NETHERCUTT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, I represent one of the most beautiful agriculture districts in the country, the Eastern District of the State of Washington, the east one-fourth of our state, the largest geographic district in the State of Washington. We have abundant wheat farming. Peas and lentils are grown there, potatoes and other agriculture commodities. So agriculture is a very important component of this budget agreement legislation that has been agreed upon by the leaders of the House, both Democrats and Republicans, and by the White House. It has specific interest to me coming from an agriculture-producing area.

Washington farmers export about 90 percent of our commodities that are produced each year, and we have had a great crop this year. We had a great crop last year. Hopefully, we will have great crops in the future.

The genesis for the freedom to farm, the Federal Agriculture Improvement Act, which was signed into law by the President and passed in a bipartisan way in 1996, was right in the Fifth District of Washington.

When I first got elected to Congress in 1994, started serving in 1995, I approached agriculture producers and farmers in the Fifth District of Washington and said what do we need in the way of farm improvements, agriculture improvements, policy improvements? They came up with a lot of that which was eventually signed into law as the freedom to farm concept and the freedom to farm legislation, that allowed farmers across this country to have a transition out of the old system into the new, the freedom to market system whereby our farmers would market our products around the world with several understandings.

Number one, that there would be some tax relief; that there would be some sanctions relief; that we would not be imposing sanctions which inhibited the export of our commodities overseas; regulatory relief and certainly agriculture research.

So it was with these issues in mind that I have approached whether to support this legislation that has now been crafted or not, and I am proud to say that as a person from a farm community and a farm region, that this is a good bill.

It provides about $6 billion in additional relief, in disaster payments and in market shortage sanctions payments, essentially, because of the reduction in demand from our Far Eastern trading partners; frankly, I think not as aggressive an approach to agriculture marketing as our USDA ought to have. I think our USDA, our government, ought to be out there pushing our products worldwide and helping our farmers in this transition period, this 7-year period of getting some payments so that they can farm for the market, not for the government.

So I am pleased that this particular legislation, even though the President vetoed the ag appropriations bill, and I happen to serve proudly on the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies, and we thought that was a good bill, had good research dollars in it, it had additional transition payments under the existing system that would help farmers, but it was vetoed, unfortunately I felt, because we wanted and knew in this negotiation that we would be adding additional disaster payments and sanctions relief for our farmers.

Nevertheless, the product that has been produced out of these negotiations is a good one. It provides a total of $5.939 billion in additional spending, total spending, I should say, under the ag appropriations bill for market loss payments for 1998 disaster payments, for multiyear disaster payments, for livestock fee payments for a Farm Service Agency loan authority and for Farm Service Agency administration.

Our farmers are now inundating these farm service agencies with assistance requests and these people are needing help. We provide that help in this bill. We did it in the ag appropriations bill but it is reinforced in the final budget negotiation bill that has been approved and will be approved, I should say, in this House and has been approved by our leadership.

The tax relief that is provided in this bill is good for farmers. It will be talked about by my good friend and my colleague, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LATHAM) here shortly, but it is a good bill. It is a good tax relief package.

It is not what we want totally, because I am one that favors greater tax relief for farmers and all Americans. I think we were not able to get that in this negotiation but we will get it next year. So I urge my colleagues to support this bill, support the relief that is provided by this legislation for farmers.

## RELIEF, NOT MORE TAXES, FOR FARMERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LATHAM) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LATHAM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Speaker very much for this time and I also thank the gentleman from Washington (Mr. NETHERCUTT) for his comments about the agricultural provisions in this bill that we are about to pass tomorrow.

I would just like to point out some key provisions I think that are extremely important to all of us in agriculture who are experiencing some very difficult times. First of all, a new provision as far as soy biodiesel, and the gentleman in the Chair, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS), has played a major role in getting this included, this is going to be a great opportunity for soybean producers to use soybean oil as a fuel. It will add value to soybeans to the tune of about 8 to 14 cents a bushel. If someone is an Iowa farmer, that is a lot of money.

Also a provision in here gives some additional help to livestock producers who have experienced devastating crop loss and have had to go out and buy feed for their livestock. There are $200 million in there for those disasters.

I think this bill finally shows a stark contrast to what the administration in their budget proposal put forth when they had $573 million of taxes on farmers in the form of user fees if they are in the livestock business. So this is a great victory for livestock producers.

There is a provision in here which is very important also to livestock producers, and that is a 1-year price reporting provision and a study to go with that. It is a pilot program, but I think it is very, very important that there is transparency in the market place so that people know when they discover price for livestock it is done in an open and fair manner and this is a very, very important provision.

Also, for farmers, there are some tax provisions that are extraordinarily important. Income averaging, 3-year income averaging, is going to become a permanent part of our tax law after this bill is passed. We have a look-back provision so that if a farmer had a very good year 4 years back he can look back this year if he had a disaster and recover some of the taxes that he paid back in his very, very high income year, extremely important; a 5-year look back provision.

Health care deduction for not only farmers but for all self-employed people, this is extraordinarily important. If a person is a farmer out there, if they have a small business, one of their major costs is health care, and currently we are not allowed to deduct nearly enough of the cost of that health care. In the year 2003, it will go to 100 percent deductibility, extremely important for self-employed folks and for farmers.

Because of our good friends at the IRS, we had to include a provision so that they did not tax us this year on money that we did not receive this year. As farmers know, the emergency bill we passed earlier allowed them to take their farm payments earlier in this year for the entire 1999 year. Well, IRS said because a person may or may not take the money actually this year, if they do not take it we are still going to charge tax on it. So we fixed that provision in this bill.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I think with this aid package that is here for agriculture, we did not undermine the fundamental policy of the freedom to farm bill. The freedom to farm is based on the idea of the government finally respecting the intelligence of farmers to make decisions for themselves.

