

I am grateful to my colleagues for consenting to this. I am grateful to have worked on this with my distinguished colleague, the Senator from Hawaii, who worked hard with me to put together this bipartisan piece of legislation that we have been fortunate enough to pass through the Senate today.

Thank you.

I see that my colleague from Hawaii is here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I want to thank my colleague, the Senator from Utah, Mr. LEE, for working with me on the act that we just passed.

AGRICULTURE AND NUTRITION ACT OF 2018—Continued

FILLING THE UPCOMING SUPREME COURT VACANCY

Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, if this week has shown us anything, it is that courts matter. In three important decisions over 2 days, the Supreme Court majority endorsed Donald Trump's bigotry and handed him the power to exclude any group of people for any reason, as long as he couches it as a national security matter.

Justice Alito led a narrow majority in a concerted effort to destroy unions—in this case, public sector unions—and Justice Thomas told States that they cannot tell women what reproductive services are available to them.

We have also seen a Federal trial court judge in San Diego, who combined his understanding of the law with his capacity for human kindness, order that children who were separated from their parents at the southern border be reunited with them in short order.

We have seen the Third Circuit Court of Appeals rule in favor of transgender public school students being able to use the bathrooms that match their gender identity.

The work that judges do affects the real lives of people living and working in this country—people who are trying to care for their families, to serve their country, to earn a living; people who count on us here in Congress to make sure that they are safe and that their rights are protected. In the Judiciary Committee on which I sit, that responsibility is normally never greater than when we consider a nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court.

These are not normal times. When we have a President who avows that the Supreme Court should always be Republican, ignoring the independent role of the Court, the Senate's advice and consent process is even more crucial.

Take a look at the President's tweet. He believes the Supreme Court is an extension of his political party. Last March, he reiterated: "We need more Republicans in 2018," he said, "and must ALWAYS"—he likes to capitalize—"ALWAYS hold the Supreme

Court!" Any nominee from this President comes to us with this taint attached.

The President is not the only one to politicize the courts. Neil Gorsuch would never have made it to the Supreme Court if not for the majority leader, whose proudest achievement, according to him, is Neil Gorsuch's confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court.

There is no question that the majority leader wants to ensure a conservative majority on the Supreme Court to upend the fundamental rights of millions of Americans. It started in 2016 when he refused to even meet with the President's Supreme Court nominee and would not grant him a hearing. The majority leader held this seat hostage precisely because he wanted someone who would serve as a rubberstamp for his radical conservative agenda.

Here is what MITCH MCCONNELL said when he did this. He said that the American people should have a voice in the selection of their next Court Justice. Under the McConnell rule, this vacancy created by Justice Kennedy's resignation and retirement should be treated no differently.

If the people's voice should have been heard in 2016, it is no less important now, because these are clearly not normal times. On Tuesday—the same day the Supreme Court ruled that the President could discriminate against people coming to our country on the basis of religion—the majority leader tweeted this picture of himself with Neil Gorsuch.

The message is clear. The twisted process got the Republicans just what they wanted, and they want to do it again. They want to keep doing it, and we should not let them.

Democrats should do everything we can to ensure that the Supreme Court stays independent and protects fundamental rights and values. The American people certainly deserve no less.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. ROUNDS. Madam President, I rise today to discuss the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, or what is commonly known in our part of the country as the farm bill, which we are considering on the Senate floor this week.

The farm bill is a vital piece of legislation to the people of my home State of South Dakota, where our economy depends on agriculture to survive. With more than 31,500 farms across the State, South Dakota ranks in the top 10 for ag production, providing a \$25 billion impact on our economy annually. Stability and certainty for our farmers, which this farm bill helps to provide, is crucial as they do their part to feed and fuel a growing global population.

I would like to thank Chairman PAT ROBERTS, Ranking Member DEBBIE STABENOW, and all of the other members of the Senate Ag Committee and

their staff, who worked tirelessly to get this market-oriented bill to the floor for consideration by the full Senate body. This bipartisan bill will provide much needed certainty to our ag community at a pivotal time, when the ag economy is facing significant challenges. The ag economy is down more than 50 percent over the past 5 years, and the numbers don't look much better for 2018. According to the Department of Agriculture's own Economic Research Service, net farm income is projected to fall an additional 7 percent this year to \$58 billion.

A 5-year farm bill is necessary to give South Dakota producers the certainty they need to help weather times of economic downturn, such as the one we are experiencing right now in ag country. Additionally, the uncertainty surrounding trade and tariffs has created instability in the market, which is having a significant effect on our commodity prices.

For example, in my home State of South Dakota, soybeans are one of the top commodities, and we rely heavily on exports to sell our soybean crop each year. A significant importer of U.S. soybeans is China, which accounts for about 25 percent of all of the U.S. soybean sales and 60 percent of all soybean exports.

While the tariffs on soybeans have not taken effect yet, they are already having a real impact on the market prices. Since the tariffs on Chinese goods were announced in early March, soybeans are down \$1.86 per bushel on the cash market, representing a \$449 million loss in South Dakota alone when we look at farmers' balance sheets. The USDA had projected ag exports to be flat in 2018 before tariffs were levied on the ag industry—or at least before those tariffs were suggested to be added to the ag industry.

With so much uncertainty surrounding trade deals since tariffs were announced, reauthorizing programs like the Market Access Program, or MAP, and the Foreign Market Development Program, FMD, are vital to help gain access to new markets for U.S. products. This bill does exactly that.

These programs help encourage the development, maintenance, and expansion of the ag export market to foreign customers.

I am pleased that this legislation also strengthens the crop insurance program with outlays projected to be approximately \$7.6 billion annually. Crop insurance is a highly effective public-private safety net that helps farmers customize protection for their individual operations. Sometimes I don't think we emphasize that this is one of those safety net items for which farmers and ranchers actually pay premiums to participate. Crops in my home State of South Dakota contribute roughly \$10.3 billion to our economy. Last year, in South Dakota alone, more than 50,000 crop insurance policies were written to provide \$4.8 billion in protection for over 17.5 million acres of cropland. Nationwide,

more than 310 million acres were enrolled in crop insurance, backing more than \$106 billion of crop value. It is vital as a risk management tool for farmers across the entire country. By maintaining strong crop insurance provisions, this bill will help our producers weather these very tough times in ag country.

Additionally, this legislation provides a modest increase in the cap of the Conservation Reserve Program, or CRP, to 25 million acres. That would be up from 24 million acres currently in the existing farm bill. While we would have preferred a more significant increase in CRP acres, to the tune of perhaps 30 million acres or more, a strong CRP program is an important tool to assist farmers and ranchers during these adverse times, such as during a drought like we experienced in South Dakota last year, or possible flood damage, which I fear we will be experiencing this year.

This legislation also gives the Secretary of Ag the necessary authority to reorganize the USDA. Ag Secretary Sonny Perdue recently introduced a plan to reorganize the agency, including combining the Natural Resources Conservation Service with the Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency, creating a new farm production and conservation mission, which would be under the Under Secretary, Bill Northey. Streamlining these programs will help sharpen the agency's focus on domestic agricultural issues, providing farmers and ranchers with a one-stop shop so that USDA can better meet their needs.

Last year, as the Senate Ag Committee discussions on this farm bill took shape, I wrote to the chairman and ranking member of the committee to ask them to establish a foot-and-mouth disease vaccination bank to combat economic, food, and national security concerns. A major outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, or FMD, would be financially devastating to our producers, and I am pleased this bill highlights an FMD disease bank as a priority at USDA.

The final thing I will mention about the Ag Improvement Act of 2018 is that it increases the cap for individuals seeking loans under the Farm Service Agency loan guarantee program. This program provides financial assistance to farmers and ranchers who want to expand and improve their operations. Under this legislation, the FSA direct loan program cap will go from \$300,000 to \$600,000 for direct ownership loans, \$400,000 for direct operating loans, and from \$1.39 million to \$1.75 million for guaranteed ownership and operating loans. Increasing both the individual cap for these loans and the total amount of money available for lending will allow a greater number of producers to utilize the program. Farming and ranching have become increasingly costly, and increasing these limits will more accurately reflect inflation and increasing costs of ag production today

and make sure that lenders have flexibility during times of hardship.

South Dakota producers work hard every day to feed and fuel a growing global population. As in all businesses, some years are simply better than others. During those more difficult times, it is important that our farmers and ranchers have access to tools that can help them keep their operations vital. The certainty and stability of this farm bill will do that by allowing them to work to weather this current economic downturn, as well as strengthen the agricultural economy.

I support the Senate's efforts to provide certainty to our farmers, and I will continue to work with my colleagues to see this bill across the finish line so that we can provide our ag economy with much needed certainty and help get our ag economy back on track.

Let me also add that I believe we may very well see some very well-meaning amendments today that make good sense, but these amendments might very well not be supported by enough of our Members to where the actual bill itself would survive if the amendments were included. My interest is in making certain that this farm bill is allowed to continue forward, to be reconciled with the House, and become law as quickly as possible. I would ask the other Members to seriously consider the impacts; while we may very well have some great ideas on how to make improvements, unless we have enough to maintain that 60-vote margin in the U.S. Senate on a bipartisan basis, then we will have failed in providing that stability to the ag community in this time when they desperately need that reassurance.

With that, Madam President, I thank you for the opportunity to visit and talk about this very important piece of legislation.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mrs. ERNST. Madam President, I rise today on behalf of Iowa's farmers and ranchers in support of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 or what we refer to as the farm bill. I thank Chairman ROBERTS and Ranking Member STABENOW for bringing this critical piece of bipartisan legislation to the floor for consideration.

Farmers, ranchers, and rural communities are resilient—some of the toughest in the face of adversity. But low commodity prices, trade tensions, and unpredictable weather have taken a toll on many of our folks back home. These are the people Americans rely on day in and day out to put food on our tables, clothes on our backs, and fuel in our cars.

In trying times, it is essential that we provide farmers and ranchers with the certainty and the predictability they need and they deserve. These folks helped guide my priorities for this bipartisan farm bill, which maintains a robust crop insurance, makes

improvements to commodity programs, and promotes soil health and water quality.

I am thankful that several of my provisions and amendments can be found within this bill. Long overdue reforms to the Conservation Reserve Program will refocus the program's intent on highly erodible and environmentally sensitive land and provide opportunities for the next generation of American farmers to access land to build economically viable farm operations.

This bill also strengthens the ARC-County Program, limiting payment discrepancies and ensuring that farmers receive the necessary support they deserve. It also puts farmers first by providing critical support and mental health resources to those in need or those facing tough times.

I do want to note one area of the bill where I think we need to do more, and that is on the issue of SNAP reform. Most notably, the bill misses an opportunity to help able-bodied SNAP recipients rise up out of poverty. SNAP is a program that is relied on by children, in addition to elderly Americans, people with disabilities, and many working families who are struggling to make ends meet. No American should go hungry, and SNAP provides critical assistance to our most vulnerable citizens.

We also have an obligation to ensure that this safety net does not perpetuate a cycle of poverty and is not abused by those who should not be taking this benefit. Unfortunately, we have seen some shocking stories that show how SNAP has, at times, been misused. For example, I am reminded of the 28-year-old, lobster-eating, Cadillac-Escalade-driving surfer from San Diego, CA, who had not worked in over a year and was receiving food stamps. He was unabashedly abusing the system and taking benefits away from those who need those benefits the most. Surfing is a pretty physically active sport—I think we can all agree to that—and it was safe to presume that this young man was able-bodied. We should not allow this type of behavior to continue, and we should not allow more examples of people taking advantage of a safety net that is set up to help those who need it the most.

While this example is an exception rather than the rule, I am concerned that the ability to abuse the system could increase the number of folks who simply choose to sit back and decide they will also ride the free waves, rather than get in the game and return to employment.

We need to encourage those who can to start working again. Getting people back to work is the most effective way to prevent poverty, both in the near term and for people's long-term stability. Programs like SNAP should encourage able-bodied adults to participate in the labor force. According to the Census Bureau, 30.5 percent of adults who did not work lived in poverty in 2016. However, on the flip side,

just 2.2 percent of full-time workers and 14.7 percent of part-time or part-year workers lived below the poverty line.

Folks who are employed are not only better off financially, they also benefit from the sense of purpose and confidence that comes from a job. As I always say, there is dignity in a job. Take, for example, April, a Missouri woman who was on government assistance from the age of 16 to the age of 30, receiving food stamps and housing assistance. When she was caught shoplifting, she was forced to do community service. She volunteered at Watered Gardens, a rescue mission in Joplin, where folks living in poverty get the help they need while they are also working at the gardens. April was so inspired by her time there that she started a women's discipleship center in her community and is now living a fulfilling life.

SNAP currently requires able-bodied adults without dependents to work, participate in training, or volunteer for at least 20 hours a week to receive assistance. That is the current requirement, but unfortunately 35 percent of Americans live in an area where work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents have been waived. They have been waived. Of the 1,200 areas where this has been waived, over half have unemployment rates below 5 percent, and over 500 of those areas are at full employment. These waivers were intended for States and communities that are experiencing economic downturns, not States like California, which has a statewide waiver, despite a record low 4.2-percent unemployment.

