AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH, EXTENSION, AND EDUCATION REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 1998

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 365) regarding the bill S. 1150, the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reauthorization Act of 1998.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 365

Resolved, That, upon the adoption of this resolution, the House shall be considered to have—

(1) taken from the Speaker's table the bill S. 1150, to ensure that federally funded agricultural research, extension, and education address high-priority concerns with national or multistate significance, to reform, extend, and eliminate certain agricultural research programs, and for other purposes;

(2) struck out all after the enacting clause of the bill S. 1150 and inserted in lieu thereof an amendment consisting of the text of the bill H.R. 2534, to reform, extend, and repeal certain agricultural research, extension, and education programs, and for other purposes, as passed by the House;

(3) passed the bill S. 1150 as amended; and

(4) insisted on the House amendment and requested a conference with the Senate thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH).

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 365. This resolution, upon adoption, will delete all of the Senate language within S. 1150, including that which has been the cause of concern of many Members, and insert in its place the language of H.R. 2534, which was passed by the House last November.

Passage of the resolution is merely a necessary procedural step which allows the House to declare itself in disagreement with the Senate and to request a conference on the House-passed language.

Mr. Speaker, so there is no confusion, I know my colleagues had concern with the Senate language. The objective here in H.R. 365 is simply to reauthorize the Foreign Agricultural Research Extension and Education Programs within the Department of Agriculture. The funding provisions which came under scrutiny in the Senate version are not, I repeat, are not in this bill or the language in this resolution.

The language identical to 365 passed the Committee on Agriculture by a unanimous vote on Wednesday, October 29, and the full House on November 8 by a vote of 291 to 125. It is the first comprehensive overhaul of agricultural research programs since 1977. It encompasses over $14 billion in 5 years.

The last two decades have brought sweeping changes to agricultural trade, production, and the government's approach to agriculture culminating in the reforms accomplished in the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996, commonly referred to as the Freedom to Farm Bill.

In the Committee on Agriculture, we have adapted to these changes by focusing on American agriculture's competitiveness around the globe, working to eliminate barriers to American farm products and to open international markets.

Mr. Speaker, every farmer I know would prefer a market to a subsidy, and it is on that principle and in that knowledge that Congress, 2 years ago, began getting government out of the farmers' business. But that is not to say that government does not still have a role. It clearly does, and agricultural research is an enormous part of it.

Today, agricultural research is more important than ever in transitioning to a market economy and securing new markets for American farm products overseas and ensuring that we continue to produce the world's highest quality food and fiber at competitive prices. The core bill, H.R. 365 lives up to this challenge in addition to reauthorizing numerous agricultural research programs through the year 2002.

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The bill includes reform provisions to ensure peer and merit review of all USDA research programs, greater accountability in the development of Federal research priorities, and greater dependence on cost sharing through requirements for matching funds. I urge my colleagues to support the resolution so that we may move forward with this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 365, a resolution which contains four provisions that upon their adoption will provide the following:

One, it will take Senate bill 1150 from the Speaker's table; two, it will strike all after the enacting clause and insert the text of H.R. 2534 as passed by the House and ably described by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH); three, it will pass Senate bill 1150 as amended by H.R. 2534 and insist on the House amendment and request a conference with the Senate.

I would like to make it perfectly clear that this resolution merely allows us to go to conference with the Senate. That is all.

H.R. 2534 passed the House on November the 8th, 1997, by a vote of 291 to 125 and is the result of a bipartisan effort. H.R. 2534 provides for a straightforward reauthorization and reform of current USDA agricultural research programs. H.R. 2534 does not contain any of the savings and reallocation measures associated with Senate bill 1150.

Confusion and concern over this issue prevented our going to conference on this bill at the end of the first session, the 105th Congress. I recognize that there are concerns about provisions in the Senate bill. For this reason I urge Members to permit us to go to conference so we can begin to work through these differences. The sooner we begin working on a suitable conference report, the more time we will have to carefully consider these concerns while ensuring that support for vital agricultural research programs is not unnecessarily delayed.

Again, I strongly urge passage of this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. LIVINGSTON).

(Mr. LIVINGSTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LIVINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time; and I rise in support of the resolution.

