

But today I want to focus on disaster aid, something both Democrats and Republicans have long supported and which impacts people in every State of the country. Earlier today, the OMB, the Office of Management and Budget, released a letter addressed to Congress calling for swift action on disaster aid, along with a detailed breakdown of where that money is needed.

Right now, a host of Federal programs from various Agencies are running critically low on the funding they need to function. In some cases like the SBA, Small Business Administration, funding has already dried up. Without congressional action, the Federal Government may not be ready to respond to the next wave of disasters when they strike.

Many of the programs in need of replenishing focus on the long-term elements of disaster recovery. When disaster strikes, obviously, the first priority is getting people out of danger, providing for their needs. But then homes need to be rebuilt. Schools need to be reopened. Farmers need help recovering their losses from ruined crops. Roads and bridges and railways need funding for repairs. Businesses need loans to get back on their feet. All of these priorities are running critically low on Federal dollars.

A month ago, Speaker JOHNSON said getting disaster aid would be his priority upon Congress's return this month. I hope the Speaker honors that commitment and works with Democrats to get disaster aid done as soon as we can. We should not kick the can down the road nor withhold vital resources the Federal Government needs to properly help recovering communities.

It is a longstanding tradition that when any community is hit by disaster in this great country, we all rally together to help our fellow Americans. With just a few exceptions, this has almost always been nonpartisan. That is how it should be on issues like this that impact communities of all kinds and in all places.

We must work together to get disaster aid done as soon as possible so that we will be ready the next time disaster strikes.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

#### FEDERAL JUDICIARY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I was talking before about the ongoing campaign to undermine the Federal judiciary. Leftwing activists and elected colleagues, alike, continue to make

their disapproval of constitutionalist orthodoxy known at all levels, and Federal judges who are worried about where things are headed are in a bind.

They can't retaliate using their office because they swore an oath to uphold the law without respect to persons. They can't go on social media to defend themselves or put out press statements. That is because the American people rightly expect their judges to focus on deciding cases and interpreting the law, and not engaging in crisis communications.

Of course, the Founders anticipated some of this dynamic by giving Federal judges life tenure. They hold their offices until they give them up, regardless of how loudly law professors may complain.

So recent unanswered attacks may not have professional consequences for individual judges, but they do have an alarming effect on the judiciary as a whole. The article III branch lacks Congress's power of the purse. It can't exercise force like the President. Instead, it relies on the legitimacy of its judgments for its power, and these constant attacks are designed to erode that legitimacy.

Leftist law professors and journalists attack the courts seemingly with impunity. They know they can affect the institution, while their targets have to just sit there and take it. That is why I am so vocal and consistent in my defense of the Federal judiciary.

Sometimes—very rarely—the tables turn. Sometimes a judge does get a chance to respond to those who seek to undermine the integrity of the judiciary. It actually happened just last week.

At the latest Federalist Society convention, Judge Edith Jones of the Fifth Circuit was on a panel with one of the field marshals of the academic project to undermine the judiciary. Any of our colleagues who know Judge Jones wouldn't be surprised to hear that, in this academic context, she let the law professor have it.

When he complained that this is unfair and that he wanted to talk about abstract legal principles of judicial integrity, she pulled out his tweets denigrating conservative judges in Texas. The reaction from liberals in the legal academy—although I repeat myself—was outrage. How dare, they said, the judge give one of their own the sort of tongue-lashing they give conservative judges every day.

Well, bullies always cry foul when they are the ones who get punched right in the nose. So kudos to Judge Jones for standing up for her colleagues. She proved yet again why she is a lion of the bench.

And even if organizations like the American Bar Association and the American Law Institute continue to refuse to defend the judiciary from partisan attacks, our Federal judges can know that I, at least, will be in their corner.

#### RECOGNIZING THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

Now, on another matter, I would like to pay tribute to an organization that has dedicated 40 years to protecting America's children.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has saved literally thousands of lives, and I hold it in particular high regard because its roots run deep in Kentucky.

Over 40 years ago, when I was a local official, the issue of missing and exploited children had yet to receive the national focus it deserved. Thankfully, two public servants, Ernie Allen and John Rabun, had vision and drive on this issue when few others did.