Our economy is booming right now. We have a 3.8-percent unemployment rate. For the first time on record, the number of job openings exceeds the number of Americans looking for work.

This is the best possible time for us to encourage work among able-bodied SNAP recipients. That is why I introduced an amendment which would strengthen the waiver process to ensure that areas with low levels of unemployment are not exempt from SNAP's requirement for able-bodied adults without dependents to work, train, or volunteer.

I planned to offer this amendment today. I am not going to because I want to keep the farm bill moving for the sake of our farmers, but I do want to see this done at conference. Despite its imperfections, we have a bill before us that will feed hungry Americans, protect natural resources, mitigate risk, and support rural jobs.

With heavy rainfall this past week across Northern Iowa, some hard-working men and women are now facing even greater challenges. Flooded fields have producers worrying about crop damage. This all underscores the need for a strong and reliable safety net and timely passage of the farm bill.

The goal and absolute requirement is to provide farmers and ranchers across our Nation the certainty and predict-

ability they deserve during difficult times. I look forward to working alongside my colleagues to meet this goal by passing this farm bill, and I encourage support.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I come to talk about the farm bill and an amendment I filed along with Senators CORNYN and HELLER, but I first want to thank Chairman ROBERTS for doing the remarkable job he does bringing people together on the Agriculture Committee. For the first 2 years I was in the Senate, beginning in 2015, I was on Agriculture, and I really enjoyed watching the way he worked trying to bridge the gaps between different interests.

In the Agriculture Committee, it is less along partisan lines and more along regional lines. So the fact that we have a farm bill before us, which I will support and I believe is good for farmers, is a testament to the leadership of Chairman ROBERTS and Ranking Member STABENOW.

A lot of people probably don't realize that although North Carolina is a relatively small State, with the majority of our population in urban centers, we are also one of the top 10 agriculture States. We have over 80 commodities raised in our State which contribute about \$84 billion to our State in revenue. So it is a very important sector—in fact, I would argue, the most important sector.

It is absolutely important that we get the farm bill right and that we have fair treatment for all crops. Chairman ROBERTS is working on that, and I am going to do everything I can to help him as we work with the House Members in conference.

I want to spend the remaining part of my time talking about something that is also very important.

About 80 percent of the farm bill is dedicated to the SNAP program. We heard Senator ERNST talk about it in her comments. It is a very important program for nutritional assistance, but it is also important we implement policies that make sure it is sustainable over time and that for those who are reliant on it, we ultimately do everything we can for those who are capable to no longer rely on it. How do we do that?

Right now, there is a program for adults where, if you don't have dependents, there is an expectation about work requirements, but I believe we have to make sure we have more people looking for work, being trained for work as a requirement for getting the SNAP benefits.

There will be a lot of people who are going to talk about the heartless nature of this program, but let's talk about what is really being proposed versus what you may hear in a floor speech or in the press.

What this program is about is for people between the ages of 18 and 50

who do not have children under the age of 6. Why 6? Because at that point they are generally going to school, so daycare issues are not as great. We are not talking about people who have a health problem or someone who has a disability. They are exempted.

We are talking about adults who may have older children, who are able-bodied, and should be expected to work or do some sort of community service as a condition for getting the SNAP benefit.

There are a lot of people we think we can provide the benefit, get them to work a minimum of 20 hours a week, and ultimately maybe get them a job where they would no longer need the SNAP benefit and be free of any dependence on government to make their ends meet.

There are also people who may not have skills that can get them into a job at this point. So if you can't find a 20-hour-a-week job, you can at least perhaps get into a job training program so you have the necessary skills to make a living wage.

A couple of months ago, I was visiting a center in Charlotte, about 15 minutes out of my hometown, which has been stood up by Goodwill. It takes all comers. Anybody who wants new job skills can come to this facility. They can pursue certifications. They can do the prerequisite work there to then go to a community college or university. This program is about saying: If you don't have the skills you need today to get into that job that would free you from government assistance, then I think it is reasonable to expect that maybe 20 hours a week you go to training programs like this so you are better prepared to do it over time.

That is essentially the nature of the amendment I have filed, along with the support of Senator CORNYN and Senator HELLER.

There are a couple of reasons why you want to do this. We need to make sure we can get as many people to work, No. 1, so they can be free of government assistance; and, No. 2, to make sure the economic burden on taxpayers does not become so great that, at some point, the only way we can pay for the SNAP benefit is to cut the SNAP benefit. In other words, I want to make sure these safety nets are always well-funded and always there for people who need it.

I think this amendment and an opportunity to talk about it, and potentially make progress on this farm bill, is something I am excited about. I think we can do it in a way to make sure people who genuinely need it will get it, but those who genuinely have an opportunity to free themselves from government assistance over time can do that too.

I will leave you with this. When I was 17 years old, I was supposed to go into the Air Force, and I was discharged because of an automobile accident. I had moved out of our home when I was 17. I found myself not going to college and actually not being employed. Fortunately, for me, there was a community

college or a technical school back in Nashville, TN, that I went to which gave me the job skills that, over a very short period of time, gave me a job which ultimately led to my professional career, and I guess ultimately led to me being a U.S. Senator. So I am speaking from personal experience.

If I had taken the path of maybe just looking for a program that didn't have a work requirement, didn't necessarily have the motivation to go down the path I did—there are people out there whom I think we are going to lose who could be some of the greatest business executives, plant managers, artisans, and trades men and women we have ever seen. That is why programs like this and amendments like this I think require serious consideration and hopefully the support of the Senate.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have been a member of the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee since I was first elected to the Senate. The work that committee has done throughout my tenure in the Senate has proven that a bipartisan, reasonable process is not only possible but is preferable to the rancor and rhetoric that so often curtails the important work before the Senate.

The 2018 farm bill process once again demonstrates this distinctive quality of the Agriculture Committee, which has produced a vital legislative product that will improve our Nation's agricultural, food, and environmental systems. As a former chairman and ranking member of the Agriculture Committee, I know just how much work it takes to draft and advance a bill of this size, breadth, and influence, and I thank Chairman ROBERTS and Ranking Member STABENOW for working together to get this done.

This bill stands in stark contrast to the version passed by the House of Representatives just last week, in which an ugly partisan process resulted in legislation full of environmental riders and harmful policy constraints that would devastate the millions of families that depend on our nutrition programs for basic nutrition. I urge all Senators to recognize that the bipartisan product reported nearly unanimously by the committee is a strong bill that provides leadership on food, agriculture, nutrition, natural resources, and rural development issues. The policies it advances are based on the best available science and will provide for effective management.

This bill is so much more than just a "farm bill" or even a "food bill." This is a bill that addresses a wide swath of American life and helps to set priorities for the policies that affect every single one of us. It is our chance to show farmers, foresters, families, rural communities, and every American consumer that we hear their concerns and can help everyone live a healthier, fuller life. Vermont farmers and families expect that the programs and guidance within the farm bill will help our

struggling farms, large and small, to stay productive, ensure that children are well nourished, and protect our environment. This is a bill for every America and a bill for future generations.

I have heard countless heartbreaking stories from Vermont dairy farmers who are struggling to stay afloat right now amid perilously low milk prices. In addition to dairy, I know that agriculture across the country is facing increasing difficulties when it comes to competition, trade, dropping prices, and dramatic weather challenges that have farmers everywhere on edge. I am proud that this bill will continue to address these. I particularly want to thank the chair and ranking member for the inclusion of the improved Dairy Risk Coverage Program that builds on the important margin protection improvements I was able to secure in February for our struggling dairy farmers. The bill also provides important support for the rapidly growing organic industry and local food systems and the opportunity for farmers to diversify their crops by growing and selling hemp products.

We continue the proud tradition of providing nutritional assistance to our fellow Americans with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, and this bill continues our commitment to worldwide stability and productivity with programs like McGovern-Dole, Food for Peace, the Global Crop Diversity Trust, as well as valuable research to support farmers here at home and around the world. We know that, when families and children do not have to wonder where their next meal may come from, children do better in school, workers are more productive, and our Nation is stronger. The same is true when we support international efforts that combat poverty and provide lifesaving humanitarian assistance, we alleviate poverty and build stronger U.S. partners.

Our Nation's conservation tradition is reinforced in this bill, with significant funding and necessary improvements to programs that allow farmers and forestland owners to make environmentally friendly improvements to their land and take care of the natural areas that make our lands and our countryside so vital, productive, and unique. Wildlife, biodiverse ecosystems, and the air, land, and water we rely on will be cleaner and healthier because of this bill. Through the support of the committee's chair and ranking member, the bill does not include problematic changes that would have weakened pesticide and forestry laws.

This farm bill provides critical economic development support to address the unique challenges and needs faced by our rural communities. I am proud of the steps this bill makes possible to improve the lives of rural citizens everywhere by investing in rural community infrastructure and facilities, including a new priority for treatment

centers for substance abuse disorders, while providing and expanding much-needed technical assistance and access to affordable capital for small and growing rural businesses that serve as economic engines in our rural towns.

This bill is a good bill, a strong bill, and it is a breath of bipartisan fresh air. Coming on the heels of our recent passage of the first package of Senate appropriations bills for fiscal year 2019 earlier this week, we are again proving that the Senate can move important and complicated legislation with bipartisan support when we take the time to work with each other and we commit to keeping these bills free of controversial items.

This bill serves as an example of why we are all here: to help those who need it, to make sure our Nation is secure, and to protect our natural resources for generations to come. I will work with the chairman and ranking member to ensure that this bill passes and that we are able to send a strong and balanced bill to the President that we can all stand behind.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to amendment No. 3074.

Agriculture is the economic engine of Nebraska, and the beef industry is the largest segment of Nebraska agriculture.

In fact, in Nebraska, cattle outnumber people by more than three to one.

The industry plays a critical role in my State's economic viability with nearly \$7.2 billion in annual cash receipts.

Nebraska is also the No. 1 cattle-on-feed State, illustrating our commitment to provide American families and dinner tables around the world with affordable, safe, high-quality Nebraska beef.

As a Nebraska cattle rancher, I understand the purpose of the checkoff program and its direct impact on producers' ability to market their products.

It is an investment into the future of my State's No. 1 industry.

Funds collected from producers are used for research and promotion programs designed by producers to benefit the entire industry.

Producer control has been a defining feature of the beef checkoff since its inception and is what drives its success.

Since 1985, producers have proven perfectly capable of deciding how to spend their money and should be allowed to continue to do so.

This amendment would harm agricultural producers and the rural communities they support.

I strongly urge my colleagues to reject this amendment.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I have some remarks with which to explain the two unanimous consent requests

that I am making. I understand, to accommodate the schedule of the Senator from Wisconsin, I will make the unanimous consent requests prior to my remarks.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized upon the disposition of the unanimous consent requests.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2880

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 2880, a bill to establish a pilot program for long-term rental assistance for families affected by major disasters, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, as chairman of the committee of jurisdiction, I have reached out to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for its views, and the Agency opposes this legislation.

According to the Agency:

FEMA has spent more than \$432 million on . . . [the Transitional Shelter Assistance program], and provided rental assistance to more than 25,000 TSA participant families to help them find permanent housing solutions. [Ninety-seven] percent of those enrolled in the program have successfully transitioned to more permanent housing.

The remaining households in [the Transitional Shelter Assistance program] have either received rental or repair assistance from FEMA; have a habitable home with utilities on; or are not eligible for additional FEMA housing assistance.

Federal, state, and voluntary organization partners will continue to provide assistance through disaster case management to those who still require long-term solutions.

Again, as the chairman of the committee with oversight and jurisdiction over FEMA, I really do believe it is important to support FEMA's objection to this. For those reasons, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I have another unanimous consent request.

Let me just say, as to the unanimous consent request that the Senator from Wisconsin has just objected to, indeed, FEMA does oppose this. That is the whole purpose of the UC request, for people are about to get shut out of the temporary housing that they have in their having been evacuated from Puerto Rico to Florida.

According to FEMA, this program runs out on June 30. In fact, a law on the books says that FEMA could activate that program just as it did after Hurricane Katrina for the poor people in New Orleans who had to evacuate from their homes. In that case, most of

them evacuated to a different State. A lot of them went to Houston, TX.

