

the final bill. These bills are based on the conversations I have had with farmers and ranchers as I travel throughout South Dakota as well as events I have held to hear from ag producers about their priorities for the farm bill.

I am very pleased that the framework Senator BOOZMAN has put out contains measures from a number of the bills I introduced. That includes elements of my Conservation Reserve Program Improvement Act—legislation I introduced to make the Conservation Reserve Program a more effective option for producers—as well as my CRP Flexibility Act, which would provide additional drought flexibilities for CRP contract holders.

It also includes my Crop Insurance for Future Farmers Act, which I introduced with Senator KLOBUCHAR to help make crop insurance more affordable for young farmers, as well as measures from my Expediting Forest Restoration and Recovery Act and my Rural Internet Improvement Act.

It includes a section modeled off my bipartisan Strengthening Local Processing Act to increase the processing options available to livestock producers and expand small meatpackers' capacity.

Importantly, this framework would make improvements to the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs, which are essential elements of the farm safety net.

I am tremendously grateful to Senator BOOZMAN for his work on this framework and his efforts to move the farm bill process forward.

I hope that my Democratic colleagues will approach pursuing a bipartisan agreement on this legislation with a new seriousness. As I said earlier, their focus on nonfarm priorities has slowed progress on this farm bill. I hope the House's recent work and Senator BOOZMAN's efforts will encourage them to focus on what should be in the substance of any farm bill—namely, the farm.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. LANKFORD. Mr. President, if everyone here in this Chamber is watching the news of late, in the last 24 hours, the FBI scooped up eight citizens from Tajikistan that were in the United States and arrested them on immigration violations, but they were also suspected terrorists that were in the United States. They were in Philadelphia; they were in Los Angeles; they were in New York City; and they were

individuals that had direct connections to terrorism. And they were here because they illegally crossed our southern border and were waved in.

This is an issue that I have been on this floor at this desk speaking about for 2 years now. The population that is crossing our southern border has dramatically changed in the last 2 years.

No longer it is just about everyone from the Western Hemisphere. Now we have very large numbers of people from places like Tajikistan, from West Africa, from China, from Russia, from Pakistan, from other specific places that are known areas of terrorism, and we have people in the thousands that are crossing our borders that we don't know who they are, from places that we typically don't have people illegally crossing.

This group of individuals are called special interest aliens; that is, they are not on our Terror Watchlist, but we don't know why they are here or how they got here or the process that they came to come to the United States across our southern border illegally is unusual, different, or is directed by a crime organization outside of Mexico—special interest aliens.

Last year, we had 70,000 people that fell into the category of special interest aliens. This year, so far, we have had 53,000 people that were special interest aliens. These eight individuals that were arrested yesterday were part of that group of special interest aliens: illegally present here, not vetted on our southern border but released on their own recognizance, and now, with an announcement yesterday from the FBI, a connection to terrorism, specifically ISIS terrorism.

In the past several months, the FBI has also picked up al-Shabaab terrorists in the United States that had crossed on our southern border, that were listed as special interest aliens, and that have now been picked up.

We are literally living on borrowed time. This is the issue that I have brought up over and over again to this body to say we need to pay attention to this issue of what is happening on our southern border.

Now, currently the administration has put in place a new Executive order to try to lower somewhat the number of people that are coming across, but the way they are doing it is by turning around people from the Western Hemisphere, but folks from other areas like Tajikistan, those folks are still coming through. Some are being detained, but a large number are actually being released on their own recognizance as special interest aliens. We don't have information on a direct tie to terrorism at the time they are at the border so they are being released.

The bill that I brought to this body would have changed the way we did screening dramatically, would have taken all of these issues about terrorism from the end of the process and moved it to the beginning so that we are not releasing people and then trying to figure out if we can chase them.

Right now, what is really happening day-to-day is that individuals that are crossing our border, we are hoping that the FBI can pick up any information on them after they are already released into the country.

Remember, there were 70,000 individuals like this last year, 53,000 so far this year, and we are hoping the FBI is able to discern they are a terror threat before they carry out an act of terrorism. That is exactly the wrong way to do this.

We need to enforce our southern border with more than just some action to be able to reduce what is happening. We should not be living on borrowed time every day awaiting the next terrorist attack in the United States because our border was open.

What have we done in the past? Well, last year we deported four Tajiks—last year, four. Now we are in the process of deporting another eight. We don't know what the numbers are here. And at the end of the day, that is a very bad spot for us to be in as a country.

I don't want the United States of America living on borrowed time, awaiting the next terrorist attack because we were not paying attention and enforcing our own southern border.

We need to be able to wake up on this.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The Senator from Arkansas.

#### FARM BILL

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, prior to breaking for the Memorial Day recess, the House Agriculture Committee did something few beltway pundits thought was possible. The committee approved, in a bipartisan manner, a farm bill that meets the needs of farmers, ranchers, foresters, rural communities, and consumers across America.

I commend Chairman GT THOMPSON for his stewardship of this bill through an open process that let every committee member have a say in the bill.

Likewise, I wanted to express my appreciation for each of the Members that voted to advance this legislation out of committee. Chairwoman STABENOW also recently released her farm bill framework, putting the Senate majority's priorities on paper and advancing the discussion forward.

Cumulatively, these efforts exhibit the first real progress toward passage of a new farm bill since the process began 2 years ago. This week, Republicans on the Agriculture Committee are building on that momentum by releasing our farm bill framework.

We believe that our framework reflects the Chamber's shared commitments across all 12 titles while putting more farm in the farm bill, something we have been calling for since the onset.

Let's talk about what that means. It means we direct additional resources to the tools that farmers rely on and they are calling for us to invest in, while ensuring we do no harm to our

nutrition programs which account for over 80 percent of the bill's baseline spending.

