

Moreno	Rounds	Sullivan
Murkowski	Schmitt	Thune
Paul	Scott (FL)	Tillis
Ricketts	Shaheen	Wicker
Risch	Sheehy	Young

NAYS—39

Baldwin	Kaine	Sanders
Blumenthal	King	Schatz
Booker	Klobuchar	Schiff
Cantwell	Luján	Schumer
Coons	Markey	Slotkin
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Smith
Fetterman	Murphy	Van Hollen
Galleo	Murray	Warner
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Warnock
Hassan	Padilla	Warren
Heinrich	Peters	Welch
Hickenlooper	Reed	Whitehouse
Hirono	Rosen	Wyden

NOT VOTING—13

Alsobrooks	Hoeben	Moran
Bennet	Kelly	Scott (SC)
Blunt Rochester	Kim	Tuberville
Duckworth	McConnell	
Durbin	Moody	

The nomination was confirmed.

(Mr. MORENO assumed the Chair.)

(Mr. GRAHAM assumed the Chair.)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORENO). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's actions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HUSTED). The Senator from New Jersey.

FARM BILL

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I want to talk about a real crisis in America that we are not talking enough about. We have a farm crisis going on in the United States of America. It is facing our entire country. It is facing our rural areas, and it is facing some of the most noble Americans in our country who are part of a great tradition and a great heritage that is vital to all Americans.

We are in the midst of a farm crisis, and we are in the midst of a nutrition crisis. And despite the need for Congress to step up to this moment, to meet this crisis, and pass a bold farm bill, it is not happening right now.

Since we passed our last farm bill in 2018, we have lost over 150,000 farms—most of them small farms. That is an average of 51 farms we have lost every single day for the past 8 years. And the farmers who have managed to hang on are telling me that the economics of farming simply do not work for them anymore, and they fear that we are on the brink of another 1980s-type of farm crisis.

I am hearing more and more now from farmers about the reality that most of them have to seek off-farm employment just to be able to keep their families afloat.

Now, this trend has been going on for years. It is a trend that we saw under Democratic Presidents and Republican Presidents. It demands a bipartisan response. I know the policies of this administration, though, are making the situation worse for farmers—not better. They are acting as an incendiary to this horrible fire.

We see this President's reckless tariff policies have driven up costs for farm-

ers; President Trump's reckless war in Iran, which closed the Strait of Hormuz, drove up costs for our farmers; USDA's decision to cancel critical programs that farmers were relying upon such as local food purchasing programs for schools and food banks—these are all things that have severely hurt our farmers. USDA's staffing cuts and field office closures have further injured our farmers, and I could go on with that list.

But the heart of this problem that our farmers are facing, the heart of the problem is the massive amount of corporate concentration that has taken place in our food system over many decades as both Republican and Democratic administrations stopped enforcing our Federal anti-trust laws.

Farmers are now being squeezed by monopolies on all sides. A handful of companies now control the inputs that farmers need like seeds and fertilizers and drive up those prices. And at the same time, farmers now have very few buyers for their products, and so they are not being paid a fair price for their crops and for their animals.

Back in 2018, as I worked on my first farm bill here in the Senate, I went on a tour to meet with farmers—not just in New Jersey but also in Missouri, Illinois, and Kansas. Some of the farmers I met with were Democrats and some Republicans, but what I heard consistently from all of them was that our current farm system was not working for farmers.

Farmers and ranchers told me about how decades ago they would have many buyers competing and bidding up the price for their livestock, but now, today, they often only had one buyer who was able to dictate a low purchase price undercutting them as they made more profit.

I heard heart-wrenching stories about farmers whose land has been in their families for many generations but were now on the verge of losing their farm.

Farmers told me about how the current system was created to keep farmers growing commodity crops like corn and soy for animal feed rather than healthy foods to feed their communities they cared about because nearly all of our farm bill subsidies and safety net programs are designed to benefit big farmers growing a handful of commodity crops but not to support the farmers that grow the food that people eat like fruits and vegetables.

And these farmers were right. While our Federal dietary guidelines tell us that 50 percent of our diet should consist of fruits and vegetables, less than 10 percent of our farm bill agricultural subsidies actually go to farmers that grow fruits and vegetables.

And that has led us to the second crisis I mentioned: The nutrition crisis in the United States of America.