If the Presiding Officer hears emotion in this Senator's voice, indeed, it is there. I will address the remarks later.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—S. 2066

Mr. President, my second unanimous consent request involves a matter of Medicaid assistance and housing assistance to families who have been affected by a major disaster.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee, of which this Senator is a part, be discharged from further consideration of S. 2066, a bill to provide housing and Medicaid assistance to families affected by a major disaster; that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; that the bill be considered read a third time and passed; and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I have been asked by the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee to object on his behalf. On his behalf, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, both of these UC requests are because there are a lot of people who are hurting in the aftermath of two hurricanes having hit Puerto Rico and because the island is still in great distress. Our fellow U.S. citizens on the island of Puerto Rico are, indeed, in great distress. It is not only because of the slow assistance by FEMA but because of the lack of electricity, as parts of Puerto Rico today are without electricity, with its going on 10 months after the hurricane. It is because of the number of people who are fleeing the island and, therefore, the jobs are not available because the economy has been so crippled. Naturally, a number of those people have fled to where they can find safety and shelter and put their children in school. By the way, there are a number of schools in Puerto Rico that are closed.

Not just tens of thousands but hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans have fled the island to the States where there will be decent opportunities to get jobs, and a good number of them are in my State of Florida.

In Florida, there are 600 families who have been in temporary housing. It is called TSA. It is called temporary shelter assistance. About 100 of those families have moved on to other States, and another 100 of those families have returned to the island. Yet 400 of those families are still in our State, and a good number of those 400 families are still in temporary shelter assistance.

At least FEMA did not stop this assistance in March. We got them to extend it until the end of May and then pointed out that a lot of these families

in that temporary assistance had children in school and that they needed to complete the academic year. The assistance was extended until 2 days from now, June 30.

They have nowhere to go. By both husband and wife working two jobs, some of them have collected enough savings to be able to afford apartments. The problem is that the apartment rentals want security deposits that are three or four times the monthly rents. Many of these families do not have that much money saved as a result of their being unable to find work.

It seems to me that the humane thing to do is to activate again the part of the law that is still on the books that was activated after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, of which this Senator asked for unanimous consent and to which it has been objected by the Republican side, for the purpose of there being transitional housing assistance. That bill was filed by a number of us. It was the only way to get action since we just heard the chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee say that FEMA was not going to extend it and does not support it.

If it were good enough for the people who fled New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina, why isn't it good enough for the people in Florida, our fellow U.S. citizens of Puerto Rico, who have been equally devastated after their having fled the deplorable conditions on their native island?

In the wake of those hurricanes, there are thousands of displaced families who are still unable to return to their homes. This includes the hundreds of families—and we estimate its being about 400 families—who are in the State of Florida. Despite that fact, FEMA is still saying that it is ending this transitional shelter assistance.

This decision to stop providing assistance to these families has many of them very scared. They are scrambling to figure out what they are going to do and to find affordable places. We have reached out to churches, and we have reached out to other charitable organizations to try to help them afford the deposits even when they have the income now from one or both spouses having worked two jobs to be able to afford the apartments.

So what we have been trying to do with this legislation, now rejected by our Republican friends, is we have been trying to urge the Agency to do the right thing—use the existing law and activate it. It was done for New Orleans; why not now for Puerto Rico?

The situation that many of these families find themselves in is a situation no family should have to go through. I suspect that what we are going to see come Sunday in Florida by the news organizations will be a chronicle of some who will be living in a car or going down to a homeless shelter. Some of them have lost everything because of these storms. Too many are

still unable to find work or to find affordable housing and especially the security deposit. For many of them, the only thing they have is the help FEMA is providing, but that is only good for 2 more days.

We have tried, but the Senator from Wisconsin, at the direction of the Republican leader, has said they are not going to let this legislation come up.

These folks are not looking for a handout; they just need a little help getting back on their feet after the storms took everything from them. The fact that FEMA has put an arbitrary deadline on this aid rather than trying to work with the people defies logic. FEMA's TSA Program is critical and it has been critical to providing for them. While I recognize that the TSA Program was a temporary fix, you just can't end a temporary fix when people are being thrown out on the streets. So that was an attempt to force FEMA to act, this request to pass the legislation forcing them to act. That is why this Senator made the unanimous consent request.

The second unanimous consent request this Senator asked for was to activate a housing program of additional section 8 housing. Florida has used up its meager allocation. This would have given additional section 8 housing for those among the least fortunate of us. I thank my cosponsors—Senators BLUMENTHAL, WARREN, MARKEY, GILLIBRAND, HARRIS, and BALDWIN—for their understanding of this situation and for signing on as cosponsors with me.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RUSSIA

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about a problem that is growing and needs to be confronted or we will regret our decision to lay down in the face of Russian aggression and Syrian aggression inside of Syria.

As you well know, we have been trying to find a solution in Syria for quite a while. We were able to reach an agreement about deescalation zones in southwestern Syria where, basically, the parties would disengage, and we reached a settlement with the Russians, U.N. Resolution 2254, to create some space to stop the fighting and the killing.

What have we found? In recent days, the Syrian regime has intensified military operations within the southwest Syria deescalation zone negotiated by Jordan, Russia, and the United States. The Russian Air Force is flying in this area, and we are doing nothing about it.

The bottom line is that if we allow Russia to get away with this and Assad

to get away with this, it is going to hurt us everywhere else in the Mideast. When President Trump meets with President Putin on July 16, I hope he will bring this up.

The question is this: Are we going to let Putin walk all over us? We had 8 years of that, and I am kind of tired of it.

Now, 6,000 civilians have already fled their homes. A lot of them have been killed in this area where we reached an agreement with the Russians and the Jordanians and the world at-large. These people were assured under this agreement that they would not be bombed or slaughtered anymore. Now the slaughtering and the bombing has started anew. They are going to look at us and everybody in the region is going to look at us as all talk and no action. The United Nations is going to be seen as weak.

I like a strong President. I appreciate what President Trump has done to rebuild the military. I like the fact that we are talking with North Korea to avoid a conflict with North Korea, but I also like the fact that the President has told North Korea: We are going to stop your nuclear program and missile program. We would rather do it peacefully, but it is going to stop. Stop threatening the United States. We are trying to make it a win-win.

We have taken the fight to ISIS in a new way. There are a lot of things to say about our military and foreign policy under President Trump, like getting out of the Iran deal, which was terrible. It is all good. It is about to erode in a big way.

If we let Russia and Assad violate the agreement that we negotiated and they don't pay a price, then it is going to hurt our standing everywhere, and it is going to embolden Russia and Assad even more.

This is a nightmare for Israel. Syrians have suffered enough at the hands of Assad and Russia. It is a nightmare for the Kurds, and it really affects our standing in the world.

When this meeting happens on July 16 in Finland, I hope the President will bring this up if it is not resolved before then because, President Trump, if you let Putin get away with this and Assad get away with this, then, good luck everywhere else in the world.

We have had 8 years of letting bad people get away with bad things. I hope you will bring it up and bring it to an end because our word should matter. Thousands of people have been displaced from their homes. Hundreds have been killed in violation of an agreement we signed, I think, last year.

Secondly, the meeting with Putin is a good thing. You have to talk to your enemies, your friends, and everybody in between. National Security Advisor Bolton had it right. There are things we can work on with Russia and there are things we can't. Russia is an enemy. They are not a friend. They are an enemy of democracy, but you have

to talk to your enemies as well as your friends.

We do have some common ground—maybe even in Syria. Russia has had bases in Syria for a long time. I don't mind that they continue to have bases. I don't want to turn Damascus over to the Iranians, and I don't want Syria to be run by the Russians. I want Syria to be run by Syrians.

There was a statement today by the President that Russia denies meddling in our election. You are right, Mr. President, they deny it, but they are lying. When you meet with Putin and he says we had nothing to do with it, I would take the opportunity to show him why we disagree. When you meet with Putin, I would explain to him what happens if you continue to meddle in our election.

Not only did they meddle in the 2016 election—I am not alleging they changed the outcome, and I have seen no evidence of collusion between the Trump campaign and the Russians—but I am 100 percent convinced that it was the Russians who stole the Democratic National Committee emails and Podesta's emails. It was the Russians who took out ads all over the country pitting one American against the other.

The bottom line is this: Russia did interfere in our democracy. They are doing it everywhere else in the world. When they say they didn't, they are lying.

President Trump, if you don't bring this up, it will be a huge mistake. If you don't push back against the lie, it will be a huge mistake.

As to what they are doing now, I hope President Trump will tell President Putin: We know what you are doing, and you had better knock it off because you continue to do this at your own peril. If we have a face-to-face between President Trump and President Putin and there is not a clear understanding by President Putin that we have had it with his interference in our democracy and his destabilizing the world at-large, then it will be a huge mistake and a great opportunity lost.

There are areas on which we can agree with the Russians and places where we can work with the Russians, but to have a good relationship with Russia, you have to have an honest relationship with Russia. Here is the honest relationship with Russia: Putin is no friend of democracy. He interfered in the 2016 election, and he is going to do it again in 2018. He really is not a Republican or a Democrat. He hates us equally.

Remember the dossier—this piece of garbage that was collected in Russia by a foreign agent paid for by the Democratic Party? Where do you think they got that information from? Do you think Putin would hesitate 1 minute to undercut you if he thought it was in his interest? He will do what is in his interest, and when the pain is too great, he will back off.

I am counting on you, and the American people are counting on you, President Trump, and the world is counting on you to set the record straight when it comes to Putin's interference in democracy, including ours. I hope he understands after this meeting is over with that if he continues to go down this path, it is at his own peril. If we don't make it painful, he will keep doing it.

We are doing a lot of good things in terms of pushing back against Russia but not enough, because if we were doing enough, they would not be interfering in the 2018 elections, and they are.

Finally, as to whether or not they did it, every intelligence agency we have, under the Obama administration and now the Trump administration, says without equivocation that the Russians interfered in our election. It wasn't some 300-pound guy sitting on a bed somewhere. They stole the emails. They gave them to WikiLeaks. They are trying to divide us. They are not a friend of Republicans. They are an enemy to all of us.

President Trump, use this opportunity to clear up the record and set it straight when it comes to Russia's interference in our democracy. Find common ground where you can. It makes sense to work with the Russians in Syria, and it makes sense to work with them in North Korea. It makes no sense to believe the lie or to make them believe that we believe the lie, and the lie is that they didn't interfere.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about the 2018 farm bill and the importance of passing this bill.

I thank Chairman ROBERTS and Ranking Member STABENOW for their dedication and determination in producing a truly bipartisan bill that cleared the Agriculture Committee 2 weeks ago with a strong bipartisan vote. Senator MCCONNELL and Senator SCHUMER have been dedicated to moving this bill to the floor. Under Chairman ROBERTS' and Ranking Member STABENOW's leadership, the committee held six hearings, examining every title of the bill, passed a bill out of committee on a nearly unanimous 20-to-1 vote, and included almost 70 amendments before getting it to the floor this week.

The Agriculture Committee and the farm bill are models of how we can work across the aisle on tough problems and on major legislation that impacts every American—the farmers and ranchers who grow and raise the crops

and livestock that sustain us, the hunters and conservationists who rely on the wetlands and grasslands protected, the families who rely on access to healthy foods.

This is an important bill. I hear it every day from people in my State—fishermen and hunters, farmers in rural communities and leaders. They understand that we do not want to be a country that becomes dependent on foreign food. We don't want that to happen.

In Minnesota, we produce a lot of food. Our economy is diverse from north to south and east to west—corn, soybeans, hogs, and turkeys in the southern and western part of our State; wheat, canola, and sugar beets in the northwest; and dairy and cattle in the central and southwest. As a State, we are No. 1 in turkeys. Yes, Mr. President, that is true. Minnesota is No. 1 in turkeys and sugar beets. We are No. 2 in hogs, No. 3 in soybeans, No. 4 in corn, and fifth overall in agricultural production. But the prices farmers have received when selling these goods have been declining since 2013. USDA's Economic Research Service is forecasting net farm income to fall another 6.7 percent this year, which would represent the lowest level since 2006.

These commodities are increasingly sent around the world. From 2006 to 2016, Minnesota producers sent \$7.1 billion worth of ag products to markets around the world, making us the fourth largest agricultural exporting State in the United States. Our soybeans and dairy go to China, pork to Canada, beef to South Korea, and corn and poultry to Mexico. These exports are a crucial part of our economy, and the unknown on trade and the threat of terrorists, especially from allies with allies, such as Canada and what we have been seeing there—and I hope we will have a reasonable approach with our allies going forward—those headlines are having real impacts on many farmers' bottom lines.

Finally, no matter where the farm is located or what crops they grow, all Minnesota farms and rural communities face weather risks. This spring, many farmers and ranchers were delayed getting into their fields because of an April blizzard. We had rains that were unexpected, and the uncertainty out there in the countryside makes our work on the 2018 farm bill even more important.

What do I like about this bill? First of all, it continues to protect and improve the tools that help our farmers deal with risk. The improvements included in the commodity title will ensure more consistent payments across counties in the Agricultural Risk Coverage Program and more access to risk management tools, such as crop insurance.

It also replaces the Margin Protection Program for dairy producers and invests additional funds in the new Dairy Risk Coverage Program. This is a major challenge in my State and many others.

We have also started a vaccine bank for the first time—something Senator CORNYN and I worked on. He is here in the Chamber, and I thank him for his leadership in working on this vaccine bank that we have started. It will help us with avian flu, H1N1, and other diseases that we see with our animals.