John and Ernie proposed to me that Jefferson County create a special unit bridging social services and law enforcement to combat the problem. Together, I believe we created the first police-social services team in the Nation dedicated to working child abduction and exploitation cases. The team pioneered new techniques, like a statewide fingerprinting effort that met much success—enough success, in fact, that other jurisdictions adopted our model, eventually leading Congress to establish a national center in 1984.

Today, the national center quarterback platforms like AMBER Alerts and a central tip line, mobilizing a vast network of data, resources, and child welfare professionals to help thousands of families avert tragedy. To date, their work has directly led to the recovery of over 400,000 children. Last year, they recorded a success rate of 88 percent.

So I am honored to recognize the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children on 40 years of immense service to our country. I know parents all across America are thankful for the peace of mind that should the unspeakable ever occur, this fine organization stands ready to bring their children home.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

#### FARM BILL

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, for more than 2 years, I have been working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass my sixth farm bill, the third one that I have either been chair or ranking member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

I have met with farmers across the country who have made clear that crop insurance is their No. 1 risk management tool, farmers who made clear that the farm safety net must be the backbone of support for all farmers and not just a handful of mostly southern commodities.

I have met with families who are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet as food insecurity in our country continues to grow.

I have met with rural communities who are struggling to access the basic things they need to thrive, like access to healthcare, including mental health,

childcare, clean drinking water, and high-speed internet that we are all working to address.

The farm bill has always been the place where we put the power of the Federal Government at work in a bipartisan way to support farmers and families and communities. That is the coalition that has always been the foundation of a successful, bipartisan farm bill.

In May, the House released a proposal that would put immense taxpayer resources into a handful of mostly southern commodity programs. I am not saying that these farmers don't need support—they do—but it can't be at the expense of millions of other farmers and ranchers in this country, farmers in the middle of the country, farmers who grow fruits and vegetables, who run smaller and diversified operations or lack access to the tools and support that are overwhelmingly favored in the House bill. The large increases in farm subsidies should not be paid for on the backs of families in need or the broader needs of our small towns and rural communities.

In the spring, I unveiled our Democratic proposal, a 90-page, section-by-section bill to try to refocus our negotiations on holding the farm bill coalition together and actually getting a bill passed, not robbing Peter to pay Paul but instead taking a balanced approach that supports all of agriculture, our friends, our families, and rural communities across the country.

But unfortunately this did not spark the serious negotiation I had hoped for in order to put forward a bipartisan farm bill that can both pass the House, pass the Senate, and be signed by the President of the United States. So today I am introducing my Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act, a 1,397-page bill. This is it. This is a tremendous amount of hard work that has gone on, both from my staff—and I want to thank a really incredibly smart, creative team of people—and great staff on both sides of the aisle that have worked with us and colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

This particular farm bill has over 100 bipartisan bills incorporated in it, and this is the full text of the farm bill that I believe should pass and can pass and needs to be passed for our farmers and for others so impacted by the farm bill.

It is a robust bill. It includes \$39 billion in new resources above the farm bill baseline—\$39 billion more in funding above the normal farm bill baseline. It puts more farm in the farm bill for all of our commodities, not at the expense, though, of rural communities or American families that are critical to holding the farm bill coalition together.

It provides farmers with the certainty of a 5-year farm bill, and this is really important. We can do ad hoc help, but our farmers need the certainty of a 5-year policy so they can go to the bank, so they can get the financ-

ing they need, so they can know how to plan. This does that and at the same time responds to current needs. We are going to move up payments so that we can respond now, to more urgent needs right now that need to happen.

It also authorizes a permanent disaster program to ensure we have a process in place when disasters like Hurricanes Helene and Milton strike. This new program will put a consistent process in place so farmers have certainty and the USDA can get the money out the door. No more scrambling. No more leaving farmers behind. Our farmers deserve this.

It also makes a significant investment in title I for the 22 row crops that receive the lion's share of the resources available in the House proposal. We know—I know Republican colleagues primarily are focused on title I, and so we do a number of things to be able to increase support.

We move up the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage Programs' payments by 6 months so that farmers receive assistance faster so they can keep their operations going. One of the things I have been concerned about, with so much reliance on ARC and PLC, is it doesn't pay out for a year and a half or 2 years. We have farmers that need help now, and we can fix that by putting dollars into speeding up the payments, and that is what we do in this bill.

It also increases the effective reference prices that trigger help by as much as 15 percent, with all 22 commodities getting at least a 5-percent increase for the first time in a decade.

The Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act continues to include crop insurance. Again, the No. 1 risk management tool that farmers have told us they want—crop insurance. It makes it more affordable and ensures that all farmers have access to this critical tool. It provides more coverage to more farmers at a lower cost. This crop insurance responds much more quickly than the ARC and PLC Programs, and it is important that we continue to make that as affordable as possible.

Importantly, I include a provision that will partially reimburse farmers' crop insurance premiums and what is called NAP fees to put cash in people's pockets who urgently need it right now.

Again, we can use the structure and policies of a farm bill rather than ad hoc assistance and just move up the payments, provide more assistance right now, and do it while we are passing a 5-year farm bill. That is what we should be doing.

The bill also strengthens support for specialty crops, which are almost half of what we grow—our fruits and vegetables and horticulture in this country. It strengthens support for specialty crops and ensures that farmers have the support they need to make sure we have American fruits and vegetables on our tables.

This is a significant investment in all farmers and all of agriculture because,

frankly, farming is one of the riskiest businesses out there—maybe the riskiest. I don't know if other people get up and look at the weather every day to try to figure out what is going to be happening for them. But it is getting even riskier now because of what is happening with the climate crisis, and we know that.

The majority leader was talking about disaster assistance being put out. It is critical. I strongly support it for farmers as well as for communities. But that is going to get more and more and more because of what is happening in the atmosphere and what is happening with climate change. How many once-in-a-generation storms or droughts need to hit our farmers over the head before we take this crisis seriously?

This bill will roll the historic investment we made in the Inflation Reduction Act into the farm bill baseline for the future. We take dollars for voluntary conservation programs that farmers are using, that farmers want. Right now, that funding is outside the farm bill baseline. We can make a tremendous, tremendous move forward for farmers by moving it into the farm bill baseline while keeping the language regarding climate.

Popular voluntary conservation programs that go directly to farmers—that is what we are talking about. This will make our farmers more resilient, because it is very simple: You put more carbon in the ground, you have healthier soil. You take more carbon out of the atmosphere, it is healthier for everybody. So this is a win-win, and we need to continue to support our growers and embrace the investments that we have already made.

I also am including new investments in biofuels. I see our Presiding Officer, who has been such a leader in Illinois and across the country. So important for jobs. So important as another place in which we can have a cleaner environment and cleaner fuels and more jobs.

We put more into the loan programs and local foods, trade. The list goes on and on, including a downpayment on a much needed ag research moonshot. We need reinvestment in the future of agriculture, in the future of our food supply.

But a farm bill is not just about investing in our farmers and ranchers—of course that is critical—but it is also about investing in the communities they call home. We know that rural communities are shrinking, and it is getting harder and harder to pass the farm on to the next generation.

In this bill, we are betting that rural prosperity is American prosperity. It improves quality of life for rural families by improving rural healthcare, including mental health services, and also childcare, rural childcare, which is so critical and so often not available.

It grows the middle class by creating good-paying jobs in manufacturing and entrepreneurship and small businesses in rural America.

It increases our investment in connecting communities to high-speed internet, which everyone in this Chamber agrees is essential to our success in the world. Whether it is a child being able to do their homework or a farmer being able to see a doctor or small businesses being able to access new markets beyond their rural Main Street, that all starts with reliable, high-speed internet. We have made major steps in the infrastructure bill that we passed; but, frankly, there is more to be done, and there is more focus that needs to be put on our rural communities to get that done.

And, importantly, this bill makes sure that rural communities are not left behind when it comes to accessing the resources of the Federal Government. When it comes to securing Federal grants, I know my hometown of Clare, MI, can't compete with Detroit or New York City when it comes to staffing. So we leveled the playing field by investing in the resources rural communities need to compete for hiring grant writers and planners and advisers to provide technical assistance so they can get the resources that they need.

And, finally, it is discouraging to me that the needs of families have been lost in this debate over the last 2 years. Yes, the farm bill must be the backbone of support for farmers and ranchers across the country. Yes, the farm bill must ensure that farming and a rural way of life can thrive today and into the future. Yes, the farm bill is where we put the support of the American people behind the men and women who feed and clothe and fuel this country.

And I would challenge anyone to look at my record as the leader of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee and say with a straight face that I am not a stalwart champion for farmers and ranchers.