Diet-related chronic disease is now the No. 1 killer of Americans. Every single day in America, 2,700 people die from diet-related diseases. That is

nearly a million Americans dead every year from what we eat.

Half of adults are now prediabetic or diabetic—one in four of our teenagers are. Half the children alive in this country today are projected to be obese by the time they are 35. Cancer rates in young people are climbing. Dementia rates across our country are climbing. And a chorus of doctors and researchers are now tying this explosion of diet-related diseases directly to the ultraprocessed foods Americans are eating every single day.

And so what our farmers need right now—and what all Americans need—is for Democrats and Republicans to come together and pass a much bolder bipartisan farm bill that provides immediate assistance to our farmers—the assistance that they desperately need.

We are losing farmers every day, and this body and the House and the President are not rising to meet this crisis.

Farmers are wondering: Who is fighting for us? We need to show them that we are—in concrete policies that address their issues, that address this farm crisis, and for the millions of Americans suffering from preventable diseases that affects the nutrition crisis too.

Farmers in America—our fellow Americans that farm—need a farm bill that provides substantial emergency financial assistance to all of our struggling farmers—and especially our specialty crop farmers who have so far been shortchanged in this administration.

Farmers need a farm bill that puts more money into conservation programs and begins to reform those programs to better serve farmers and help them diversify their farms.

And farmers need a farm bill that makes other policy changes to help our farmers and ranchers—policy changes like restoring mandatory country-of-origin labeling, reforming our Federal checkoff programs that are so broken, strengthening the Packers and Stockyards Act to protect our farmers and ranchers from abuses by big meatpacking companies creating a real farm safety net for specialty crop farmers in America.

Farmers need a bold farm bill that reinstates funding for healthy food purchases from our local farmers for schools and food banks.

Farmers need a bold farm bill that scales up programs like SNAP Double Bucks that purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from small farmers and gets those healthy foods to families that are participating in the SNAP program.

Not only would a bold farm bill like that be a lifeline to our farmers, but it would be an example of using food as medicine and provide healing—healing—to Americans suffering from diabetes and other diet-related diseases.

But unfortunately, how did the House of Representatives—the Republican-led House respond in this moment? Well, they passed a farm bill that fails to meet this crisis, that fails to lead when

people are looking for help, that fails to meet the needs of our farmers and our families. They passed a farm bill that would hurt our farmers by preempting State laws such as Prop 12 that create new markets for our farmers.

The Senate now has to do better. Democrats and Republicans in this Chamber must come together. We must put aside poison pills such as Prop 12 preemption and pesticide preemption and negotiate a bold farm bill that helps our farmers and families and meets this crisis that has been growing and growing and growing.

And at a time when we are seeing President Trump's policies causing food crisis to increase at an alarming rate, that bold farm bill must reverse the destructive Republican SNAP cuts that already left nearly 1 million of our children today going to bed hungry.

I hope that we rise to this occasion in the Senate. I hope that we are a nation that knows our fundamental health and well-being rely on American farmers. They protect our heritage. They are stewards of our land. They are the hope for a better, healthier future.

Let's stand together, join together, and be bold, be strong, and bring about a better deal—a new deal—for our farmers.

JUNETEENTH

Mr. President, this week, not many hours from now, we are going to celebrate Juneteenth.

We all know the story of Juneteenth, that there were slaves in Texas that had not gotten the word that they were free. A civil war that cost so much blood and treasure to this country—no other war has seen so many Americans dead—and yet, at the end of that war, many, many people had not heard the Emancipation Proclamation, did not know they were free.

It wasn't until that fateful day on Juneteenth that slaves—now free people—in Texas heard about their freedom. There was jubilation. There was celebration. And the tradition of Juneteenth started.

I am very familiar. It is hard for me to walk on this Senate floor, this sacred civic space—it is hard for me to walk here and not recognize the history.

Right after Reconstruction, we saw the first Black person ever to walk on this floor. We saw a Black Senator and a Black Senator elected to this body—not popularly elected—but back then we put our legislators in the Senate by votes of State legislatures.

We saw House Members come from Southern States, as well, being elected in free, fair elections in that Reconstruction period—because freedom in America is not just defined by not having chains. Freedom in America means being able to participate in this democracy. And in that brief period of the Reconstruction era, we saw free and open elections. African Americans rushed to the polls and voted at 70 and 80 percent and began to elect people in

fair elections. We saw multicultural legislators. We saw Blacks and Whites in States sharing power. It was extraordinary, this brief window of time.