Senator THUNE and I worked together on several provisions in the conservation title of the bill to help farmers get more out of their land. We also worked to increase the CRP cap to 25 million acres and to fix a loophole in the conservation sodsaver program.

This bill includes a number of amendments. I see Senator STABENOW is here on the floor, and I again thank her for her leadership in helping us. Michigan, just like Minnesota, understands how important agriculture-based energy, biobased manufacturing, and clean energy technology programs and initiatives are. Those amendments were all included in this farm bill. I truly appreciate it, as well as the work that Senator HOEVEN and I did to increase access to credit, while providing for better data reporting on borrowers and participation rates.

I close with this: In these times of uncertainty in agriculture, we need to work to strengthen the farms and rural communities that sustain us every day. Whether it is hemp in Kentucky, hogs in Iowa, sugar beets and sweet corn in Minnesota, or energy in Michigan, this farm bill is about our Nation's future, and it is about adjusting what is working, making it a bill that meets the challenges ahead, and making sure we are investing in the farmers and the workers of the Midwest and not the oil cartels of the Mideast.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, before the Senator from Minnesota leaves, I want to thank her for her amazing leadership as one of the senior members of the Agriculture Committee. She has not only made a significant difference as it relates to energy—and she talked about bioenergy and the biobased economy, which is so important for us, for jobs and energy independence. She has been a real leader there, as well as in conservation, commodities titles, local foods, and all of the ways in which this bill has come together. So I thank the Senator from Minnesota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

AMENDMENT NO. 3383

(Purpose: To provide for certain work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents and to require State agencies to operate a work activation program for eligible participants in the supplemental nutrition assistance program)

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I call up my amendment No. 3383 to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 3224.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Louisiana [Mr. KENNEDY] proposes an amendment numbered 3383 to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 3224.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with and for the opportunity to make a few remarks about my amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The amendment is printed in today's RECORD under "Text of Amendments.")

Mr. KENNEDY. Thank you.

Mr. President, I am joined in this amendment with Senators Cruz and Lee. I thank Senator ROBERTS and Senator STABENOW for their work on this bill.

The farm bill is a must-pass bill. It is important. I realize that. America was born on the farm. Seventy percent of the cost of this bill has to do with food stamps, and I am pleased to have the opportunity for us to discuss a way to improve our food stamp program.

As I said yesterday, I don't want to take away food stamps from people in need. I do want fewer people to need food stamps. In our country, I am very proud of the fact that if you are hungry, we feed you. If you are homeless, we house you. If you are too poor to be sick, we pay for your doctor. But the best way to continue the food stamp program and our other social programs is to make sure that they are efficient and that we save as much money as we can from those who would abuse the program in order to really help those in need.

This amendment will make responsible changes to the SNAP program by updating photo identification requirements related to electronic benefits transfer systems in the Food and Nutrition Act, and it will also take the very important step of having work requirements for able-bodied adult individuals without dependents. We are not talking about someone with kids or taking Grandpa out of the nursing home. And it would require State agencies to operate work activation programs for eligible SNAP participants.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Mr. President, I am proud to join with Senator KENNEDY and Senator LEE in offering this amendment.

The farm bill has many good and important elements in it that benefit our farmers and ranchers, who are a critical part of our economy in my home State of Texas and all across this country.

A major component of this bill is, of course, the food stamp program. The food stamp program provides important support for people who are in need, but at the same time, we should not be trapping people into dependency.

The amendment that I have joined with Senator KENNEDY and Senator LEE in offering strengthens the work

requirements for food stamps for able-bodied adults. Right now, more than a third of the country lives in areas with no work requirements. Thirty-three States have some kind of waiver on the work requirements. Twenty-eight States have partial waivers. Five States and the District of Columbia have total waivers on work requirements. That is not right, and it has led to a troubling development. In recent years, a rapidly growing group of food stamp recipients has been able-bodied adults between the ages of 18 to 49, in prime working ages, who are not disabled and have no dependents or children to support. This population has quintupled, rising from 1 million recipients in 2008 to about 5 million recipients in 2015.

As a Senate, this should be a bipartisan proposal. We should come together to include work requirements to get people who are on food stamps back into the workplace, providing for their families.

I urge our colleagues to support this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

I want to step back and look at the reality of SNAP and the food assistance program today.

The farm bill has two kinds of safety nets. It is a safety net for farmers and a safety net for families.

The good news is, because the economy is doing better, we are going to save over \$80 billion in the next 10 years on the food and family side because the economy is getting better and people don't need temporary help and they are going back to work. The challenge for us is that in this bill, we have a lot of farmers who need a safety net because we have seen prices drop by 50 percent and weather disasters and other things that have been very challenging for them.

So, No. 1, I think this is an amendment in search of a problem. No. 2, we already have work requirements—let's make that very, very clear. Despite things that have been said before, we already have work requirements in the SNAP program.

Now, 75 percent of those who get food help are senior citizens, people with disabilities, and children and their parents—75 percent. Of the 25 percent—they are required to work at least 20 hours a week, and if they do not, then the most they can receive is up to 3 months' worth of food help in a 3-year period.

The amendment essentially would limit and change that for people. For instance, it would subject parents of children as young as 1 years old to new work requirements, but there is no funding for training or support for childcare or anything to help that mom be successful.

In the underlying bill, we have funded 10 States to help those who have extra challenges get into full-time em-

ployment, and we add 8 more States to that. That is the positive way to do it, not just saying that moms of children as young as 1 years old have to meet a work requirement in order to feed their children. This also eliminates waivers that States use in high-unemployment areas, like Tribal areas.

Basically, what is being said here is that we shouldn't trust States. I think about all the times we hear from my colleagues on the other side of the aisle about State block grants and about supporting States. This goes in the exact opposite direction—taking away the opportunity for States to be able to ask for waivers in high-unemployment areas.

It also slashes work exemptions that States use to cover special populations, such as veterans. It would incentivize States to cut people off of SNAP by forcing States to meet unrealistic workforce targets or face stiff penalties, and it would cut the amount of time that someone—again, I mentioned that you have to work 20 hours a week; otherwise, you can receive no more than 3 months' worth of food help in a 3-year period. This would say "No, no, no; 3 months is too much out of 3 years" and it would take it down to 1 month.

Finally, there is the Kennedy provision specifically requiring household members to show picture IDs to purchase food. Colleagues should know that this is strongly opposed by the Food Marketing Institute and the National Grocers Association and the manufacturers. It would impose new liabilities on more than 200,000 stores, including small businesses that participate in SNAP, which would then be liable and responsible for what happens under this provision.

It would create barriers for seniors, people with disabilities who rely on caregivers to purchase their groceries, and others who depend on someone else to get them their food assistance, and homeless individuals, including veterans, without IDs might be denied food as a result of this provision.

I join with the distinguished chairman who will be making a motion to table this amendment. We will have the opportunity to thoughtfully address these issues in a conference committee.

This amendment, in my judgment, would undermine what has been a very positive bipartisan effort to get a farm bill done and, in fact, would stop us from being able to complete this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I think I owe an apology to many of my Republican colleagues, if I could call for regular order, please.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will be in order.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I think I owe an apology to many of my Republican colleagues, and I hope I can get their attention.

We have talked a lot about the need for a farm bill. We have talked about

how we are in a rough patch in agriculture and how it affects every part of the country—all regions, all crops—and that we have crafted a farm bill in a bipartisan way with most of the titles.

I have not talked enough to stress what we have done with regard to the SNAP program, in terms of reform and efficiencies, and solving that bonus program that was full of errors, prompting the IG to fine several States.

Bear with me. I want to go over some of this progress that I think my colleagues will be interested in.

I thank my colleague for his amendment, which would modify the work requirements under SNAP, as has been indicated, and require a photo ID with the use of a SNAP EBT card. I understand the intent to work toward self-sufficiency among SNAP participants. By the way, the best thing we have done is we have seen the economy improve and have seen to it that people have jobs and can get jobs and actually get off of food stamps.

While I understand the intent is to promote work by broadening the application of the requirements, our bill would focus more on employment and training in the work requirements. The point I am trying to make is that in addition, many of the provisions in the amendment are duplicative of current law and regulations and would create significant administrative burdens for the Department of Agriculture and State agencies—something we don't want.

Our bill is focused on more accountability in the employment and training programs to get folks back on the path to employment. Ten States have pilot programs, taking a look at exactly how they can accomplish this goal. Eight more we deal with in this bill. That is 18 States where we have pilot programs where we can actually make progress and that is by States innovating, by adopting State pilot programs, as I have just mentioned.

We authorize new State innovation employment and training pilots. I just basically addressed that. We make sure State work programs consult with local employers when setting up and evaluating a training program. That means we are much more specific. We set up a process for groups of employers and nonprofit stakeholders to conduct their own training programs that count for SNAP participants with minimal regulatory burden.

So we are achieving regulatory reform while, at the same time, getting basically nonprofit stakeholders to come in and actually take part. That is a good thing.

These are all things that will provide the tools to States, to people, to employers, and to nonprofits that will get people working again.

I urge my colleagues to support my motion to table this amendment, and then we can find the appropriate balance in getting people working again. Obviously, we point out that this issue

is going to come up again when we go to conference—if we can get a bill; if we can at least keep on the bipartisan track to get a farm bill done.

Again, I appreciate the effort to combat fraud in SNAP, but I am in opposition to this amendment, along with the independent grocers, the convenience stores, and retailers all across the country.

Current law allows States to have a photo on EBT cards, but most States have concluded that the cost of putting a photo on the card would outweigh any savings from fraud prevention. For the few States that have opted for a photo EBT card, it has created so much confusion at the register for many retailers, since EBT cards are shared with different people in a household. It is a problem.

While I share concerns about the SNAP program's integrity, the bill already includes several provisions that would improve the integrity of the program, such as the use of increased data matches across the program.

These are efficiencies I haven't talked about to my Republican colleagues. I know the ranking member certainly has made her caucus aware of them. Therefore, I respectfully urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment.

Mr. President, I move to table the Kennedy amendment No. 3383 and ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH) is necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 68, nays 30, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 141 Leg.]

YEAS—68

Alexander	Grassley	Nelson
Baldwin	Harris	Perdue
Bennet	Hassan	Peters
Blumenthal	Hatch	Portman
Blunt	Heinrich	Reed
Booker	Heitkamp	Roberts
Boozman	Hirono	Rounds
Brown	Hoeven	Sanders
Cantwell	Isakson	Schatz
Capito	Jones	Schumer
Cardin	Kaine	Shaheen
Carper	King	Shelby
Casey	Klobuchar	Smith
Collins	Leahy	Stabenow
Coons	Manchin	Sullivan
Corker	Markey	Tester
Cortez Masto	McCaskill	Udall
Crapo	Menendez	Van Hollen
Donnelly	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Moran	Warren
Feinstein	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Murphy	Wyden
Graham	Murray	

NAYS—30

Barrasso	Flake	Paul
Burr	Gardner	Risch
Cassidy	Heller	Rubio
Cornyn	Hyde-Smith	Sasse
Cotton	Inhofe	Scott
Cruz	Johnson	Thune
Daines	Kennedy	Tillis
Enzi	Lankford	Toomey
Ernst	Lee	Wicker
Fischer	McConnell	Young

NOT VOTING—2

Duckworth McCain

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Thank you, Mr. President.

We are getting very close to finalizing the farm bill on a bipartisan basis. We just have some UC requests we are going over. Stay tuned. I hope Members understand that when we do have a vote—this vote was over 60 minutes. There was some commentary on it. I understand that, but certainly we can do better than that on behalf of our ranchers, farmers, growers, and the great State of Texas. Thank you very much, and we will be back to you just as quickly as we can. I know people have very important schedules to meet.

I yield to the Senator from Michigan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I will join with Chairman ROBERTS. We are close to the final UC and to the final vote. We will ask folks to stay close, and we hope to begin that process shortly, with everyone's support and indulgence. Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

NOMINATION OF TARA SWEENEY

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I would like to take a few minutes while we have an interlude here with the farm bill to speak along with my colleague Senator SULLIVAN about the nomination of, in my view, an extraordinary Alaskan—Tara MacLean Sweeney, who has been nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of Interior.

It is certainly my very strong hope that Ms. Sweeney can be confirmed to this position before we leave for the Fourth of July recess. I see no reason why this body should delay confirmation.

I want to give just a little bit of background and share, along with my colleague Senator SULLIVAN, some of the attributes we are talking about here.

Ms. Sweeney is truly a noncontroversial nominee. She has support across

the political spectrum. She was reported out of the Committee on Indian Affairs by a voice vote. There was no dissent. She is endorsed by the National Congress of American Indians, and she enjoys strong support across Indian Country—not only from Alaska Natives up in our State but truly across Indian Country. She is Inupiaq. She is a very distinguished leader, respected among indigenous peoples not only here in the United States but abroad. She is truly eminently qualified for the position.