But a farm bill must also be about the single mom in Michigan working two jobs who just needs a little bit of extra help to put food on the table for her kids so her children can thrive. At a time when food insecurity rates in our country have increased for the second year in a row, it is absolutely unacceptable for anyone to attempt to cut SNAP and other nutrition programs. I refuse to leave this mom behind. Not on my watch.

We should be investing in the farm bill nutrition programs that are the heart of the family safety net in this country. Our Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act does that. It does that and lays the groundwork to see a future where we could actually end hunger in America. It protects nutrition assistance and draws a clear line in the sand that we will not walk away from the progress we have made to keep families fed in this country.

This is a bill that keeps farmers farming and families fed and rural communities strong, all of which are critically—critically—important. And

it is a robust bill that is paid for by using the same resources our Republican colleagues in the House used to pay for their bill, but we don't divide the broad bipartisan coalition that is the foundation of the farm bill to do it.

In my time leading Democrats in the community, I have locked arms with Republican leaders like Senator Pat Roberts to defend programs that may not have been my priority, but it meant holding the coalition together. That is how you get legislation done. That is how you do it on a bipartisan basis.

You know, farm bills failed to pass the House in 2012 and 2018 because Republicans included cutting food assistance in their bill, and they didn't have the votes to pass it. They couldn't pass it.

In 2018, the farm bill passed the Senate with a historic 87 votes, and the only no votes were 13 nays by Republicans—just want to underscore that. So we know how to do this and get a bipartisan bill done that is robust support for our farmers and ranchers and communities and our families.

Now, frankly, today, as I look to the future and what comes if we don't get a farm bill done, I have a lot of question marks because Project 2025, the roadmap for the incoming Trump administration, actually proposes eliminating ARC and PLC—the very programs the House Republican bill makes their top priority. It would also gut crop insurance. It would terminate U.S. sugar production, and slash trade promotion programs.

Now, I don't know what is going to happen to that. Maybe nothing. But it should worry everybody that that is the vision that is out there. And, frankly, I think that is why it is no secret why the House farm bill that came out of committee on a primarily partisan vote last spring has not yet been put up for a vote on the House floor, because I don't think—and everyone tells me—there are not enough Republican votes to pass it. And the last time I checked, the Chamber will be similarly divided next Congress in the 119th.

So I would encourage my Republican colleagues to join with us, to join with me, to get this done now, to do what we need to do for farmers: provide them certainty, provide them more immediate help, and to do it right now.

I would encourage Republican colleagues to rethink their proposal to make the largest cut to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in more than 30 years. That is not the way we get a bill done. I would encourage them to join us to pass a meaningful 5-year farm bill now—there is no reason we can't—and a bill that provides immediate assistance, within the farm bill, for what our farmers need.

The Rural Prosperity and Food Security Act is robust, adding \$39 billion to the farm bill baseline. It is bipartisan, with over 100 bipartisan bills included, and it balances the needs of farmers,

ranchers, families, and rural communities. It holds the broad farm bill coalition together, which is critical for the future of any farm bill, and I firmly believe that it is the best—and probably only—path to pass a 5-year farm bill this year. I urge my colleagues to come together and consider this bill seriously.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I hope that many people tuned into the presentation that Senator STABENOW just made. Those of us who serve in the U.S. Senate know that as Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, she not only walks the walk, she talks the talk. She has passed a farm bill; no mean feat. She has shown her own expertise in achieving that goal and her understanding of a very complex piece of legislation.

Would the Senator from Michigan yield for a question?

Ms. STABENOW. Yes. Absolutely, yes.

Mr. DURBIN. Could you be kind enough to say for the record when the current farm bill expires?

Ms. STABENOW. The current farm bill expires at the end of December. So we have to do something before we leave in December.

Mr. DURBIN. Would you explain to those who are not familiar with it what happens if we do nothing?

Ms. STABENOW. Well, if we do nothing, then a number of programs revert to what is called a Depression-era policy, and there is something called the dairy cliff that everybody is always worried about because it goes back to a pricing structure that would completely throw the dairy industry into upheaval. And so this is not OK.

Mr. DURBIN. And when you say "Depression-era programs," are you literally talking about the 1930s?

Ms. STABENOW. Yes, yes. It throws it back to policies of the 1930s.

Mr. DURBIN. And there are consequences for dairy interests, for example.