Over the last 6 years we have had a one-size-fits-all government controlled

policy trying to say that the government can out-guess the weather every year, and the government saying we know how much someone is going to produce next year so we are going to have a farm program that is going to fit that. It has never worked.

We have either compounded surpluses or we have caused crop disaster years to be compounded in a negative way. It has never worked, and the government, with all the infinite wisdom we have around here, has never been able to out-guess the weather.

I am on the Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies. We have also in this bill fought off the administration in their efforts to undercut crop insurance. Looking at the President's budget this year, they cut dramatically crop insurance which was going to devastate any opportunities for farmers to cover their own risk. We have fought off that provision from the administration.

We continue to put in money to help farmers to be able to export their products. My only hope, Mr. Speaker, would be that in this next fiscal year that the administration will finally use the tools that we have given them to help move our agricultural products overseas.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very, very good bill for farmers. It is a very good bill for all Americans and I will support it tomorrow.

## REASONS TO VOTE NO ON THE OMNIBUS APPROPRIATIONS BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Speaker, it is becoming apparent that this House will be called upon to vote on approximately a thousand page document tomorrow that is responsible for over half of the appropriations bills that should have been passed separately, and it is going to do some good things.

It is also going to have a lot of things buried in it that I think none of us could possibly defend when called to task back home. As we speak all across America in 435 congressional districts and one-third of the Senate seats, people are out there begging for the opportunity to serve in the greatest legislative body this world has ever known.

They are putting their houses up for mortgage. They are selling their cars. They are asking friends and relatives for loans. They are doing basically anything they can to get the funds to get on television. What do they talk about once they get on TV? They talk about $15,000 that was squandered here or a million that was squandered there. Many of them get elected to this body, and we have got to wonder what happens to them then, because the same people who are outraged at the squandering of $15,000 or one million will tomorrow vote for a bill that is for tens, no, I am sorry, hundreds of billions of dollars and they have not the foggiest idea where it is all going.

They are going to vote for $18 billion for the International Monetary Fund, an international rat hole over which we have little or no control.

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They are going to vote for farm programs that do not work; educational programs that are not necessary, that have little or no supervision, and above all ought to be the States' responsibility. They are going to vote for things for defense that should have been done, absolutely, but should have been done through the normal process where the committees can take a look at it and decide whether or not that is in the best interest of our country. In short, they are going to try to do 2 years' worth of work in one day.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think one of my constituents would sign a document for a $50,000 mortgage that they had not read. I do not think one businessman in my district would sign a document for a $10,000 loan that he had not read. And yet they are asking the 435 people of this body to sign a document that none of us have read.

The people who have read it are the Speaker of the House, President Clinton, and the Majority Leader of the Senate. That is not good enough for me. That is not good enough for my constituents.

So, I am going to encourage my colleagues to vote ''no.'' We have stayed here this long. We can stay a little bit longer. And I am going to encourage my colleagues to continue to vote ''no'' until we are given adequate time to study the measure that is brought before us, and then and only then should we be making a decision for over hundreds of billions of dollars worth of programs and whether or not it is a good idea for our country.

## AMERICA'S PROMISE: NATIONAL DEFENSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUYER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUYER. Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the House tonight with regard to the bill we are going to be voting on tomorrow. I think the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. TAYLOR), some of his comments were completely accurate in that this is a crazy process, the way we have come down here at the end of the year to take these appropriations bills and to lump them together. I do not think this is a good way to do business.

We also have to recognize this is a political institution. Two completely different political parties. Parties do things. Sometimes we scratch our head and do not completely understand and we ask why.

America should be very clear that back in August, the President had a campaign strategy that he coordinated with the Democrats and that was he wanted to shut down the government, so he came over here to the Cannon Building and he met with the Democrat Caucus. They gave him a rounding cheer and applause as they wanted to unite and come together and when we came back together after the August recess, that the President would shut down the government.

Mr. Speaker, he wanted to do that because he thought that he did a good job when he shut down the government before, and Republicans kind of helped him do that. And so he thought, boy, this would be a great strategy. It would be a great distraction from his own problems and a distraction for the Democrats and their failure to accomplish a lot of things they wanted to accomplish.

So what happened? Here we are still in session, a few weeks before an election. And I agree with my colleague from Mississippi, this is not a healthy way to do business. But we also need to understand what put us in this predicament in the first place.

So, there was a political strategy at hand. And, fortunately, we were able to get an agreement. My assessment of the agreement so far is that the Republicans have about 65 to 70 percent and the Democrats, they got what they want. That is what politics is about, is about the art of compromise.

Anybody can stand here in the well and talk about a lot of things they do not like and everybody can find a reason to not vote for it. Likewise, people can find reasons to vote for it. And sure enough, they will do it for whatever particular reason that will be most beneficial for them back in their home districts. But let me talk about something that is more important than either political parties and something that gets my attention with regard to this bill. That is about America's promise, and America's promise is that of our national defense.

When I think about our national defense, we had some testimony by Gordon Sullivan, who is the former Chief of Staff of the United States Army who came and for years and year I used to listen to the Chief of Staff of the Army come and talk to us on the Committee on National Security. He always talked about the Army being on the razor's edge. That is how close we were. This budget will be okay, but we are right on the edge.

Now in his retirement, he talks now about how fragile the Armed Forces are today. He is absolutely correct. In my 6 years here in the House during the Clinton administration, I have seen what he has done to our United States military. They are truly extended in every corner of the world. They have a strategy of working harder and doing more for less, and I can assure my colleagues that is not a strategy for success.

We have Navy ships going to sea undermanned as a result of the Navy