So I want to share briefly the history of how we got here. It has been many months—many, many months—and I think it is important to know the process she has gone through. The President announced his intent to nominate Ms. Sweeney on October 16, 2017. We received it in the Senate about a week later, and from there she entered into this frustrating bureaucratic purgatory is probably the best way to describe it.

So I mentioned that Ms. Sweeney is an Inupiaq from the North Slope, and like every other Alaska Native who was born before December 18, 1971, she is a beneficiary of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Under that legislation, Ms. Sweeney received 100 shares of stock in the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation. This is one of the 13 corporations that has been created by Congress. Ms. Sweeney also inherited some additional shares from her mother who died in 1996.

The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act prohibits Ms. Sweeney from disposing of those shares. Why is that? These are not shares that are like shares in IBM or General Electric. These shares are her birthright as an Alaskan Native. The Department of Interior has concluded that Ms. Sweeney's continued ownership of those shares creates no ethical impediments to the discharge of her duties—none whatsoever. She has also entered into an ethics agreement under which she will recuse herself from matters involving the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, where she served as a corporate officer prior to her nomination.

Really, there is no conceptual difference between Ms. Sweeney's service with her Native corporation and the service of her predecessor Assistant Secretaries for Indian Affairs who all came to the office after serving as elected Tribal leaders. In those instances, none of the predecessors to Ms. Sweeney were disqualified for confirmation for Tribal service, and she certainly should not be either.

Ms. Sweeney's corporation manages lands set aside for Native people; so do nearly all of the federally recognized Tribes. Her corporation engages in a variety of successful business activities that parallel those engaged in by federally recognized Tribes in the lower 48. Voting membership in Ms. Sweeney's corporation is constituted entirely of Native people, just like membership in the lower 48 Tribes, and the governing body in Ms. Sweeney's corporation is

constituted entirely of Native people, just as the governing bodies of the lower 48 Tribes. There is no valid reason—certainly no valid reason to delay the confirmation of Tara Sweeney to the post of Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs.

This is an agency that I think those of us who have been involved on the Indian Affairs Committee, as I have for my entire tenure in the Senate, know that leadership in this critical agency for our first peoples is absolutely a priority.

There is so much that needs to be done within the Agency. The Bureau of Indian Education, which Ms. Sweeney will oversee as an Assistant Secretary, has earned a place on the Government Accountability Office's list of high-risk programs for the 115th Congress. One of her challenges will be to improve the Bureau of Indian Education.

When you think about the responsibilities you have as Assistant Secretary with NBIA to address not only the education issues, the health and safety issues, and the life and well-being of our Native people, she has a lot of work to do. So leadership at the top is going to require a handful of things. The first is steady leadership and a strong commitment to lead. You just can't get to leading the agency until you have been confirmed to the position. The second thing that has to happen is to ensure that the agency is staffed and has the resources to care for our Native children. The third is to have an action plan in place that identifies the root causes of the agency's problems and to identify real solutions. The fourth is the formulation of corrective measures and to validate the work. The final one is to demonstrate progress that the agency has overcome some of these issues.

I can tell you for a fact that Tara Sweeney is ready. She is beyond ready. She has been teed up to do this, in my view, literally, her whole life. She has gone through a very rigorous process. She has been overwhelmingly endorsed by Native peoples across the country, those whom she would serve in this capacity. She knows there are significant issues and problems within the BIA that need to be addressed that are going to be difficult, and she has said in front of us and to those of us who know her well: I am not afraid to kick down doors. I am not afraid to stand up and speak out loud for the people whom I will serve.

I know she takes these responsibilities very seriously. I know her leadership skills. I know her managerial skills. I have no doubt that she will do everything in her power to overcome these deficiencies that the GAO has identified, but I also should be clear that there will be no progress within the agency until one of the single most important positions to Indian Country is permanently filled with an Assistant Secretary.

I know we are having challenges moving through nominees on this floor

right now, but I would urge my colleagues to look at Tara Sweeney's credentials. Look at her background. Look at how she has come to this place. She is not a controversial nominee. She is well-qualified. She did extremely well at her hearing before the Indian Affairs Committee. She has answered every question that has been asked of her. Indian Country is united in support of her.

I just ask that, for the good of the first peoples in this country, they have that leadership at the top to come in and address so many of these serious issues that face them today. Let us come together with this nominee and move her through the process in a prompt and expedient way.

I will close with one last comment before turning to my colleague, and that is that of the 12 previous Assistant Secretaries at the BIA over the years, 11 of those 12 have moved through confirmation here in the Senate unanimously, without even a vote. Only one was required to have a vote. As I recall, the outcome in support of that individual was 87 votes in favor. This is not a controversial position. This is not partisan in any way.

This has to be an individual that is willing to bring together people—our first peoples and those of us at government levels—to work together to address the very real, serious, and significant concerns that we have.

Tara Sweeney is just that person. I would urge colleagues: Please, please, let's advance her quickly and expeditiously across the floor of the Senate.

I would turn to my colleague who has worked very hard and also knows Ms. Sweeney to be an extraordinarily capable Alaskan.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague Senator MURKOWSKI from the great State of Alaska—our great State—for talking about someone we really care about and someone who will do really important things for the entire country.

Senator MURKOWSKI talked about Tara Sweeney's background. When we had the confirmation hearing in Indian Affairs, I had the honor of introducing her. She did fantastic in that interview. Republicans and Democrats all agree.

When you look at her background, she is a leader. You can read her resume. You can see all of the things that this relatively young woman has accomplished. Senator MURKOWSKI mentioned some. She was, for example, the cochair of the Alaska Federation of Natives. That is an elected position in Alaska. Almost 20 percent of our population is Alaska Native. She was one of the youngest cochairs ever on that incredibly important organization.

She was the chair of the Arctic Economic Conference. She has also served in leadership positions at her Alaska Native Regional Corporations and the

National Congress of American Indians, and she is ready to lead an organization that needs leadership. She is clearly qualified.

Sometimes there can be confusion in terms of the laws that this body passes. In 1971 the Congress of the United States passed, and the President of the United States signed, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, or ANCSA back home. As Senator MURKOWSKI mentioned, this set up not reservation systems like we have in the lower 48 but a very innovative approach to Alaska Native claims for their land, and 44 million acres of State and Federal land went to the possession and ownership of the first peoples of Alaska. It was very innovative.

This body created Alaska regional corporations and village corporations, of which all our Alaska Native people are shareholders. My wife is a shareholder. My daughters are shareholders. That was mandated by the Congress. Yet, as Tara Sweeney has gone through her confirmation process, the Federal Government seemed to wake up to the fact that Alaska Native individuals owned shares in these Alaska corporations that Congress created, and time and again, they started to seemingly almost hold it against her.

Let me give you a little bit of a timeline of the delays that Senator MURKOWSKI mentioned. She was nominated by the President to serve as the Assistant Secretary on October 16, 2017. That is almost 9 months ago.

First, her nomination went through a very long process through the Office of Government Ethics—again, because of the birthright shares that she is entitled to as an Alaskan Native because Congress told them that. So there was confusion. Again, a lot of people didn't know what this was. At one point, there was even the sense that she couldn't have the job until she sold her shares. But she can't sell her shares, as Senator MURKOWSKI said. It is not like owning IBM or Microsoft.

Certainly, we were saying that if that were the precedent, you would rule out an entire class of great people—our constituents—from serving in the Federal Government. That couldn't be the precedent.

She has worked through this with the Office of Government Ethics, which has completely cleared her with regard to how she is going to manage these shares and recuse herself from anything her regional corporation has before her, which, by the way, historically, has almost never happened. She said she would do this in writing. That satisfied the Office of Government Ethics.

Her nomination hearing was held on May 9, where she again committed to recuse herself from matters that pertain to her regional corporation.

On June 6, she was unanimously voted out of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. During the confirmation hearing, she said several times that she would recuse herself. In that hearing,

as I mentioned, members on both sides again asked for assurances that she would recuse herself from issues pertaining to her regional corporation, and again, she provided assurances in writing after the hearing.

You are starting to see a pattern here. I am not sure there is anyone who has gone through Senate confirmation recently who has had to reassure and say she is going to recuse herself again and again on an issue more than Tara Sweeney has. It is pretty remarkable, when you think about the fact that the reason she has these shares is because this body voted to create the act in 1971, and yet there is amnesia all over this city and, certainly, in this body.

Once again, as we are trying to move her to the floor, it looks like there has been another demand for another assurance and another letter on the same issues. So once again, Ms. Sweeney has provided that. Certainly, I hope that my colleagues—whoever is demanding this—will say: That is enough. If this very highly qualified person owned IBM or Microsoft or something like that, this would have been done and over. She would have recused herself. Yet, somehow, because she is an Alaska Native shareholder, there seems to be cause for additional delay. I think that is sad.

I certainly hope that is not intended to somehow focus on making it more difficult for an Alaska Native to serve in such an important position. I hope that is not what is going on here. The pattern is starting to get a little bit difficult to endure.

I think further delay, as Senator MURKOWSKI mentioned, is a disservice to someone as qualified as Tara Sweeney, and it is not reasonable. She has been waiting for months. Every time there has been a demand made on her, she does it. Every time there is a letter to ask her to reassure something, she has reassured several times. She does it, but there is delay. That is not good for the individual. It is not good, actually, for trying to get good people to serve in the Federal Government, which we all want.

Senator MURKOWSKI also underscored that further delay is not good for anyone who is an Alaska Native or an American Indian or somebody who cares about them, like we do, because right now, the most important position in the Federal Government, the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of Interior—which will be headed by someone who is immensely qualified in Tara Sweeney—is not filled. As Senator MURKOWSKI mentioned, there is so much work to be done. This woman is a leader. She will get on it. She will get on it to help Alaska Native people and to help lower 48 American Indians.

We all know there are significant challenges on reservations and in some of the Alaska Native villages. We need a leader, and we have the leader. We have her. I am really concerned if there is going to be any more delay. What

this body should do is confirm her right now.

Senator MURKOWSKI and I are getting ready to ask at a certain point today, before the Senate moves to recess for the Fourth of July recess, for a unanimous consent request. As far as I can tell, almost every Senator knows that this is important. I am certainly hoping all my colleagues are not going to ask for further delay. I am certainly hoping they are not going to ask for further delay that somehow relates to her being an Alaska Native. That would be highly inappropriate.

Hopefully, we can move this nomination forward for confirmation today so that Tara Sweeney can get to work for some of the most important people in this country. We have been without a leader in this position for way too long.

I am certainly encouraging my colleagues—everybody here—to clear this unanimous consent request when we make it, and that we get her confirmed today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I come to the floor this afternoon to talk about the Nation's first line of defense against hunger—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.

Since day one in the Senate, I have fought to pass a farm bill that stands up for North Dakota's farmers, ranchers, and low-income families. In 2014 we passed a strong farm bill, which I helped to write, negotiate, and pass. Since then, I have been working on the next farm bill.

Now the Senate is incredibly close to passing the next farm bill, which we crafted with strong support from Democrats and Republicans. This important bill shows that the Senate can work to find compromise and support the American people.

A key component of any farm bill is the safety net for farmers and ranchers during tough times, like crop insurance. It also includes a safety net for families who fall on hard times.

Our Nation is one of the most prosperous nations in the world. Yet, despite our great wealth, more than one out of seven Americans live below the poverty line. SNAP provides the critical safety net for these Americans who are food-insecure.

In my own State of North Dakota, about 54,000 North Dakotans participate in SNAP on any given day. SNAP plays a critical role in helping these families put food on the table in what is oftentimes one of the most stressful periods in a person's life. Of those 54,000 North Dakotans, 43 percent are children, 28 percent are seniors, and about 4 percent are veterans.

Families can find themselves needing this assistance for a number of reasons. First, their hours may have been reduced at work, they may have been laid off, their places of employment may have gone out of business, or an individual may be unable to work due to a disability or serious illness. Additionally, nearly 9 percent of seniors

live below the poverty level. SNAP helps those seniors with their basic needs, many of whom live on fixed incomes.

Not one of us can predict when an unexpected life event will happen to us. Thankfully, SNAP is available to provide at-risk families with the safety net they need.

Other than those with disabilities, the elderly, or others who cannot work, very few people stay on SNAP for more than 3 months in a 36-month period. Half of those new to the SNAP program will leave it within 9 months once they become financially stable.

Yesterday, I stood here to talk about the critical, bipartisan work of the chairman and ranking member on the Senate Ag Committee and what they have done for ranchers and farmers.

This bipartisan farm bill includes a number of provisions that work to improve employment and job-training opportunities and programs that help parents find new jobs or obtain new skills so that they can qualify for higher paying jobs. This includes expanding SNAP employment and training demonstration pilots that were authorized under the 2014 farm bill. These pilot programs create more opportunities to build evidence on what works best in helping SNAP participants secure and retain jobs and advance in the labor market.