I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the Committee on Agriculture on this bill. Agricultural research is the heart of a system of agriculture which allows less than 2 million American farmers and ranchers to feed 260 million Americans and hundreds of millions of more people overseas.

This bill reflects great credit on the distinguished chairman of the committee, my good friend, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH), and all of his colleagues, particularly my two good friends, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST) and the distinguished ranking member, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM).

I do wish to raise a serious concern about the bill that has come out of the other body. That bill, creates more than $1 billion in new mandatory spending that I believe contradicts all the hard work that has been done in cutting the budget here in this House in the last 3 years.

In particular, section 301 of the Senate bill creates a new $780 million mandatory spending program for research; and I would point out that we already are spending annually about $1.6 billion in the two major agriculture research programs in the discretionary account.

Section 226 of the Senate bill adds $300 million to an existing mandatory program called ''The Fund for Rural America.'' About half of the annual $100 million of spending in that program goes to research which, as I have already pointed out, already gets substantial discretionary funding.

The other half of the annual $100 million goes to rural development activities. I would like to remind all my colleagues that, in the current fiscal year, we are supporting a program level of more than $6 billion in rural development through discretionary funding.

Again, I think the House bill is a good bill; and I commend the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH) and

the authorizing committee for their work. I believe, however, that in conference the conferees must eliminate the costly and unnecessary mandatory programs in the Senate bill in order for the conference report to have sufficient support to pass.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY).

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas for yielding me this time.

Let me simply say that I have mixed feelings about this bill. I certainly have no objection to the bill as it is leaving the House. I think the House bill is a responsible bill. But as both gentlemen know who are managing the bill, I have three major concerns with the Senate bill with which this bill will be conferenced.

As the gentleman from Louisiana just indicated, first of all, that Senate bill creates new mandatory spending for agriculture research. While I certainly support an expansion of agriculture research, I strongly oppose making ag research an entitlement program. Research is inherently a discretionary function of the budget, whether it is cancer research or energy research or agriculture research, and there is no reason to elevate agricultural research to a different standard.

I would also say that creating new mandatory programs in the ag research area will not add to a net gain in spending for the agricultural research community because, if a new mandatory program is created, you can bet your last dollar that when the 302 allocations are made in the appropriations process, that that new mandatory research will be taken into account and discretionary research will be reduced accordingly by the majority party when they establish their 302 allocations. So there will be, in the practical world, no net gain for ag research.

My second objection is that the source of the savings in the mandatory spending is the food stamp program. And while I certainly agree that States should not be able to double bill the Federal Government for food stamp administrative costs, there are other pressing needs in the food stamp arena that ought to be met, including restoring food stamp benefits to legal refugees, including the Hmong veterans who fought side-by-side with American troops during the Vietnam war.

Thirdly, even if full savings were not needed to restore food stamp benefits to immigrants or refugees, there are other mandatory spending issues that the authorizing committee ought to be addressing, in my view, rather than raiding the jurisdiction of the Committee on Appropriations.

I would point out that spending $200 million a year for sales commissions in the crop insurance program means that there will be less discretionary money spent for important agricultural research programs, and I think that the authorizing committee ought to fix that problem before they set up new mandatory spending programs.

So I would simply say to Members who have asked me about whether they should vote for this bill or not, I have no problem voting for this resolution at this time. But I hope that Members who talk about holding spending caps will, if this bill comes back from conference with new mandatory spending, I hope they will be prepared to vote against that conference report and deep-six it, as it will justifiably deserve to be deep-sixed, if it adopts the approach taken by the Senate.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BARRETT), chairman of the Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities of the Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise in full support of the Agricultural Research, Extension and Education Reauthorization bill.

I think it is a very well-reasoned and responsible bill that will make sure that vital agriculture and related research will, in fact, continue through the year 2002, including reform provisions which ensure peer and merit review of agricultural research. It also includes provisions which will provide for input into the priority setting process by those who benefit from agricultural research.

I think it is important for us to remember that the bill has already been passed. It is important for us to know that this is a clean resolution that will simply substitute our language for the other body's language and will simply allow us to go to conference on this issue.

