics estimates that in a weak economy, every \$1 increase in SNAP benefits generates \$1.72 in economic activity. In fact, economic importance is demonstrated in part by Walmart, which on January 31, 2014 put out updated expectations for its fourth quarter. Its report stated:

Despite a holiday season that delivered positive comps, two factors contributed to lower comp sales performance for the 14-week period for Walmart U.S. First, the sales impact from the reduction in SNAP (the U.S. government Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits that went into effect Nov. 1 is greater than we expected . . .

CBO rated an increase in SNAP benefits as one of the two most cost-effective of all spending and tax options it examined for boosting growth and jobs in a weak economy.

About 94.6 percent of Federal spending goes directly for food; administrative costs are low. SNAP's error rates stand at record lows; fewer than 2 percent of SNAP benefits are issued to households that do not meet all of the program's eligibility requirements.

I am thankful that The Emergency Food Assistance Program will receive increased funding under this bill, but there is no way for our already-strained food banks to make up for the increased demand they will see due to the SNAP cuts in Pennsylvania.

Therefore, I could not in good conscience vote for this bill.

I want this Senate to think about the children of the Witnesses to Hunger and all others who face hunger in this Nation—and what more we can do to help them succeed in the face of low wages, unemployment or underemployment.

TRIBUTE TO 2014 OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST DAVID WISE

Mr. HELLER. Madam President, today I wish to extend well-deserved congratulations to Nevada's own David Wise, a Sochi Olympic athlete who won gold in this year's debut sport of halfpipe skiing. Motivated by support from his family and the Nevada community, David triumphed this year in Russia to bring home one of the United States' nine gold medals.

Despite difficult conditions in Sochi that proved challenging for these experienced athletes, David outperformed his skilled opponents by scoring a 92 on his first run in the halfpipe. As an American and Nevadan, I am honored that David represented our Nation proudly and brought home the gold.

During his free time, David enjoys spending time with his wife Alexandra and their 2-year-old daughter Nayeli. David's accolades reach far beyond his athleticism and victories on the slopes. As a believer in service, David frequently supports a number of charities, including several water projects in the Dominican Republic. This community service extends to his local community, where he runs a youth group at his family's local church.

Driven by his purpose founded in sport, service, and family, David embodies the spirit of an exemplary athlete that the Nevada Family is proud to call our own. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating this remarkable individual as we show our pride and support for all of his accomplishments.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO JAMES LAROSA

• Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I wish to honor the life of a remarkable

West Virginian who was taken from us on February 15, 2014. James Dominick LaRosa, known to his friends and family as Jim, was a true pioneer developer who never forgot his roots as he helped enrich North Central West Virginia into a thriving, vibrant and beautiful region of the Mountain State. As we mourn the loss of a truly special person, I join all West Virginians in keeping in our thoughts and prayers Jim's only son, Jimmy Joe, his daughter-in-law, Leigh Ann, and his three grandchildren, Lauren Louise, Natalie Nicole and James Lee.

A native of Harrison County, which neighbored my local area in Marion County, Jim was driven and motivated at an early age. Anyone who met him immediately recognized that there was a bright future ahead for Jim. In 1944, he graduated from Washington Irving High School in Clarksburg, WV and then attended West Virginia University. After graduating in 1948 with a degree in business administration, he learned the fundamentals of business in his father's small surface mining company. At the ripe age of 35, James assumed the position of president of his father's company.

During this time, his entrepreneurial temperament took flight. Jim's unwavering dedication to the area's communities, accompanied with his innovative visions and inspirational spirit, helped improve the region's quality of life, enhanced medical accessibility, built multiple businesses and recreational facilities, created jobs, increased local revenue, boosted visitor access, and most of all, created a positive image of the North Central region.

Many of Harrison County's most well-known areas and attractions can be attributed to the vision and discipline of Jim LaRosa, including the Pete Dye Golf Course, Bridgeport Hill and the Eastpointe and Newpointe Shopping Centers. He also focused on projects that underscored his many interests, especially his Italian heritage, quality food access, the performing arts and theater, interior decorating and animals.

Time and again, Jim showed how greatly an individual can contribute to his community through passion, commitment and hard work.

He not only played the role of pioneer developer, but he also served on several boards of directors, such as the Clarksburg Chamber of Commerce, Lowndes Bank and the West Virginia Coal and Advisory Commission. In addition, he served on the original board of the West Virginia Surface Mining and Reclamation Association and the Director's 100 Club for WVU Athletics.

During his life, Jim received countless awards to honor his accomplishments and his commitments to West Virginia's North Central region. He received the Distinguished West Virginian from two Governors. He also received an honorary doctorate degree of humane letters from Salem College in 1984. In 1985, our dear Senator Robert

C. Byrd recommended to President Reagan that Jim should be a member of the Christopher Columbus 500th Jubilee Commission, which consisted of 35 Americans of Italian descent, in celebration of the 500th year of the discovery of America.

Jim's remarkable foresight, coupled with his leadership skills and his well-deserved accomplishments, has consistently enriched the communities of North Central West Virginia and across the Mountain State.

Jim's imprint will always be marked in the countless businesses, facilities, centers and improvements that he established over years of hard work and dedication. He will be greatly missed by the people whose lives he touched.

West Virginians cannot thank Jim enough for the steadfast commitment and positive influence he's had on our great State. Jim LaRosa will always be remembered as a truly gifted and exceptional West Virginian. And though he will be greatly missed, his legacy will always live on. ●

TRIBUTE TO DR. KISHORE CHALLA

• Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I wish to congratulate one of West Virginia's most dedicated and talented cardiologists, Dr. Kishore Challa, on receiving the 2014 Heart of Gold Award, which was presented by the West Virginia American Heart Association. There is no one more qualified, more compassionate or more devoted than Dr. Challa, who has been practicing in West Virginia for more than 20 years.

A native of India, Dr. Challa has called the Mountain State his home since 1989, and his unwavering commitment to the cardiology field at South Charleston Cardiology, where he continues to practice today, has consistently saved West Virginian lives across our State. We cannot thank him enough for continuing to deepen his roots in the Mountain State. His significant contributions, positive influence and medical expertise have helped boost the quality of our medical community as well as improved the health and well-being of many, many West Virginians.

Dr. Challa's integrity and work ethic know no bounds in a field where long hours and often times emotional, demanding and traumatic experiences become routine. Most cannot imagine the pressure and stress physicians endure on a daily basis, and Dr. Challa's calm, compassionate and enjoyable personality should inspire us all to always focus on the good and the positive. Regardless of the day, Dr. Challa treats all of his patients, staff and friends with kindness and respect, and that is why I am truly proud to call him my friend.

Dr. Challa is also no stranger to prestigious awards, including the Distinguished West Virginian award, which was created to honor those who have contributed significantly to West Virginia and those who have brought positive attention to our great State. His