Additionally, the Senate farm bill encourages States to create new public-private partnerships around job training and leverage existing private sector job-training programs for SNAP participants.

During consideration of the 2014 farm bill, the Senate Ag Committee, on which I proudly sit, also worked to responsibly cut \$4 billion of waste, fraud, and abuse from the program, while protecting low-income families who rely on this lifesaving program during times of need. The Senate bill continues to improve SNAP's integrity by preventing dual participation by enabling States to check whether applicants have already enrolled in other States.

In other words, the SNAP program as laid out in the farm bill that we will be considering is a program that has the necessary reforms and the necessary balance. No one—no one—in this body wants someone who is unworthy to receive SNAP benefits, but we also do not want families who need that critical benefit to find it onerous or impossible to access food for their children, food for their grandchildren, or food for our veterans.

A week ago, the House of Representatives narrowly passed its version of the farm bill by two votes, which would drastically cut SNAP. This partisan bill was even opposed by 20 Republican Members. As ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee, COLLIN PETERSON said the following about the vote:

The partisan approach of the Majority has produced a bill that simply doesn't do

enough for the people it's supposed to serve. It still leaves farmers and ranchers vulnerable, it worsens hunger, and it fails rural communities.

This approach makes reckless cuts to the nutrition safety net and in so doing significantly jeopardizes our chances of passing a farm bill. Any effort to separate farm programs from nutrition programs threatens the urban-rural coalition that has kept the farm bill a bipartisan effort for years.

Simply put, the House bill threatens these critical lifelines for struggling families, seniors, and Americans with disabilities. There is no place for politics when it comes to protecting these vulnerable members of our society.

According to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the House farm bill would cause more than 2 million individuals in more than 1 million households to lose their benefits. This simply will not impact single adults, but when a parent loses their food assistance, there isn't enough money to buy for the whole household, including children.

The House farm bill would pull the rug out from underneath low-income families by expanding the already rigid work requirements in SNAP. This includes working parents, children, seniors, veterans, and disabled Americans. A quarter of a million children would lose their access to school lunch.

Last Saturday, I was asked to participate in a discussion with the faith-based community in my State regarding their concerns about the SNAP program. At that time, we were told a couple of stories that I think are significant for review here in the Senate.

I want to start off by telling you about Kim. Kim is a woman, a single mom with two beautiful children. She lives in Bismarck, ND. She works as an accounting assistant, and when she doesn't have full-time hours, she works as a substitute at area daycares. Since her divorce 3 years ago, her family has been eligible for SNAP benefits.

Kim said: "We do what we can, but usually we are eating ramen by the end of the month—don't want to eat cheap food, but there's never enough money to buy healthy foods."

To stretch their food budget, Kim tries to get the children to The Banquet, which is a local feeding ministry, for meals two to three times a week. They also visit the local food pantry.

She told us:

I can only speak for myself, but I'm grateful for this program every single day. I'm working hard. If I don't have enough to eat, I can't work. If I'm not healthy, I'll need even more support.

This is an incredibly common theme among SNAP families.

I think it is worth mentioning that the average meal benefit in North Dakota—I want to repeat this—the average benefit per meal in North Dakota is \$1.32. You can't even get a bowl of Senate bean soup for \$1.32.

Next, there is Ricky. Ricky was born in Minot, ND, where he grew up in pov-

erty, and his family spent the majority of their lives on what was then known as food stamps. Ricky has since moved to Fargo, and a number of years ago, Ricky suffered an unfortunate accident in his workplace. So Ricky was working. He got injured, and he woke up from a coma 3 weeks later. He was later diagnosed with epilepsy, and he no longer can drive or work. Like Ricky, his parents are also disabled, and the program has offered them a consistent safety net during their difficult times.

From his childhood, Ricky recalled that his family rarely had money for food. He said:

If it wasn't for food stamps, we could have starved easily. There were times when my family couldn't even celebrate birthdays because we didn't have anything.

Now in his late twenties and living on his own in Fargo, unfortunately the difficult times surrounding hunger are still a concern for Ricky, for reasons outside of his control. Understanding his difficult situation and all that the SNAP program has meant to him and his family, Ricky is passionate about stopping lawmakers from making unnecessary cuts to this program. For Ricky and his family, the SNAP benefits they have received are more than just a benefit; they are a way of life and a lifeline.

For individuals who are homeless or trying to get back on the right track, SNAP can play an invaluable role in providing a bit of security.

Folks who have benefited from the helping hand SNAP provides are all around us. They could be our neighbors. They could be our friends. They could even be a rural pastor.

Many years ago—about 6 years ago—when I was traveling the State, I had an opportunity to have a discussion in a rural community. That discussion went something like this:

Many people raised concerns about people taking government benefits when they didn't need them. I sympathized. I don't think that we should. I think we need to stop waste, fraud, and abuse. But we know those government programs are there for a purpose.

After there was a long discussion about SNAP, or food stamps, the room cleared, and a young pastor came up to me. His wife was with him, holding their latest child, who looked to be about a 2-year-old toddler.

He said: I didn't want to say this in front of the community. I didn't want to tell you about this in front of the community, but I want you to know that I am on SNAP. My family is on SNAP. We still can't buy milk. We still buy powdered milk to feed our children. If I want to do my rural ministry, I am not paid enough to support and feed my family, so I am working, and I am on SNAP. I can't afford food as a rural pastor.

I think many times we don't realize those around us who are struggling, those who contribute as teachers, as teachers' aides, CNAs. People are working hard. They may be tripped up by

some of the onerous standards and onerous bureaucratic requirements in the farm bill that was passed by the House.

I think it is critically important that we understand that there are very, very few people in America who are abusers of this program. There are very, very few people in America who would take a handout unless they absolutely needed it. They need a hand up. They need job training. They need sympathy for their disabilities. And they need to know that we live in a country that cares for the hungry around us.

As we consider the farm bill, it is important to remind ourselves about those who are not as fortunate as we are, those who struggle to put food on the table for their families or who might not be able to put food on the table because they were laid off or their hours were reduced at their minimum wage jobs.

The chairman and ranking member have worked diligently to find ways to continue to improve SNAP's integrity and operations.

I hope the Senate votes on and passes this strong bipartisan farm bill in the next few days. I hope the House decides to keep working through August, just as the Senate will do, to reach an agreement and pass a strong farm bill before it expires and jeopardizes SNAP further.

The farm bill gives farmers the certainty they need to get through tough times, and it is important that it also maintain a strong safety net to give certainty to our Nation's families that they can get the support and food they need at the same time.

I urge all of my colleagues to stand with the ranking member and the chairman and all of the Senate Agriculture Committee in supporting this farm bill and supporting the nutrition title of this bill.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, most people in America are probably familiar with the advertising slogans: "Pork, the other white meat" and "Beef, it's what's for dinner," but what they might not know, what they might not be as aware of is the cronyist underbelly of slogans like these.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture checkoff programs behind these very slogans and others like them tend to collect compulsory fees from producers of milk, eggs, beef, and other agricultural products. These funds are then used to promote and do research on those particular commodities.

Unfortunately, these programs have been rife with opportunities for abuse. Many of these programs have crept far

beyond the scope of their statutory mandate by engaging in illegal lobbying and anticompetitive activities. Take, for example, the case of a small California company called JUST, Inc., formerly known as Hampton Creek, which a few years ago was attacked for selling its vegan mayonnaise known as Just Mayo in stores nationwide. It turns out that a Federal entity called the American Egg Board conspired with USDA employees and top executives from the egg industry to threaten and coerce retailers into not carrying the Just Mayo brand.

The original intent of these programs was to research and promote certain commodities, not to disparage other ones, and they certainly were not intended to prevent any new products from having a fair chance in the marketplace.

Let me just stop, by the way, while we are talking about Just Mayo and that incident, to take note of the fact that it ought to be very concerning to us that the Federal Government became involved in a campaign to pressure someone about whether they could set up a brand of vegan mayonnaise and call it that.

So what were supposed to be promotional boards have instead become protectionist boards. What is more, checkoff programs force farmers to pay into a system that sometimes actively works against their interests and, on top of that, the boards for these programs have come under fire for a lack of transparency and for misuse of their funds. Some have gone so far as failing to submit congressionally mandated spending reports, refusing and delaying requests under FOIA, and even engaging in protracted legal battles to prevent public audits from being disclosed.

In short, these programs—the so-called checkoff programs—are in significant need of reform. This is why I have worked hard with my colleagues—Senator BOOKER, Senator HASSAN, Senator PAUL, and Senator WARREN—to introduce amendment No. 3074. This amendment would address some of the most grievous abuses of these commodity checkoff programs.

First, the amendment would prohibit them—these checkoff programs—from contracting with any organization that lobbies on agricultural policy with an exemption for research at institutions of higher education. It would also prohibit employees and agents of the checkoff boards from engaging in activities that may pose a conflict of interest. Furthermore, the amendment would establish uniform standards for checkoff programs that prohibit anticompetitive activity and any unfair or deceptive practices.

While this amendment would not abolish checkoff programs, it would implement much needed transparency measures so farmers can see what their checkoff dollars are actually being spent to do. These commonsense reforms will not be convenient perhaps to

the giants of the agricultural industry—at least not the ones using checkoff dollars to rig the system in their favor. These commonsense reforms will help farmers—and particularly the little guys—from the small farms and the startup companies to see exactly where the fees they pay are going and ensure that their hard-earned money is not being used unfairly against them.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of this amendment to bring about much needed reform with checkoff programs.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, the amendment offered by Senator LEE and Senator BOOKER would prohibit checkoffs from partnering with farm groups and others that engage with government. This prohibition would extend far beyond farm country, and it would have negative impacts on the general public. This is because checkoffs partner with a diverse number of entities, not just farm organizations, to conduct research and education campaigns on environmental, conservation, improved nutrition, and other critical areas that benefit our entire society.

Examples of entities who have contracted with checkoffs and would be barred from continuing checkoff work because they engage in lobbying include the American Heart Association, the American Association of Pediatricians, and the National Women, Infants and Children Association. These organizations and many others would be prohibited from partnering with checkoffs if this amendment were adopted.

I urge my colleagues to think carefully about the impact this amendment would have, and I urge a "no" vote on the Lee-Booker amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I join with the chairman in asking members to vote no on this amendment. Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be agreed to en bloc: the amendment by Senator ISAKSON, No. 3348; Senators WYDEN and MURKOWSKI, No. 3346; Senator ENZI, No. 3181; Senators KING and COLLINS, No. 3221; Senators GILLIBRAND and TOOMEY, No. 3390; Senator HEINRICH, No. 3287; Senator RUBIO, No. 3364; Senator SULLIVAN, No. 3303, Senator HIRONO, No. 3321; Senators CORTEZ MASTO and PORTMAN, No. 3388; Senator DURBIN, No. 3389; Senators BROWN and PORTMAN, No. 3323; Senator CANTWELL, No. 3365; Senator MORAN, No. 3171; and Senator THUNE, No. 3371. I further ask that it be in order for the following amendment to be called up and reported by number: the amendment by Senator LEE, No. 3074. I further ask that the cloture motions with respect to H.R. 2 be withdrawn and the Senate now vote on the

following amendments in the order listed: Senator LEE, No. 3074; Senator THUNE, No. 3134; and Senator ROBERTS, the substitute No. 3224; further, that the Lee amendment be subject to a 60-vote affirmative threshold for adoption; and that following disposition of the Roberts amendment, the bill, as amended, if amended, be read a third time and the Senate vote on passage with no intervening action or debate and that passage be subject to a 60-vote affirmative threshold.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments (Nos. 3348, 3346, 3181, 3221, 3390, 3287, 3364, 3303, 3321, 3388, 3389, 3323, 3365, 3171, and 3371) were agreed to, as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 3348

(Purpose: To modify the provision relating to economic adjustment assistance for upland cotton users, to provide payments for losses relating to peach and blueberry crops, and to strike the provision relating to the use of the Commodity Credit Corporation)

On page 26, line 16, strike “2020” and insert “2021”.

At the end of subtitle E of title I, add the following:

SEC. 15. LOSS OF PEACH AND BLUEBERRY CROPS DUE TO EXTREME COLD.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall provide compensation for expenses relating to losses of peach and blueberry crops that occurred—

- (1) during calendar year 2017; and
- (2) due to extreme cold, as determined by the Secretary.

(b) FUNDING.—Of the funds of the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Secretary shall use to carry out this section \$18,000,000, to remain available until expended.

Strike section 1710.

AMENDMENT NO. 3346

(Purpose: To provide that research and extension grants may be made for the purposes of researching hop plant health)

On page 1203, strike line 3 and insert the following:

“(16) HOP PLANT HEALTH INITIATIVE.—Research and extension grants may be made under this section for the purposes of developing and disseminating science-based tools and treatments to combat diseases of hops caused by the plant pathogens *Podosphaera macularis* and *Pseudoperonospora humuli*.”.