Strong agricultural research programs have certainly enabled our farmers and ranchers to produce the highest quality food and fiber in the world at competitive prices. This resolution simply reauthorizes our agricultural research. It updates and modernizes our research program so that American farmers will, in fact, maintain their competitive edge in an increasingly global marketplace.

As the current Asian crisis is teaching us, our ability to ensure a stable export market is tenuous at best. Therefore, we need to continually work at expending our ag markets in every region of the world. This requires, among other things, the ability to be on the cutting edge of agricultural research, to provide agricultural products that these markets demand.

In addition, for my very agricultural district in Nebraska, this reauthorization is, in fact, critical. Among the many provisions of the bill that are key to Nebraska agriculture are provisions for research on wheat scab, precision agriculture, ethanol, animal waste and management, and methyl bromide.

The reauthorization provides a new direction in ag research. I think it is reform at its best, and I encourage all Members to vote ''yes'' on the resolution.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON).

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time. I appreciate this opportunity.

I am in strong support of H.R. 2534 as written by the House and, has been stated already, it has been passed by the House. This piece of legislation needs to go forward to conference.

The problem is not with this bill. The problem is with S. 1150, the Senate version of agriculture research, which uses a considerable amount of saving from the food stamp administration for other purposes in the majority, other than responding to the needs of the hungry and for which food stamp monies are authorized for. Therefore, the conference needs to proceed very carefully.

While this legislation contains very important items, many of those I support, such as authorization of the use of research in extension grants to study the impact of pfiesteria and other microorganisms that pose threats to human and animal health upon our waterways; increasing the priority of finding alternative resources to methyl bromide; animal waste management; and significantly increasing the funding for historically black colleges and universities for research.

All of these, indeed, I support. And this bill, again as stated, is a wonderful bill; and it is much needed in the agricultural community.

I am gravely concerned and I urge the conferees as they go forward to please consider the needs of the hungry and that the food stamp savings will be there; that they should, in fact, go for those purposes.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote for this, but I also urge the conferees to understand what my reservation would be, and I look forward to seeing how the conference turns out.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EWING), who is chairman of the Subcommittee on Risk Management and Specialty Crops.

(Mr. EWING asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. EWING. Mr. Speaker, I support the legislation before us; and the conference committee, I hope, will take note of what is said here today as they do their deliberations on this legislation.

First of all, this is the first comprehensive overhaul of the agricultural research program in 20 years. This legislation is a crucial step toward meeting an increasing demand for world food and, yes, the commitment which we made to our farmers when we passed the Freedom to Farm Act: the Federal Government's responsibility for research.

The bill improves the ability and capacity of participants in the U.S. food and agricultural sector to meet consumer needs for high-quality, safe, nutritious, affordable and convenient food.

H.R. 2534 will help those participants compete in a global market and produce products in an environmentally sound manner. The legislation is vital in ensuring the United States remains at the forefront of producing the world's highest quality food and fiber at competitive prices.

This bill creates an exciting new food genome research initiative which is fundamental in developing new and improved uses.

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It also establishes an animal waste management research initiative, which is very important across the country as we have many, many controversies in America and in Illinois over waste from animal facilities. Mr. Speaker, this is really a piece of legislation whose time has come. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to support it.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. BECERRA).

Mr. BECERRA. I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time. Mr. Speaker, I come here with some reservations about this bill, but with some confidence. This bill as it will leave this House and go to conference will not contain a provision which when it comes back from conference I guarantee you it will have, and that is a provision that will take, it is not clear how much, it is somewhere between perhaps $1 billion to $2 billion, from the food stamp program, which are considered administrative savings, and those moneys will be used for which programs we do not know. But the concern that a number of us have is that if we are going to take money out of food stamps, and we took a whole lot of money out of food stamps two years ago when we passed the welfare reform law, that we should put the money back into services for the hundreds of thousands of families, including mostly families with children that were now as a result of this bill denied access to food stamps.

As I said before, I have reservations but I have confidence from speaking to many of my colleagues that a serious effort will be made to address this concern if in fact we have moneys that comes out of the food stamp account. I trust that the members of the Committee on Agriculture will remember that the moneys in these savings should go into those programs from where the money came. If that is done, then certainly when this bill comes back after conference, all of us could say that we could support the programs.