But then the Reconstruction period ended, and a reign of terror fell throughout the South. We saw Black elected officials, Black judges, Black mayors being dragged out of their offices, beat, and some of them lynched. We saw laws being passed by State legislatures to bar Black people from voting, to put on poll taxes and other extraordinary hurdles to stop African-American participation and African-American voting. That very idea of being free was now undermined and undercut by a set of unfair laws.

And what happened to Blacks in the Senate? What happened to Blacks in the House of Representatives? Well, they disappeared.

I know the last speech—I have read it before—by George Henry White. The last Black person, in 1901, gave the final speech, and he predicted that one day African Americans would return to our Federal legislature, would return to the House of Representatives, would return to the States. It is called the "Phoenix Speech" because he predicted that one day Blacks would return to these bodies, one day elections would be free, one day we would reclaim our democracy of one person and one vote. It was 1901, and he was from North Carolina. And it wouldn't be until the 1990s that another Black person would come to be elected from North Carolina.

From those days in the 1870s and 1880s, with that reign of terror and the denial of vote, it wasn't until the 1960s that laws were secured, passed through the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House, that gave the right to vote a more fair and equal chance. It was called the Voting Rights Act of 1965, this extraordinary piece of legislation that secured the right to vote for African Americans.

And, finally, African Americans start returning to our legislature. We saw Edward Brooke get elected to the U.S. Senate. We saw Carol Moseley Braun be elected to the U.S. Senate. The third person was Barack Obama, elected to the U.S. Senate. And I was No. 4—the fourth Black person in history to be elected to this body.

After this history of horror and struggle and pain, after girls were killed in a bombing, the Edmund Pettus Bridge marchers beaten on Bloody Sunday, Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner being killed in Mississippi, the stories of horror of those folks who tried to stand up for the right to vote, tried to fight to advance the cause of equal voting—finally, in 1965, the Voting Rights Act was passed—equality at the polling place, justice returned. And this body and the Chamber across the Capitol began to see, as was predicted by George Henry White, Blacks come back to Congress—justice, fairness, equality secured by this Chamber, secured by Congress, signed by a President.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 held strong and allowed that fairness to be seen and allowed voters to have a fair say.

But here, as we get ready to celebrate Juneteenth and those ideals of freedom, I have to stand here on this Senate floor, recount this history, and say that we are at another crisis point in our democracy because the Supreme Court now has gutted the Voting Rights Act, eviscerated section 2.

And what has happened as a result? Before the ink was dry, we saw Southern States—those same States that, a century before, used the legislative power at the State level to eviscerate Black voting fairness, they raced really quickly to draw congressional lines on their maps with the express purpose of diluting African-American voting power, literally eliminating districts where African Americans had fair representation, in order to stop them from having a voice in Congress.

Here we are celebrating Juneteenth, but there is an irony—a painful, bitter-sweet truth—that is being told that, right now, we are seeing legislature after legislature in the very States that made up the former Confederacy moving with all deliberate speed to try to stop African Americans from having a fair say, a fair voice, equal rights in voting. And the consequence of that is already being seen.

Just like George Henry White, who knew he would not last one more election cycle, I see colleagues now who know that their districts have been diced up with intentionality in order to stop their voters from having a representative in Congress.

What did our ancestors struggle for? What did generations who swore an oath to this flag that this would be a nation of liberty and justice for all, what do those people who died in the movement, what do those folks who struggled and sacrificed, what do those folks who literally watched, finally, fairness and equality coming to maps in the South, what are they to say now?

I can't stand on this floor as one of the few and still only a handful of African Americans ever to serve in this body without knowing upon whose shoulders I stand, the debt that I owe, the price that they paid so that we should have a Federal Government that is truly of the people, for the people, and by the people.

We know our history is full of dirty tricks and unfair games that were played to stop some people from voting, so that even though those folks made up majorities in their communities, they would have no say in Congress. It is a bitter, ugly, wretched history that we have overcome. It speaks to the greatness of our Nation that we have overcome. It speaks to the mightiness of a rainbow coalition of Americans—Black folks and White folks, people from all backgrounds—who joined arms and sang songs and marched toward freedom that helped