AMENDMENT NO. 3181

(Purpose: To improve the Rural Energy for America Program)

Strike section 9107 and insert the following:

SEC. 9107. RURAL ENERGY FOR AMERICA PROGRAM.

Section 9007 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (7 U.S.C. 8107) is amended—

- (1) in subsection (c)(1)—
 - (A) in subparagraph (A), by striking “and” at the end;
 - (B) in subparagraph (B), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and
 - (C) by adding at the end the following:

“(C) to purchase and install efficient energy equipment or systems.”;
- (2) in subsection (e), by striking “(g)” each place it appears and inserting “(f)”;
- (3) by striking subsection (f);
- (4) by redesignating subsection (g) as subsection (f); and

(5) in subsection (f) (as so redesignated), in paragraph (3), by striking “\$20,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2014 through 2018” and inserting “\$50,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2019 through 2023”.

AMENDMENT NO. 3221

(Purpose: To provide for a report on funding for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and other extension programs)

At the end of subtitle E of title XII, add the following:

SEC. 125. REPORT ON FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE AND OTHER EXTENSION PROGRAMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after the date on which the census of agriculture required to be conducted in calendar year 2017 under section 2 of the Census of Agriculture Act of 1997 (7 U.S.C. 2204g) is released, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate a report that describes the funding necessary to adequately address the needs of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, activities carried out under the Smith-Lever Act (7 U.S.C. 341 et seq.), and research and extension programs carried out at an 1890 Institution (as defined in section 2 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7601)) or an institution designated under the Act of July 2, 1862 (commonly known as the “First Morrill Act”) (12 Stat. 503, chapter 130; 7 U.S.C. 301 et seq.), to provide adequate services for the growth and development of the economies of rural communities based on the changing demographic in the rural and farming communities in the various States.

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—In preparing the report under subsection (a), the Secretary shall focus on the funding needs of the programs described in subsection (a) with respect to carrying out activities relating to small and diverse farms and ranches, veteran farmers and ranchers, value-added agriculture, direct-to-consumer sales, and specialty crops.

AMENDMENT NO. 3390

(Purpose: To prohibit the slaughter of dogs and cats for human consumption)

At the end of subtitle E of title XII, add the following:

SEC. 125. PROHIBITION ON SLAUGHTER OF DOGS AND CATS FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subsection (c), no person may—

- (1) knowingly slaughter a dog or cat for human consumption; or
- (2) knowingly ship, transport, move, deliver, receive, possess, purchase, sell, or donate—
 - (A) a dog or cat to be slaughtered for human consumption; or
 - (B) a dog or cat part for human consumption.

(b) SCOPE.—Subsection (a) shall apply only with respect to conduct—

- (1) in interstate commerce or foreign commerce; or
- (2) within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States.

(c) EXCEPTION FOR INDIAN TRIBES.—The prohibition in subsection (a) shall not apply to an Indian (as defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304)) carrying out any activity described in subsection (a) for the purpose of a religious ceremony.

(d) PENALTY.—Any person who violates subsection (a) shall be subject to a fine in an amount not greater than \$5,000 for each violation.

(e) EFFECT ON STATE LAW.—Nothing in this section—

(1) limits any State or local law or regulation protecting the welfare of animals; or

(2) prevents a State or unit of local government from adopting and enforcing an animal welfare law or regulation that is more stringent than this section.

AMENDMENT NO. 3287

(Purpose: To modify the study of marketplace fraud of traditional foods)

Strike section 12518 and insert the following:

SEC. 12518. STUDY OF MARKETPLACE FRAUD OF TRADITIONAL FOODS AND TRIBAL SEEDS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study on—

- (1) the market impact of traditional foods, Tribally produced products, and products that use traditional foods;
- (2) fraudulent foods that mimic traditional foods or Tribal seeds that are available in the commercial marketplace as of the date of enactment of this Act;
- (3) the means by which authentic traditional foods and Tribally produced foods might be protected against the impact of fraudulent foods in the marketplace; and
- (4) the availability and long-term viability of Tribal seeds, including an analysis of the storage, cultivation, harvesting, and commercialization of Tribal seeds.

(b) INCLUSIONS.—The study conducted under subsection (a) shall include—

- (1) a consideration of the circumstances under which fraudulent foods in the marketplace occur; and
- (2) an analysis of Federal laws, including intellectual property laws and trademark laws, that might offer protections for Tribal seeds and traditional foods and against fraudulent foods.

(c) REPORT.—Not later than 60 days after the date of completion of the study, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit a report describing the results of the study under this section to—

- (1) the Committee on Agriculture of the House of Representatives;
- (2) the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives;
- (3) the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry of the Senate;
- (4) the Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate; and
- (5) the Committee on Indian Affairs of the Senate.

(d) PRIVACY OF INFORMATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Comptroller General of the United States shall protect sensitive Tribal information gained through the study conducted under subsection (a), including information about Indian sacred places.

AMENDMENT NO. 3364

(Purpose: To prohibit the use of funds to carry out programs in Cuba in contravention of the National Security Presidential Memorandum prohibiting transactions with entities owned, controlled, or operated by or on behalf of military intelligence or security services of Cuba)

On page 257, line 2, insert after the period the following: “Funds may not be used as described in the previous sentence in contravention with directives set forth under the National Security Presidential Memorandum entitled ‘Strengthening the Policy of the United States Toward Cuba’ issued by the President on June 16, 2017, during the period in which that memorandum is in effect.”

AMENDMENT NO. 3303

(Purpose: To ensure that the Secretary of Agriculture enforces certain Buy American requirements with respect to fish harvested within United States waters)

On page 1203, strike lines 20 through 22 and insert the following:

(1) fully enforce the Buy American provisions applicable to domestic food assistance programs administered by the Food and Nutrition Service, including, for use in those domestic food assistance programs, the purchase of a fish or fish product that substantially contains—

(A) fish (including tuna) harvested within—

(i) a State;

(ii) the District of Columbia; or

(iii) the Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States, as described in Presidential Proclamation 5030 (48 Fed. Reg. 10605; March 10, 1983); or

(B) tuna harvested by a United States flagged vessel; and

AMENDMENT NO. 3321

(Purpose: To provide additional assistance under the noninsured crop assistance program for certain producers)

At the end of subtitle F of title I, add the following:

SEC. 1602. ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR CERTAIN PRODUCERS.

(a) **DEFINITION OF QUALIFYING NATURAL DISASTER DECLARATION.**—In this section, the term “qualifying natural disaster declaration” means—

(1) a natural disaster declared by the Secretary under section 321(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1961(a)); or

(2) a major disaster or emergency designated by the President under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.).

(b) **AVAILABILITY OF ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE.**—As soon as practicable after October 1, 2018, the Secretary shall make available assistance under section 196 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (7 U.S.C. 7333) to producers of an eligible crop (as defined in subsection (a)(2) of that section) that suffered losses in a county covered by a qualifying natural disaster declaration for production losses due to volcanic activity.

(c) **AMOUNT.**—The Secretary shall make assistance available under subsection (b) in an amount equal to the amount of assistance determined under section 196(d) of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (7 U.S.C. 7333(d)), less any fees that are owed by producers under section 196(k) of that Act (7 U.S.C. 7333(k)).

AMENDMENT NO. 3388

(Purpose: To establish the Council on Rural Community Innovation and Economic Development.)

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD of June 27, 2018, under “Text of Amendments.”)

AMENDMENT NO. 3389

(Purpose: To reauthorize the rural emergency medical services training and equipment assistance program under section 330J of the Public Health Service Act)

At the end of subtitle F of title XII, add the following:

SEC. ____ . REAUTHORIZATION OF RURAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This section may be cited as the “Supporting and Improving Rural EMS Needs Act of 2018” or the “SIREN Act of 2018”.

(b) **AMENDMENTS.**—Section 330J of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 254c–15) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by striking “in rural areas” and inserting “in rural areas or to residents of rural areas”;

(2) by striking subsections (b) through (f) and inserting the following:

“(b) **ELIGIBILITY; APPLICATION.**—To be eligible to receive grant under this section, an entity shall—

“(1) be—

“(A) an emergency medical services agency operated by a local or tribal government (including fire-based and non-fire based); or

“(B) an emergency medical services agency that is described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and exempt from tax under section 501(a) of such Code; and

“(2) submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

“(c) **USE OF FUNDS.**—An entity—

“(1) shall use amounts received through a grant under subsection (a) to—

“(A) train emergency medical services personnel as appropriate to obtain and maintain licenses and certifications relevant to service in an emergency medical services agency described in subsection (b)(1);

“(B) conduct courses that qualify graduates to serve in an emergency medical services agency described in subsection (b)(1) in accordance with State and local requirements;

“(C) fund specific training to meet Federal or State licensing or certification requirements; and

“(D) acquire emergency medical services equipment; and

“(2) may use amounts received through a grant under subsection (a) to—

“(A) recruit and retain emergency medical services personnel, which may include volunteer personnel;

“(B) develop new ways to educate emergency health care providers through the use of technology-enhanced educational methods; or

“(C) acquire personal protective equipment for emergency medical services personnel as required by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

“(d) **GRANT AMOUNTS.**—Each grant awarded under this section shall be in an amount not to exceed \$200,000.

“(e) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section:

“(1) The term ‘emergency medical services’—

“(A) means resources used by a public or private nonprofit licensed entity to deliver medical care outside of a medical facility under emergency conditions that occur as a result of the condition of the patient; and

“(B) includes services delivered (either on a compensated or volunteer basis) by an emergency medical services provider or other provider that is licensed or certified by the State involved as an emergency medical technician, a paramedic, or an equivalent professional (as determined by the State).

“(2) The term ‘rural area’ means—

“(A) a nonmetropolitan statistical area;

“(B) an area designated as a rural area by any law or regulation of a State; or

“(C) a rural census tract of a metropolitan statistical area (as determined under the most recent rural urban commuting area code as set forth by the Office of Management and Budget).

“(f) **MATCHING REQUIREMENT.**—The Secretary may not award a grant under this section to an entity unless the entity agrees that the entity will make available (directly or through contributions from other public or private entities) non-Federal contributions toward the activities to be carried out

under the grant in an amount equal to 25 percent of the amount received under the grant.”; and

(3) in subsection (g)(1), by striking “2002 through 2006” and inserting “2019 through 2023”.

AMENDMENT NO. 3323

(Purpose: To add a provision relating to extension and agricultural research at 1890 land-grant colleges)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ . EXTENSION AND AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AT 1890 LAND-GRANT COLLEGES, INCLUDING TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY.

(a) **EXTENSION.**—Section 1444 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3221) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by adding at the end the following:

“(5) **FISCAL YEAR 2019, 2020, 2021, OR 2022.**—In addition to other amounts authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, there are authorized to be appropriated for 1 of fiscal year 2019, 2020, 2021, or 2022 such sums as are necessary to ensure that an eligible institution receiving a distribution of funds under this section for that fiscal year receives not less than the amount of funds received by that eligible institution under this section for the preceding fiscal year.”; and

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in the undesignated matter following paragraph (2)(B)—

(i) by striking “paragraph (2) of this subsection” and inserting “this paragraph”; and

(ii) by striking “In computing” and inserting the following:

“(C) In computing”;

(B) in paragraph (2)—

(i) in subparagraph (B), by striking “Of the remainder” and inserting “Except as provided in paragraph (4), of the remainder”; and

(ii) by striking “(2) any funds” and inserting the following:

“(3) **ADDITIONAL AMOUNT.**—Any funds”;

(C) in paragraph (1)—

(i) by striking “are allocated” and inserting “were allocated”; and

(ii) by striking “; and” and inserting “, as so designated as of that date.”;

(D) by striking “(b) Beginning” in the matter preceding paragraph (1) and all that follows through “any funds” in paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

“(b) **DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Funds made available under this section shall be distributed among eligible institutions in accordance with this subsection.

“(2) **BASE AMOUNT.**—Any funds”;

(E) by adding at the end the following:

“(4) **SPECIAL AMOUNT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019, 2020, 2021, OR 2022.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to subparagraph (B), for 1 of fiscal year 2019, 2020, 2021, or 2022, if the calculation under paragraph (3)(B) would result in a distribution of less than \$3,000,000 to an eligible institution that first received funds under this section after the date of enactment of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Public Law 113–79; 128 Stat. 649) for a fiscal year, that institution shall receive a distribution of \$3,000,000 for that fiscal year.

“(B) **LIMITATION.**—Subparagraph (A) shall apply only if amounts are appropriated under subsection (a)(5) to ensure that an eligible institution receiving a distribution of funds under this section for fiscal year 2019, 2020, 2021, or 2022, as applicable, receives not less than the amount of funds received by that eligible institution under this section for the preceding fiscal year.”.