I support those ag programs, the ag research programs that are there. If it were a straight bill on agriculture research, it would have my vote. But I express my reservation at this stage because it is unclear to me where we will head. But as I said before, I do have confidence, especially because of my colleagues the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLEY), that an effort will be made to ensure that if we take money from food stamps, it will be used to help the thousands of families who are in great need of providing nutrition to their children. With some reservations I say this is a bill that we should see go to conference, and with confidence I do say that I believe at the end we will all be able to vote for it.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), a former member of the Committee on Agriculture, now on the powerful Committee on Appropriations.

(Mr. WALSH asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in reluctant opposition to this very good bill. I would congratulate the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH) and all the members of the Committee on Agriculture for putting together a very responsible bill. My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that the Senate bill takes $1.2 billion in savings from the food stamp administrative savings and then creates two new mandatory programs, one for ag research, which I support but we are already spending $1.6 billion on it, and another for rural development, a program we are spending $6 billion on. The House did the right thing. The Senate has not. My concern is if this goes to conference, the temptation will be too great to spend that money on other programs that do not, quite frankly, need the funds. But the fact is, Mr. Speaker, over 900,000 legal immigrants, including over 150,000 children, have lost food stamp benefits. I think most of us would agree that that is wrong and that these funds need to be put back into the program to help to feed those people. In addition, there are many elderly and disabled persons who have lost food stamp benefits and I think we need to correct that wrong, too.

Mr. Speaker, I would again reluctantly oppose the bill, ask that we return it to the committee and allow them to put some language into the bill that directs the committee bill to provide for language that would keep those funds within the food stamps program. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I oppose the bill.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN).

(Mr. LEVIN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I know that the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH) faces a difficult conference, as does the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) and their colleagues. I am here simply to express my fervent hope that in conference they will take a look at the President's proposal on food stamps for legal immigrants. We are talking about in no way undoing welfare reform. I worked for and voted for the ultimate product. This is about hungry kids and this is about hungry elderly people, many of them refugees. The cuts in food stamps were very, very large and no one is suggesting at this point the restoration of most of them. But the President's proposal focuses on those most vulnerable, kids, most of them citizens themselves. Their parents are not yet. And the elderly, many of them, as I said, refugees and asylees. So I am here simply to say as they deal with the complexities, please do not forget these very vulnerable people who are here in our midst legally.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST), chairman of the Subcommittee on Forestry, Resource Conservation, and Research, whose subcommittee drew this bill.

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution. I would like to thank the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH), the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLEY) for their hard work and cooperation in bringing this bill to the floor. As chairman of the subcommittee with jurisdiction over agricultural research programs, I presided over a series of hearings last summer and through the fall to prepare for this bill. We worked diligently to improve upon the current research, education and extension structure by increasing coordination, communications and competition among the public and private sectors and across State lines. This bill represents a significant step toward that goal.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for our colleagues who may be watching or for their staffs who may be watching to make for certain that they understand what this is. The House has passed this bill. All we are simply trying to do is to go to conference. We had the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. LIVINGSTON), the chairman of the Committee on Appropriations. We had the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY), the ranking member of the Committee on Appropriations. We had the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH), a subcommittee chairman of appropriations, who the one common thing throughout their statements was what a great bill this was.

Mr. Speaker, we did not make any changes in the food stamp program in this bill. I agree with the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY). We need to fix the crop insurance program. Nothing about crop insurance is in this bill. I agree with the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON), who is a member of our committee about her concerns on food stamps. Nothing in this bill has anything to do with food

stamps. The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), the gentleman from California (Mr. BECERRA), all expressed their concerns about what the Senate has done. We cannot even talk to the Senate if we do not get this bill out of here under this resolution and go to conference.

So I want to make for certain that people understand, everybody loves this bill. But if the gentleman from New York (Mr. WALSH) is correct in his efforts, as he said reluctantly, to defeat the bill, nothing he is trying to do in regards to the money for food stamps is done. I want to make for sure that we understand where we are and I want to make for sure that Members understand that all we are doing is going to conference on a bill that has passed the House and all of the concern that has been raised on the floor today is about the Senate bill. We have got to go to conference before we can even begin to cure the problems. Let us not get caught up in these other things that are of legitimate concern to us as well in a bill that has nothing to do with it and keep from American agriculture the opportunity to move forward with a research bill that has not been reauthorized in, I believe, 15 years, and is vitally important to the future of agriculture and to all of our producers and to all of those people involved in it. All we are doing today is trying to go to conference.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HALL).