Ms. STABENOW. Yes.

Mr. DURBIN. So if we fail to come together on a bipartisan basis before the end of the year, that is the reality that will be faced by the new administration?

Ms. STABENOW. Yes. Now, we could pass an extension again and throw this into the lap of everyone next year. That doesn't create any more certainty for farmers. Those who want to just do some ad hoc payments, you know, that is not going to work.

And so the reality is we have short-term help in our bill. We have a 5-year farm bill, and we can get it done now. One hundred bipartisan bills that are included in our bill—this is a bipartisan effort, even though at this point not endorsed on a bipartisan basis. But our farmers and ranchers would be a whole lot better if we could get this done.

Mr. DURBIN. Well, currently, under the Senate schedule which we have been told, we literally have until a little past the middle of next month to do our business.

Ms. STABENOW. Right. This means now.

Mr. DURBIN. Yes, of course. I would add to that we have many worthy judicial nominees on this calendar to consider too. So there is work to be done.

Ms. STABENOW. There is. And thank you so much. And thank you for being a valuable member of the committee.

I would just say where—we know and you know leading the Judiciary Committee, where there is a will, there is a way. If people want to come together, we can get something done and get it done by the end of the year. But people have to decide they really want a bipartisan bill and are willing to come together to do that.

Mr. DURBIN. And the key to that, I think, goes back 60 years ago where we married nutrition programs and agriculture programs so that people living in the city of Chicago, for example, who hear over and over “Illinois is an agricultural State” but don’t have any evidence of it other than what is on the table for their family to eat will have as much interest in passing the bill as my farmers down State. I am sure the same is true in the State of Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. There is no question. And we also have extensive evidence that when a bill is put forward on the floor that cuts the nutrition title, it never passes—2012 in the House, 2018 in the House. When Republican colleagues only put a bill on the floor that cuts nutrition, they do not get the bipartisan support, and it fails every time. This feels like Groundhog Day to me every single time.

And so I would hope that we would learn from those lessons and do what we did in 2018 in the Senate and come together and get a bipartisan bill.

Mr. DURBIN. So we all know that the cost of food has gone up, making it more difficult for families to keep food on the table, and we also know that low income people face that. What are the nutrition programs that are part of this farm bill that will help them?

Ms. STABENOW. Well, first of all, let me say the basic program is called SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, is about \$6 a day for an individual. So a mom gets \$6; her child gets \$6.

Mr. DURBIN. That is not a lot.

Ms. STABENOW. Not when you go to the grocery store, no, that is certainly not.

And then we add support for food banks. We add additional assistance and incentives if you are buying fresh fruits and vegetables. We do, you know, some other kinds of things, but the basic is SNAP.

And going forward, we gave an update that hadn’t been done in 50 years in SNAP in the last farm bill, and it added—that \$6 now includes \$1.35. That was an update based on cost over a 50-

year basis, and that is what folks are arguing about. And going forward, CBO says there would be an update every 5 years of about 2 percent for SNAP, and that is what our Republican colleagues are fighting about.

Mr. DURBIN. I see my colleague from Minnesota is on the floor, and I just want to say that this exchange is the reason why we are going to miss Senator STABENOW of Michigan when it comes to the Agriculture Committee and many other areas. She does her homework. She understands that in the complexity of a big bill, that there are real-life human issues that face us, and there are real people who are waiting for us to get our job done.

Thank you for doing this and doing the committee. I sincerely hope we can get this done before the end of the year and the disastrous consequences that you described.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Madam President, I just wanted to reiterate what the chief whip has said here: that Senator STABENOW has, over and over again, against all odds, been able to negotiate a bipartisan bill. And when you look at these past bills—and you can correct me if I am wrong, Senator STABENOW—it has been, actually, majority Democrat in the Senate vote on these bills, well represented by the two Senators from Illinois, who are both in this Chamber today. But I just think the fact that you have over 100 provisions in here that are bipartisan—it is really important to note—because there is absolutely no way we can do this unless we do this together.

And the other thing, while we are going to miss you dearly, as we go into next year, we know there is going to be a major debate on tax reform—which, of course, there should—that will be dominating a lot of our Senate time, and other issues. And, you know, my concern—and you can address this—is that we not let this important bill, which, as you have pointed out and Senator DURBIN has pointed out, is so important for ag—and when we see the input costs, when we see the weather conditions that our farmers have been suffering through—but also important for conservation efforts, as well as nutrition for this Nation, and there is absolutely no way we are going to be able to do this unless we have those three legs in this bill, not to mention the economic development and research.