(b) **RESEARCH.**—Section 1445 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and

Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3222) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by adding at the end the following:

“(6) FISCAL YEAR 2019, 2020, 2021, OR 2022.—In addition to other amounts authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, there are authorized to be appropriated for 1 of fiscal year 2019, 2020, 2021, or 2022 such sums as are necessary to ensure that an eligible institution receiving a distribution of funds under this section for that fiscal year receives not less than the amount of funds received by that eligible institution under this section for the preceding fiscal year.”; and

(2) in subsection (b)—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) by adding at the end the following:

“(D) SPECIAL AMOUNT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019, 2020, 2021, OR 2022.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—Subject to clause (ii), for 1 of fiscal year 2019, 2020, 2021, or 2022, if the calculation under subparagraph (C) would result in a distribution of less than \$3,000,000 to an eligible institution that first received funds under this section after the date of enactment of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-79; 128 Stat. 649), that institution shall receive a distribution of \$3,000,000 for that fiscal year.

“(ii) LIMITATION.—Clause (i) shall apply only if amounts are appropriated under subsection (a)(6) to ensure that an eligible institution receiving a distribution of funds under this section for fiscal year 2019, 2020, 2021, or 2022, as applicable, receives not less than the amount of funds received by that eligible institution under this section for the preceding fiscal year.”;

(ii) in subparagraph (B), by striking “(B) Of funds” and inserting the following:

“(C) ADDITIONAL AMOUNT.—Except as provided in subparagraph (D), of funds”;

(iii) in subparagraph (A)—

(I) by striking “are allocated” and inserting “were allocated”;

(II) by inserting “, as so designated as of that date” before the period at the end; and

(III) by striking “(A) Funds” and inserting the following:

“(B) BASE AMOUNT.—Funds”; and

(iv) in the matter preceding subparagraph (B) (as so designated), by striking “(2) The” and all that follows through “follows:” and inserting the following:

“(3) DISTRIBUTIONS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—After allocating amounts under paragraph (2), the remainder shall be allotted among the eligible institutions in accordance with this paragraph.”;

(B) in paragraph (1), by striking “(1) Three per centum” and inserting the following:

“(2) ADMINISTRATION.—3 percent”;

(C) in the matter preceding paragraph (2) (as so designated), by striking “(b) Beginning” and all that follows through “follows:” and inserting the following:

“(b) DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Funds made available under this section shall be distributed among eligible institutions in accordance with this subsection.”.

AMENDMENT NO. 3365

(Purpose: To avert the waiving of liability for a utility whose line clearing work ignites a wildfire)

In section 8632(f), strike paragraph (2) and insert the following:

(2) PROJECT WORK.—If the Secretary approves a supplement to an approved plan under subsection (c) of section 512 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1772) or an agreement entered into under subsection (d)(1) of that section that covers a vegetation management project under the pilot program, the liability provisions of subsection (g) of that section

shall apply to the vegetation management project.

AMENDMENT NO. 3171

(Purpose: To include a provision on requirements for the calculation of a separate actual crop revenue and agriculture risk coverage guarantee for irrigated and nonirrigated covered commodities)

In section 1104(5), redesignate subparagraphs (A) through (C) as subparagraphs (B) through (D), respectively.

In section 1104(5), insert before subparagraph (B) (as so redesignated) the following:

(A) in paragraph (2), by inserting “in accordance with subsection (h),” before “to the maximum extent practicable”;

In section 1104(6), strike “(h) PUBLICATIONS.—” and insert the following:

“(h) CALCULATION OF SEPARATE ACTUAL CROP REVENUE AND AGRICULTURE RISK COVERAGE GUARANTEE.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—On request of a county Farm Service Agency committee, in coordination with a Farm Service Agency State committee, the Secretary shall consider a 1-time request to calculate a separate actual crop revenue and agriculture risk coverage guarantee for irrigated and nonirrigated covered commodities under subsection (g)(2) in a county if, during the 2014 through 2018 crop years—

“(A) an average of not less than 5 percent of the planted and considered planted acreage of a covered commodity in the county was irrigated; and

“(B) an average of not less than 5 percent of the planted and considered planted acreage of the covered commodity in the county was nonirrigated.

“(2) SOURCE OF INFORMATION.—In considering a request described in paragraph (1) and calculating a separate actual crop revenue and agriculture risk coverage guarantee for irrigated and nonirrigated covered commodities in a county, the Secretary may use other sources of yield information, including the yield history of representative farms in the State, region, or crop reporting district, as determined by the Secretary.

“(i) PUBLICATIONS.—

AMENDMENT NO. 3371

(Purpose: To provide that producers may change their election to participate in agriculture risk coverage or price loss coverage in the 2021 crop year)

At the end of subtitle A of title I, add the following:

SEC. 11. OPTION TO CHANGE PRODUCER ELECTION.

Section 1115 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (7 U.S.C. 9015) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(h) OPTION TO CHANGE PRODUCER ELECTION.—Notwithstanding subsection (a), for the 2021 crop year, all of the producers on a farm may make a 1-time, irrevocable election to change the election applicable to the producers on the farm under that subsection or subsection (c), as applicable, to price loss coverage or agriculture risk coverage, as applicable, which shall apply to the producers on the farm for each of the 2021, 2022, and 2023 crop years.”.

AMENDMENT NO. 3074 TO AMENDMENT NO. 3224

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment by number.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Kansas [Mr. ROBERTS], for Mr. LEE, proposes an amendment numbered 3074 to amendment No. 3224.

(The amendment is printed in the RECORD of June 25, 2018, under “Text of Amendments.”)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the Lee amendment.

Mr. ROUNDS. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted “nay.”

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Illinois (Ms. DUCKWORTH), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY), and the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY) are necessarily absent.

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

The result was announced—yeas 38, nays 57, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 142 Leg.]

YEAS—38

Bennet	Hassan	Rubio
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Sanders
Booker	Heller	Schatz
Brown	Hirono	Schumer
Capito	Johnson	Scott
Cardin	Kennedy	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Lee	Tester
Cruz	McCaskey	Toomey
Durbin	Menendez	Udall
Flake	Merkley	Van Hollen
Gillibrand	Murphy	Warren
Grassley	Paul	Whitehouse
Harris	Reed	

NAYS—57

Baldwin	Feinstein	Murray
Barrasso	Fischer	Nelson
Blunt	Gardner	Perdue
Boozman	Graham	Peters
Burr	Hatch	Portman
Cantwell	Heitkamp	Risch
Carper	Hoeven	Roberts
Casey	Hyde-Smith	Rounds
Cassidy	Inhofe	Sasse
Collins	Isakson	Shaheen
Coons	Jones	Shelby
Corker	Kaine	Smith
Cornyn	King	Stabenow
Cotton	Klobuchar	Thune
Crapo	Lankford	Tillis
Daines	Manchin	Warner
Donnelly	McConnell	Wicker
Enzi	Moran	Wyden
Ernst	Murkowski	Young

NOT VOTING—5

Alexander	Leahy	McCain
Duckworth	Markey	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUNT). Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is rejected.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 3134

The question now occurs on agreeing to the Thune amendment No. 3134.

The amendment (No. 3134) was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 3224

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question now occurs on agreeing to the Roberts amendment No. 3224, as amended.

The amendment (No. 3224) in the nature of a substitute, as amended, was agreed to.

The amendment was ordered to be engrossed and the bill to be read a third time.

The bill was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass?

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) and the Senator from Arizona (Mr. MCCAIN).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Vermont (Mr. LEAHY) is necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 86, nays 11, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 143 Leg.]

YEAS—86

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Peters
Barrasso	Graham	Portman
Bennet	Grassley	Reed
Blumenthal	Harris	Risch
Blunt	Hassan	Roberts
Booker	Hatch	Rounds
Boozman	Heinrich	Rubio
Brown	Heitkamp	Sanders
Cantwell	Hirono	Sasse
Capito	Hoeven	Schatz
Cardin	Hyde-Smith	Schumer
Carper	Isakson	Scott
Casey	Jones	Shaheen
Cassidy	Kaine	Shelby
Collins	Kennedy	Smith
Coons	King	Stabenow
Cornyn	Klobuchar	Sullivan
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Tester
Crapo	Markey	Thune
Cruz	McCaskill	Tillis
Daines	McConnell	Udall
Donnelly	Menendez	Van Hollen
Duckworth	Merkley	Warner
Durbin	Moran	Warren
Enzi	Murkowski	Whitehouse
Ernst	Murphy	Wicker
Feinstein	Murray	Wyden
Fischer	Nelson	Young
Gardner	Perdue	

NAYS—11

Burr	Heller	Lee
Corker	Inhofe	Paul
Cotton	Johnson	Toomey
Flake	Lankford	

NOT VOTING—3

Alexander	Leahy	McCain
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The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for passage of the bill, the bill, as amended, is passed.

The Senator from Kansas.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ROBERTS. 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, which, I assure Members, I will not do.

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

The Senator from Kansas.

FARM BILL

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, with 171 amendments and a vote of 86 to 11, obviously, getting this farm bill done has been a tremendous team effort. You are only as good as your staff on both sides of the aisle, and they make us look good when we stand up here a little confused trying to get things a little sorted out.

I wish to thank my staff: James Glueck, DaNita Murray, Janae Brady, Fred Clark, Meghan Cline, Haley Donahue, Matt Erickson, Darin Guries, Chance Hunley, Chu Hwang, Chelsie Keys, Sarah Little, Curt Mann, Andy Rezendes, Bob Rosado, Anthony Seiler, Wayne Stoskopf—who, by the way, knows more about farm programs than anybody else on the staff, myself included—Andrew Vlasaty, and Katherine Thomas.

I also want to mention Jackie Cottrell, Amber Kirchhoefer, Will Stafford, Morgan Anderson, and Stacy Daniels in my personal office.

I want to especially thank the ranking member—vice chairman, really—Senator STABENOW, and her team, led by the indomitable Joe Shultz and Jacqlyn Schneider. The efforts of Jessie Williams, Amanda Kelly, Bobby Mehta, Katie Salay, and Micah Wortham have been valuable to the Ag Committee process.

Additionally, I thank the technical support from the Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue, and the staff at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Thank you so much for your help.

I also appreciate the work of the Congressional Budget Office staff, including: Tiffany Arthur, Megan Carroll, Kathleen FitzGerald, Jennifer Gray, Jim Langley, and Robert Reese.

I now yield to my distinguished ranking member, Senator STABENOW.

I say to the Senator, thank you for being such a great partner.

Ms. STABENOW. I thank the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I thank my partner and friend. This has been a tremendous team effort, and it is a great pleasure to work with the chairman.

Today the Senate has proven that bipartisanship is the way we can get things done, and we all know that is the case. It is not always the easiest path to take. However, when we put our differences aside and focus on the needs of the communities and people we serve, that is how we deliver a good bill. In this case, it is a bill that serves our farmers, our families, and rural America. Over 500 food, agriculture, and conservation leaders agree that this bill will provide certainty to communities and to our farmers across the country.

From the start, we have had a collaborative process. We have built this bill on feedback. We heard from farmers and local leaders at field hearings and in our committee room. We added ideas proposed by Members on both sides of the aisle, both on and off the committee. From our committee markup to today, we have incorporated a total of 171 either bipartisan bills introduced by Members or bipartisan amendments—171.

We were able to get a bill done because we never lost sight of the importance of our agricultural economy and the 16 million jobs it supports. I am proud that we voted in a bipartisan way to move this bill forward. That is the good news for rural America and the men and women who work hard every day to give us the safest, most affordable food supply in the world.

Let me now give some thank-yous. As the chairman indicated, there are many.

I appreciate very much the work of our Democratic leader and his staff for their leadership and support through the process. I thank the majority leader, who knows how important agriculture is to Kentucky. I think we have some things in this bill that are going to make for an even stronger agricultural economy in Kentucky, as well as around the country. I appreciate that he moved this bill quickly on the Senate floor.

Of course, I have to thank my friend and partner Senator ROBERTS, who is chairman of the committee. He has stayed true to our commitment to deliver a bipartisan bill and has worked extremely hard to get us here today. I say: Congratulations, Mr. Chairman, and to all of our Senate colleagues who supported this important bill.

I thank my incredible staff, as well as Senator ROBERTS' incredible staff, for working together very hard, very consistently, putting together a bipartisan bill—really, a historic farm bill—and ultimately working as a team to get us over the goal line.

Of course, Joe Shultz and Jacqlyn Schneider, my staff director and deputy staff director and policy director for the committee—true leaders from start to finish. They have both been with me on the committee staff since the very beginning, in 2011, when I chaired the committee.

Joe has led our amazing team and has been living and breathing the farm bill for the past year. You can sleep tonight, Joe.

Jacqlyn has done so as well. Jacqlyn is the heart and soul of our Ag Committee, whose tremendous work over the past two farm bills has made sure that we were protecting our families and supporting our specialty crop producers. She led our efforts to develop groundbreaking new initiatives on food access, like Double Up Food Bucks.

Mary Beth Schultz, our chief counsel, had no idea what she was getting herself into when she came to the Ag Committee this last year. In no time, she