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, many of us are talking about the debate that we had last year, actually in November. At the time there were serious concerns, not with the House bill itself but with major funding decisions at stake in the conference committee. Those same concerns remain, and I would repeat them. Unlike the House bill, the Senate bill creates over $1.2 billion in new mandatory spending, offset by administrative savings from the food stamp program. Programs to be funded with those savings, however worthy, should not take precedence over feeding hungry people. The food stamp program has already been drastically cut, and it is only fair that a substantial share of any food stamp savings should be reinvested in addressing the critical food and nutrition needs, in particular restoring food stamp benefits to vulnerable groups of legal immigrants, including the elderly, the handicapped and families with children.

We did not have an opportunity to offer a motion to instruct conferees on this important concern. So if we pass this resolution, we will send this bill to conference with no firm assurance that a fair share of food stamp savings will be reinvested in feeding the hungry.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge my colleagues to pass this resolution, but send a very strong signal to conferees that many of us will work to defeat a conference agreement that does not invest at least half the Senate bill's food stamp savings in feeding hungry people, specifically vulnerable groups of legal immigrants and refugees facing hunger and hardships as a result of losing food stamps.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. SERRANO).

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am confident that both the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) have heard enough comments and concerns today so that they will go into that conference doing what needs to be done on behalf of people who are hungry and who are in need of the food stamp program. I would like to echo the comments made by other Members here today, the fact that this is a very difficult situation. On one hand, we want to be supportive of agricultural research. On the other hand, we know that so much good can come of the food stamp program, more so than we have had up to now, especially in the area of legal immigrants. And so my role today here is again to echo what the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HALL) said before. I will do nothing to stop this resolution from leaving the House. I will be supportive of its passage, in the hope that we come back with a conference report that I will not have to oppose, a conference report that will take into consideration the balance that is needed in this issue.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLEY).

Mr. DOOLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of sending this bill to conference. I think that many of us have heard the comments of many of the Members who have raised some concerns, not about the House bill but about the Senate bill. I think all of us who played a major role in crafting the bill that was passed, the ag research bill that was passed by the House, were motivated by some primary objectives. One is we have to ensure that the taxpayer dollars which are invested in agriculture research are going to obtain the maximum benefit to all of our society, all members of our economy. I think the bill that we passed made some major improvements to ensure that we will be getting the best return on behalf of the taxpayers. I would also state that many of us are sympathetic and sensitive to the issues in terms of how we will allocate any dollars that might have been saved in the food and nutrition side of this bill.

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But I would also point out that when we look at the major advocates in this country who spend so much time in trying to ensure that the needs of some of the most impoverished of our country will be met are supporting this bill going to conference.

We can look at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, who are asking this Congress to vote, yes, to send the bill to conference, the National Council of La Raza, the Food Research and Action Committee, and the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. We have a broad coalition of people, advocates on behalf of food stamp recipients and advocates on behalf of making the most appropriate investment of research dollars to benefit the ag industry are saying let us send this bill to conference in order that we can develop the compromises and the resolution with the Senate version so that we can bring it back so that we can have a bill that is going to be in the best interests not only of the agriculture sector through increased investments in ag research, but also on the interests of ensuring that we are going to help the most impoverished in our country.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to commend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST), the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLEY) for their work in the subcommittee, and the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH) for his work in bringing us here today, and I urge my colleagues to support this resolution. Let us go to conference and try to work out these issues in the best way that we possibly can for all concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLEY) especially who have been side by side with us in a very cooperative fashion putting together a research program that has not been reauthorized since 1977. So it is time, I think, that we did act and we are acting.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, we are not guilty of raiding the Committee on Appropriations. We are not guilty of starving children. We are not guilty of making all of these horrible choices. We are guilty of bringing our colleagues a straightforward bill that addresses research in America. And I remind those Members, and we have heard them all, that if there are concerns that they have should this bill survive conference, there would be many chances for them to be heard on this floor. This is not their last opportunity to express their thoughts.