So I want to commend you and just ask you that one last question about how important it is that your bill includes 100 bipartisan provisions and that we continue that work and do anything we can to finish this by the end of the year.

Ms. STABENOW. Thank you so much. And thank you, Senator KLOBUCHAR, for your current leadership and future leadership on the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

You know, I would say that, at any other time, putting forward a bill would be a starting point, and that then we would negotiate and work together, which I have been trying to do for 2 years. We put something out in May. We have been working and negotiating, but, now, here we are. And so the bill is more like the end, not the beginning. It is like: This we could pass, 100 different provisions that are bipartisan—and more than that.

There are a lot of titles. There are 12 titles of the farm bill, as you know, and a number of them we have negotiated. That is what is so frustrating. We have a number of those where we have a lot of agreement. There has been a lot of good work that has come together.

But in this one area, in terms of who gets the bulk of the resources, where they go—do we continue to honor what we did on conservation as it relates to climate, which is hitting farmers over the head? And do we try to pay for what farmers need? And I agree. I agree on what they need. But do we then say to the mom who is getting \$6 a day: You are going to pay for that.

And that is when I go: No.

And I know you feel the same way—that we have never said that. We have never said that. We have always said the resources in nutrition stay in the nutrition title.

We have also always said that, if you wanted to expand that, then you look for savings within the title. And so we don’t put money in or out in the nutrition title. But, somehow, we see this sense of being stuck.

So next year—you mentioned next year. And I would just say that I think this is incredibly risky for our colleagues from agriculture States that want very much to get a bill done, and I know there are many. I look at the fact that the House has not been able to bring their House Republican bill to the House of Representatives, which has a majority of Republicans. They can’t pass it.

And what happens next year with that?

I mean, at some point, it has to be bipartisan, and it has to be balanced and hold the whole farm bill coalition together.

The only question is, is it now or are you in a situation, in the midst of tax cuts and everything else next year, to try to put this back together to get it done? I would say farmers need certainty now. We can move up payments and get them more help now. There are legitimate concerns that farmers have in terms of costs. We need to do that now.

And I would love it if all the ag groups came in and said: We want to get this done now.

Now, I am not naive enough to assume that is going to happen, because of the politics of the world that we are in. But from an ag standpoint, it should.

So I appreciate both of you very much.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, I just want to add my voice of support. Why do we need a farm bill? Because we need farmers, and we need food. And one of the wonderful things about our farmers is they do a job that is incredibly hard to do.

It is a job that is filled with uncertainty. What is the weather going to be today? What are the prices on the futures market tomorrow? What is going to happen in our neighborhood?

It is incredibly uncertain, but the farmers love the work.

And who among us works harder than farmers? Maybe coal miners, but not many more. So they stand for hard work and feeding America.

The second thing is farmers need stability because they have no control over things that profoundly affect them. But the other thing is farmers actually are the custodians of our landscape. And they, in all of our communities—whether it is dairy, say, in Vermont, or it might be wheat or corn in Illinois, or cherries in Michigan—they are providing a benefit to all of us who are not farmers and can't take on the courage they have to do that work.

And on the conservation title, I have talked to a lot of farmers in Vermont. They are so appreciative that, in addition to feeding us with nutritious food, they have a chance to actually get some income to help us conserve the land. That is a good thing because that is another income stream for the farmers.

So this should not be a fight among opposing sides. What do we have to do to provide stability to farmers? They have to get a fair price for their crop. And then, if they are going to make contributions on the whole issue of conservation in reducing carbon emissions, they have to get some income for that. And that is in the farm bill.

So let's pass the farm bill because we need farmers, we need food, and we need a clean and healthy environment. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to thank the Senator from Vermont and remind people that his comments make it clear this is not just a Midwestern issue. It affects the whole Nation, from one side to the other.

As I said, Senator STABENOW has been our leader. I hope we can get a breakthrough in the coming days and weeks.

TRUMP CABINET

Madam President, it is hard to believe it has been less than 2 weeks since the last election—2 weeks. If it seems long, it is because you may have been following what has happened since.

