

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

“just and reasonable.” It oversees electric reliability. It licenses interstate natural gas pipelines, liquefied natural gas terminals, and hydropower projects.

By one estimate, the Commission regulates activities that account for 7 percent of our Nation’s economy. For that reason, we must fulfill our responsibility to maintain a quorum on the Commission.

In 2015 and 2016, President Obama refused to fill the vacancies left by two Republican Commissioners. Then in January of 2017, the outgoing Chairman of FERC resigned as well. The departure left the Commission without a quorum.

It then took 7 full months to restore the quorum at FERC. During that time, too many projects that help keep the lights on, help heat our homes, and aid our allies abroad were reluctantly put on hold.

We can’t let that happen again. Too much is at stake for American workers, for our energy security, and for our Nation’s economy. That is why I am glad the Senate is acting on these three nominations this very week. While I may not agree with each of the nominees on all of the items all of the time, all of them are well qualified.

I am especially supportive of Ms. Lindsay See. From a young age, she has distinguished herself as a person of exemplary discipline, drive, and determination. She graduated *summa cum laude* from Patrick Henry College. She then graduated *magna cum laude* from Harvard Law School, where she served as the executive editor of the *Harvard Law Review*. After law school, she clerked for Judge Thomas Griffith of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit.

Ms. See is an outstanding appellate lawyer. She has spent the last 7 years as solicitor general of West Virginia. During that time, she has overseen civil and criminal appeals in both State and Federal courts. Ms. See has fought tirelessly for affordable and reliable energy for American families. She has argued two cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. In one of those cases, she not only advocated on behalf of West Virginia, she also advocated on behalf of other States, including my home State of Wyoming. And she won.

Ms. See has a long track record of giving a voice to people who are impacted by Federal actions. In fact, my concern for farmers and other landowners is a principal reason why I do support Ms. See.

During the Energy and Natural Resource Committee’s hearing on the nomination, Ms. See was asked if she would “exercise extreme care” when considering applications for electric transmission lines. Of course she said yes. She went on to explain that she would faithfully adhere to and apply the law.

When she received written questions, she again committed to follow the law. Ms. See wrote:

My time as West Virginia’s Solicitor General has given me a profound respect for the ways federal policies affect people across the country.

She added:

I’ve seen how federal rules and permitting actions can threaten people’s livelihoods and local economies.

Ms. See went on to say:

Sensitivity to how federal actions affect States and local communities is essential when making policy decisions.

She said:

I would consider a proposal’s consequences for local landowners . . . important to the public interest analysis.

If confirmed, Ms. See will bring an impressive experience list, working with complex statutes, to the Commission. She will also help the Commission understand how its decisions impact farmers and other landowners.

I firmly believe that if we fail to confirm Ms. See, farmers and landowners will be worse off. For that reason, I encourage all Senators to vote in favor of Ms. See.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

FARM BILL

Mr. HOEVEN. Mr. President, just a few minutes ago, the ranking member of our Ag Committee, the senior Senator from Arkansas, Senator BOOZMAN, put forth a statement of principles that he has developed with his outstanding staff that really identify and describe a framework that we absolutely need in the farm bill.

As you know, we have a 1-year extension in place on the farm bill. You know, it is something that is just incredibly important, and it has to get done on a bipartisan basis, and so we need to get it done. If we can’t get it done before the end of this year, we are going to have to put another 1-year extension on the farm program in place.

You know, when we talk about our farmers and ranchers and we talk about the farm bill and we talk about farm policy, you know, we think we are kind of just focused on agriculture, and that is really not the case. I mean, good farm policy in this country gives us the highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the world. Well, who does that impact on a daily basis? Everybody. Every single person in this country every single day, multiple times a day. Highest quality, lowest cost food supply in the world. More choice. Higher quality. Better food than anywhere else in the world. And—and—Americans spend less of their budget on their food than any other developed country. I would say that is something we should not take for granted.

It is amazing—you know, I mean, I think nowadays so many people don’t come from the farm anymore. You know, obviously we are a huge ag State, and we still have a lot of nexus with farming, but a lot of places don’t. They think, wow, food comes from the grocery stores. Well, it doesn’t. It is produced by our farmers and ranchers every single day.

So, you know, that is one of those things that are just incredibly important. Until we don’t have it, until we don’t have this network of family farms and ranches across this country that gives us something that is better than anywhere else in the world, you know, we take it for granted. We can’t do that.

So we need to get a farm bill done, and we need to get it right. That is why I am here, is because if we follow the framework that Senator BOOZMAN just laid out, we will get it right, and so we need to do it. That is the simple point I want to make, that that is the framework we need to embrace on a bipartisan basis, on a bicameral basis, get it passed, get it to the President, and get it in place, and I would say for our farmers and ranchers but really what I am saying: for every single American every single day.

I want to start out by thanking Senator BOOZMAN; but most of all, I want to thank our hard-working farmers and ranchers who face incredible challenges whether it is weather, whether it is trade policy. You know, I mean, it is all the things that they don’t control; but year in and year out, they go out and they plant a crop and they raise livestock and they feed the world. And those challenges are what they face, like I say, every single year.

Now, this year, they are looking at lower farm net income. They are looking at record-high input costs. Obviously, inflation and high interest rates have put a real squeeze on their operations. You know, it is often said that farm bills are written for bad times, not good times; and that is what we have got to keep in mind. The whole concept of this farm bill is that it is countercyclical. It makes sure that it provides help to farmers and ranchers when they need it, and, you know, obviously, when they don’t need it, then it is not there. Of course, that is the way it should be. That is not only what affects farmers and ranchers, that is what is most beneficial in terms of the hard-working taxpayers of this country.

Of course, Senator BOOZMAN’s framework does just exactly that. It makes the investments we need in the farm safety net, and that is, ultimately, the bedrock and the foundation of what the farm bill is all about. He emphasizes that in a lot of different ways, whether it is strengthening crop insurance, which we, obviously, have to have as it is very important; improving the access to credit for our farmers and ranchers; and also making sure that our livestock producers—our ranchers as well as our farmers—are able to operate year in and year out and that, for the next generation, we are doing every single thing we can to bring that next generation into farming and ranching.

Remember, there are about 16 million people across the country who are either directly or indirectly involved in agriculture. The average age now for these family farms and ranches—the