So in the meantime, please help us pass this bill, and let us move forward with research for American agriculture.

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution, which will move the agriculture research reauthorization bill one step closer to enactment. This resolution strikes the Senate language and moves the House bill to conference.

I would like to thank Chairman SMITH, Chairman COMBEST, ranking member DOOLEY, and

the committee staff for their hard work on this important bill. I am particularly pleased that this bill includes the essential part of legislation I authored: The Precision Agriculture Research, Education, and Information Dissemination Act.

Several new technologies make up precision agriculture. These include global positioning satellites, digital field mapping, grid soil sampling, and the list continues to grow as technologies develop.

If our farmers are to remain the most productive and most efficient growers and producers in the world, precision technology must be made available to them. This technology is just as revolutionary as moving from the horse to the tractor, or from plow to conservation tillage.

Let's not deny our farmers the opportunity to remain the best in the world. Today's vote is just another step in bringing our farmers into the 21st century.

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for the House Resolution 365, which would order the House to go to conference with the Senate on the Agricultural Research bill.

The House version of the research bill, HR 2534, which I supported and voted for last year, was a good bill. When we acted on that bill, it did not contain the $1.25 billion food stamp administrative savings contained in the Senate version of the bill.

The issue of how these savings should be divvied up, between nutrition program needs, agricultural research, rural development and crop insurance is the only outstanding issue holding up a good bill from becoming law.

I urge the House to proceed to conference with the Senate and on this bill, in order to settle the differences over this matter. I trust that the goals of all parties can be addressed in conference, and the traditional strong alliance between the agricultural and nutrition programs can be rekindled.

Mr. Speaker, I recently saw first hand the importance of agricultural research at the dedication of the National Environmentally Sound Production Agriculture Laboratory (NESPAL).

This new facility is an exciting addition to the other outstanding research and educational facilities located across southwest Georgia. It is important to our state and, in fact, to the whole country. This is one more reason why that area of Georgia is recognized as a center of cutting-edge agricultural research—the kind of research we must have if we are to meet the awesome challenges in the years ahead.

NESPAL is a shining example of how business, the academic community, and government are working together to achieve the level of scientific research and development needed to sustain agricultural leadership in an increasingly-competitive world.

The Georgia Research Alliance, made up of agribusiness and agricultural and environmental sciences researchers and educators, provided the non-federal funds to match USDA's $3.6 million grant, as well as key leadership support, that gave Georgia the edge in the competition for this facility. This is a great thing for Georgia—but it is just one of many things the Alliance has done to boost research and development in Georgia, including raising $50 million a year to help create new programs and enhance existing ones at Georgia's research universities. The Alliance has played a major part in building the foundation that has made Georgia the number one state in high-tech growth.

Agriculture faces challenges of historic magnitude in the years ahead. For one thing, there will be many more people to feed in the world, and much less arable land to grow the food and fiber they will need. Over the next 50 years, the world's population is expected to jump from the current figure of between 5 and 6 billion people to more than 9 billion—not quite double the current population, but close to it. The land available for planting is already decreasing at an alarming rate as developing countries expand and provide housing for growing populations. As farm land disappears, people throughout the world will continue to destroy timber resources and even rain forests as they try to find the last acre on which they can plant. Without adequate scientific advances, these conditions pose an extremely-dire threat to the world's environmental well-being.

Another factor is the rise in the standard of living which is occurring throughout much of the world, including Southeast Asia and China, where food consumption is already sharply increasing. As income rises, so does the demand for food and fiber—in terms of both quantity and quality.

To meet these demands, the United States will be called upon to increase production three-fold over the next 50 years. If our country is prepared to meet this demand, we have the potential to provide an unprecedented level of prosperity for our farmers and our agricultural economy in general. This is both a responsibility and an opportunity. It is also something that will not be attained easily.

A corn producer, for example, will have to increase per-acre yields from 130 bushels to more than 300 bushels to meet this projected demand. This seems like an insurmountable goal. But current research indicates it can be done. Research projects that are underway in several states are routinely producing yields of 200 bushels an acre—and occasionally yields of more than 300 bushels.