Already, President-elect Donald Trump is selecting his proposed members of his Cabinet. Last week, when it came to the Department of Justice, Mark Paoletta, who is overseeing the Trump transition team for the Depart-

ment of Justice, warned that "career DOJ lawyers must be fully committed to implementing President Trump's policies or they should leave or be fired." He shamefully slandered these nonpartisan public servants as the "deep state"—whatever the heck that is.

And Cleta Mitchell, an adviser to President-elect Trump, argued that "every lawyer in the voting section and likely the Civil Rights Division needs to be terminated."

Of course, the President may set policy directives, but the Department of Justice is not—and should never be—any President's personal law firm. Civil servants have an independent duty to uphold the Constitution and the laws of the United States and should never be under pressure to take illegal action.

During his first term, then-President Trump tried to use the Department of Justice to overturn the 2020 Presidential election, as detailed in the Senate Judiciary Committee's "Subverting Justice" report.

Unfortunately, President-elect Trump has already made it clear that, in his second term, he will again undermine the rule of law and weaponize the Department of Justice to seek revenge on his perceived enemies.

The clearest illustration of Trump's resolve to remake the Justice Department into his personal political law firm is his intent to nominate former Congressman Matt Gaetz to be Attorney General.

Let me be clear. Former Congressman Gaetz is the least qualified person and the most radical person ever to be nominated to be Attorney General. While he is a lawyer, he practiced law for only a short time, and his congressional career has been distinguished by his extremism. For example, former Congressman Gaetz has regularly called for eliminating the Justice Department that he has now been nominated to lead. He also wants to abolish the Justice Department's components, most prominently, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, "if they do not come to heel"—his words. Last year, he introduced legislation to eliminate the ATF.

Former Congressman Gaetz's main qualification seems to be unquestioning loyalty to Donald Trump.

Why do I keep referring to Mr. Gaetz as "former Congressman"? That is due to the most serious concern about his being entrusted with this new responsibility.

While Mr. Gaetz just won reelection and the 118th Congress is still in session, he resigned his seat in the House of Representatives of last week. Why? Why would he quit the House at this point if he has just been reelected? It was an apparent attempt to prevent the House Ethics Committee from releasing a damaging report on his personal alleged misconduct.

Mr. Gaetz has been credibly accused of engaging in sexual misconduct with

a minor, illicit drug use, sex trafficking, bribery, and obstructing government investigations into his alleged misconduct.

I might remind those listening to this debate: We are talking about Donald Trump's choice to be the Attorney General of the United States of America.

These grave public allegations against Mr. Gaetz speak directly to his fitness to serve. Let me add that President-elect Trump's announced intent to offer Mr. Gaetz's nomination without even a standard FBI background check that every Presidential appointee undergoes is completely unacceptable.

As chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee for the last 4 years and a member of that committee for over 20 years, I can tell you that people have been eliminated from consideration for judgeships and other important appointments because they smoked a joint—because they smoked a marijuana cigarette, eliminated from consideration. They have also been eliminated from consideration if they didn't file the proper tax returns for paying a babysitter or nanny.

I have had Members' nominees excoriated because of poetry they wrote while they were in college. And now we have the President-elect saying: We are not going to do an FBI background check on a man who could be Attorney General, and we may call for recess appointments so the Senate loses its opportunity for advice and consent.

The heartening thing that has occurred in the last few days is that a number of Republican Senators have stepped up and publicly joined me in calling on the House Ethics Committee to release this report on Mr. Gaetz so that we can review it, if he is truly going to be the nominee of President Trump in this capacity.

The Senate has a constitutional duty to advise and consent, and it is crucial that we consider all the information necessary. Before considering this nomination, the Senate Judiciary Committee must review this ethics report from the House, from a bipartisan committee—equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans—who have released it.

Last Thursday, all Democratic members of the Senate Judiciary Committee requested the House Ethics Committee provide these materials to us immediately. There is substantial precedent for the release of these materials in both Chambers. The House Ethics Committee released a preliminary report about former Congressman Bill Boner after he left Congress.

The preliminary report stated:

[T]he general policy against issuing reports . . . is outweighed by the responsibility of the Committee to fully inform the public regarding the status and results of its efforts up to the date of Representative Boner's departure from Congress.

It is difficult to imagine a more compelling instance where there is a need to inform the public of the results of an