For example, we have doubled the funding for the farm bill's premier trade programs to help increase our competitiveness overseas. This is desperately needed considering we are projected to see a record \$32 billion agricultural trade deficit this year. U.S. farmers have been able to point to their positive trade balance in agriculture as a source of pride for the better part of the last 50 years as they worked to feed, clothe, and fuel the world.

Unfortunately, this administration's refusal to engage on the issue has created an agricultural trade imbalance that is projected to reach record heights and is showing no signs of slowing. Our framework can help reverse this unsustainable trend.

Another area where we double funding is agricultural research. Our public sector investment in agricultural research lags other developed economies and has fallen by more than a third over the past two decades. This is another concerning trend that our framework can help reverse.

Agricultural research programs spur innovation and productivity, allowing farmers to produce more while using less and in an environmentally friendly manner, even as threats from pests and diseases and unpredictable weather become more common.

Not only do our farmers gain in the long term, but our land-grant institutions and colleges of agriculture that conduct groundbreaking research see immediate benefits. This truly is a win-win investment.

We also make a historic investment in the conservation title while ensuring programs remain locally led and flexible.

Farmers, ranchers, and foresters have diverse conservation needs, and our framework reflects that, providing equity across practices to address drought, water quality, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, soil erosion, and climate resiliency, while continuing to provide for carbon sequestering and greenhouse gas reducing practices.

Our framework increases funding in the conservation title by more than 25 percent every single year moving forward, while making sure its programs continue to empower producers to make their best decisions to meet the resource concerns of their operation.

Our farmers, ranchers, and foresters also need investments in the communities they call home, and our framework makes those too. It is no secret that rural America has seen more than its share of difficulties over the last several years.

Recent census data shows that over half the Nation's rural counties have lost population in the last census. These communities must have the modern infrastructure necessary to attract and retain talent.

Our framework offers help by making significant investments in small busi-

ness development, broadband expansion, water and energy infrastructure programs, as well as funds to increase access to rural healthcare, childcare, and public safety.

Most importantly, putting more farm in the farm bill requires a modernized farm safety net. We accomplish this by giving producers access to risk management tools that reflect the nature of the challenges under which they operate.

As I have stressed before, this isn't an either-or decision, meaning farmers won't be forced to choose between crop insurance and vital title I programs. Our framework makes crop insurance more accessible and affordable and makes meaningful increases to statutory reference prices for all producers of all commodities in all regions.

The safety net programs our farmers operate under right now are outdated. We cannot consider a farm bill that fails to recognize and protect farmers from the historic inflation and input costs they now face on the farm.

The world, and agriculture in particular, are in a much different place today than they were during the last farm bill. Farmers are already experiencing unprecedented challenges and economic uncertainty for the crops they are sowing into the ground right now as we speak.

This follows historic inflation, a record trade deficit, rising interest rates, devastating natural disasters, and geopolitical unrest that have shrunk the bottom line for farmers.

Under this President, U.S. farmers have seen the largest decline in farm income of all time. And like I said, that is only expected to get worse if we fail to put more farm in the farm bill.

In my home State of Arkansas, where agriculture accounts for about a quarter of the State's GDP, inflation-adjusted net farm income is expected to decline by more than 40 percent compared to 2 years ago.

This trend is playing out across the Nation, which is why reference prices have been the top ask from farmers at the over 20 farm bill roundtables that my colleagues and I have held around the country.

While each of these States have diverse agriculture economies, their refrain has been consistent. In fact, it was one of my earliest roundtables in North Dakota where the mantra of "more farm in the farm bill" was born. It wasn't a Republican Senator who first said that, it was a plea from a farmer. And that is what this is truly all about.

Our farmers, ranchers, foresters, consumers, lenders, and other stakeholders helped us fashion a farm bill that meets their varying needs.

It is a delicate balance made even more difficult this time around by the way actions taken outside of the farm bill have impacted our baseline. But on the Agriculture Committee, we have shown that we can come together to carry these heavy lifts across the finish line.

I have been proud to partner with Chairwoman STABENOW to shepherd significant reforms into law on priority issues, particularly in the climate and nutrition spaces.

Together, we worked to enact the Growing Climate Solutions Act, which makes it easier for producers to participate in emerging voluntary carbon credit markets. And we passed that bill with the support of over 90 of our colleagues.

In the nutrition space, we worked to pass the Keep Kids Fed Act, which extended needed flexibilities to schools and meal providers for an additional year at a time when supply chain breakdowns persisted and food costs soared because of inflation.

Perhaps the thing that I am most proud of was our successful effort, working with Senator STABENOW under her leadership, to modernize the outdated summer meals program to reach more food-insecure children in both rural and urban communities, filling the gap children faced during the months when classes are out of session.

Marking the first substantial reform to the summer meals program in over 60 years, this investment of over \$20 billion ensures that children will never again face hunger in the summer months.

That is what our work here is all about, identifying a problem and coming together to solve it. We have proven we can do that in the past. I believe with all of my heart that we can do it again by passing a bipartisan farm bill.

I look forward to taking our two frameworks, forging a bipartisan farm bill, and passing it into law before the 118th session of Congress comes to a close.

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

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

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senators HOEVEN, BARRASSO, and MANCHIN be permitted to speak for 5 minutes each prior to the scheduled rollcall vote.

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

#### FERC NOMINATIONS

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to support the three individuals nominated to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission: David Rosner, Lindsay See, and Judy Chang.

The Commission, or the FERC, is often called the most important Agency that people have never heard of. FERC regulates the interstate transmission of electricity and the interstate transportation of oil and natural gas. It ensures that the rates for electric power in the wholesale market are