U.S. farmers could not have tripled the country's corn production over the past 60 years, as they have done, if it has not been for the research done by both the public and the private sectors. This is an impressive achievement. But we know it isn't the end of the story. Current research suggests that we have the potential to make even more dramatic gains. We are not there yet—but we can, in fact, develop new and improved ways to meet the needs that are projected for the years ahead.

Without a sufficient investment in research, we will almost surely fail. But, as long as we keep our diverse research efforts going strong, I have no doubt our farmers and agri-businesses will have the tools they need to seize the exhilarating new opportunities that are opening before them as the new century approaches. Thanks to visionary citizens like those in the Alliance, we are headed in the right direction.

One of the things we need to do to fulfill our agricultural potential in an environmentally-progressive way, I believe, is to make greater use of farm materials in the production of industrial goods.

We're talking about making non-food products out of renewable, earth-friendly commodities grown on the farm rather than depletable, environmentally troublesome resources like petroleum.

The number of trailblazing farm utilization companies that are emerging all over the country is rapidly growing—companies that transform soybeans into ink, canola into hydraulic fluid; cotton gin waste into cleansers; beets into a heart transplant medication; corn and potatoes into lubricants, paint and plastic products ranging from packing material to disposable diapers.

Most people know about ethanol, the motor fuel made mostly from corn, which as captured 7 percent of the petroleum market over the past 20 years. But many people are not as aware of the fact that plastic was originally developed from vegetable starches when discovered in the late 1800's. After the turn of the century, it was found that plastic made from petroleum had a big advantage in both quality and cost—and by the end of World War II petro-based plastic had taken over the entire market.

Now, veggie-based plastic is making a comeback. It still costs less to make plastic from petroleum. But research has narrowed the gap, and the demand for the biodegradable kind is increasing. In just the past 15 years, the amount of plastic produced in the U.S. from vegetables has climbed from virtually nothing to more than 100 million pounds a year. While this is just a drop in the bucket compared to the 60 billion pounds of petroplastic produced every year, it represents a secure foothold in the market—a foothold that's growing every year.

Cotton is another example of the country's shift back to farm materials. Cotton production went into a tailspin in the 1950's, when synthetic fabrics that require less ironing took over the market. This changed when researchers developed wrinkle-resistant cotton and cotton-blend fabrics—triggering a new boom for cotton in Georgia and much of the South.

Not coincidentally, I understand some portions of the NESPAL building's floor is covered by linoleum—a farm-based product made from linseed oil.

Two farm utilization companies can be found in the Second Congressional District of Georgia—BioPlus, Incorporated of Ashburn and Scientific Ag Industries of Blakely. Both of these companies are using peanut hulls as their basic resource—buying the hulls for just a few dollars a ton and transforming them into products like cat litter, cleansing absorbents, and activated carbon used in air and water filters that sell for $120 or more a ton.

They are marketing the breakthroughs that came from our research universities, from government, and from their own research efforts. While both are still relatively small companies, with 30 employees or less, their potential for spurring commercial growth in rural areas, while helping improve the environment, is tremendous.

BioPlus and Scientific Ag are improving the environment by diverting many thousands of tons of peanut hulls from landfills. They are also providing a new source of income for farmers and shellers, And, as they become commercially successful, other industrial investors are sure to follow their lead—creating a chain-reaction of new industrial development. BioPlus is already a success. After operating in the red for about eight years, the company turned the corner two years ago and is now earning a nice annual profit. The firm

got substantial start-up advice and assistance from the University of Georgia. More recently, it received federal venture capital to finance the expansion that helped break into the black. Most of all, it did intensive research on its own—acquiring four patents while substantially improving its product and making it more desirable and profitable.

Scientific Ag is the 2-year-old creation of a group of Georgia Tech researchers, who plan to put about as much emphasis on doing research on new industrial uses for farm materials as they do in selling the peanut hull-based activated carbon they have perfected and are producing for sale. This new firm, which has also relied on the country's whole spectrum of research programs, is just now getting to the production stage, and I believe its future is also very promising.

These companies are fairly representative of this whole movement. They are the end result of the partnership between the public and private sectors—that wide range of research programs that are collectively providing the scientific advances and the business assistance that make our farmers and manufacturers competitive in the world.

This is a partnership we must nurture and build upon. It would be catastrophic if we ever let our research infrastructure break down. Inadequate research would be a disaster for our economic future just as it would be for our national defense. If we failed to maintain a lead in military weaponry, you know what would happen—the country's influence would be weakened and our national interests would become more vulnerable throughout the world. If we failed to maintain our economic lead, our position in the world would also be weakened—as would as our standard of living.

Overall, this Ag Research Reauthorization bill strengthens the role of government in ag research—not just in terms of authorizing funds, but by ensuring that the inseparable bond between the public and private sectors involved in ag research is reinforced in the funding formulas themselves.

When we preserve this partnership, we are preserving something that is historic. Early in the nation's history, the federal government got involved in agriculture by collecting seeds from throughout much of the world and distributing them to farmers so they could experiment with new crops. This activity was managed by the Patent Office, which began to expand its farm research role in the 1840's by publishing new discoveries by our farmers for use by other farmers. In 1887, the Hatch Act greatly expanded the federal government's agricultural research activities by setting up the first experiment stations at a number of colleges in the 13 states.

Out of this beginning grew the collaboration that now exists. The private sector is the biggest part of this partnership. But the public contribution is not far behind. According to the National Research Council, private expenditures account for about 57 percent of our agricultural research and government about 43 percent. We need both.

The Georgia Research Alliance does a great job of promoting a sound, responsible, innovative, highly-diversified research infrastructure, and I commend them for what you are doing to enhance the quality of life for everyone. They are certainly doing its part to maintain this partnership, and it is up to us in Congress to make sure the federal government continues to contribute its share.

Government must stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the business and educational communities to produce the healthiest and most abundant food and fiber supply in the world; achieve our potential in agricultural exports and restore the balance of trade; reduce our dependence on oil imports; protect the environment; and keep the country economically secure for our generation and for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in sending this bill to conference.

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAW). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 365.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 365, the resolution just agreed to.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oregon?

There was no objection.

RE-REFERRAL OF EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATION 6736 TO COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE

Mr. SMITH of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Agriculture be discharged from the consideration of Executive Communication 6736, an Environmental Protection Agency rule on State Implementation Plans under the Clean Air Act, and that Executive Communication 6736 be re-referred to the Committee on Commerce.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oregon?

There was no objection.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair intends to postpone appointment of conferees on S. 1150 until after 5 p.m. today in order to preserve the motion to instruct the conferees.

HOWARD C. NIELSON POST OFFICE BUILDING

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3120) to designate the United States Post Office located at 95 West 100 South Street in Provo, Utah as the ''Howard C. Nielson Post Office Building,'' as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3120

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION.

The United States Post Office located at 95 West #100 South in Provo, Utah, shall be known and designated as the ''Howard C. Nielson Post Office Building''.

SEC. 2. REFERENCES.

Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the United States Post Office referred to in section 1 shall be deemed to be a reference to the ''Howard C. Nielson Post Office Building''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. MCHUGH).

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us was introduced on January 28, 1998, by the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CANNON) and cosponsored by all Members of the House delegation from the State of Utah pursuant to the policy of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight. This legislation was before the committee on February 12, at which time it was amended to reflect the correct address of the facility. The address of the postal facility in the original bill read 95 West 100 South Street. The committee unanimously passed the bill with an amendment correcting the address to read 95 West Number 100 South.

The amended bill designates the U.S. Post Office located at that location as the Howard C. Nielson Post Office Building.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of representatives who have cosponsored this bill. I know they will take the opportunity to expound upon Mr. Nielson's great history and his service to this country so, therefore, I would simply note that, as has happened in many occasions in the past, this recipient, I think, reflects very favorably on the kind of individual that we have historically honored with the designation of the United States Postal Service.

Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. CANNON) who has been the prime motivator and mover of this legislation for comments that he might have.

Mr. CANNON. Mr. Speaker, when my office and I considered honoring one of the great Americans who has had an impact not only on my own district, but at the national level, our thoughts turned almost immediately to Howard Nielson.

I approached several of Howard's former colleagues including the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL) the chairman and the ranking member of the Committee on Commerce, on which Howard sat. They wholeheartedly supported this tribute and recalled fond memories.