

this issue. The program which was put in place makes very clear rewards for schools which demonstrate improvement for students at all levels of achievement.

But what happens where a school doesn't improve? This is the important difference. We do not propose using critical funds in the Title I program for low income students to offer a portion of the cost for a child to seek private education. Instead, the failing schools themselves much be changed—through focusing professional development dollars on the principals and teachers or, if necessary replacing the leadership altogether. No school should be allowed to fail.

One of the most critical elements of the New Democrat proposal for the Three R's, therefore, is investment in recruiting, training, and retraining teachers. We must do our best to support our professional educators. Every child has a right to an excellent teacher.

FARMERS NEED A SAFETY NET IN ADDITION TO FLEXIBILITY

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 7, 2001

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member commends to his colleagues the following editorial from the February 2, 2001, Omaha World-Herald. The editorial highlights the challenges in developing a workable agriculture policy which maintains flexibility while providing farmers with assistance when needed.

"FREEDOM" NOT IN FARM LAW

The time is at hand for the U.S. government and the Americans involved in production agriculture to decide how they're going to coexist for the next few years. For farmers, in addition, there is the matter of how to survive in a world in which their product is often available in income-depressing surplus.

Freedom to farm, the tag line given to the 1996 federal farm policy, came along at an inopportune time. The original plan—an end to federal crop subsidies as of next year—turned out to be impractical. Something else is needed.

The underlying philosophy was worth a try. Agriculture was stagnating under the old system, in which farmers received subsidies for planting a specified number of acres to a specified crop. The 1996 idea was to de-link subsidies from planting decisions for a half-dozen years while continuing the flow of cash in the form of transition payments.

This was "freedom to farm." At the end of the transition period, the subsidies would theoretically dry up. Farmers, having tailored their production to maximize their income from the marketplace, would theoretically be ready for financial independence.

Now, with the transition period nearing an end, agriculture's ability to take that next step is more than a little doubtful. It turned out that even a relatively deregulated grain-producing industry couldn't respond in time to take advantage of fast-changing market conditions. As the Asian currency crisis worsened in the late 1990s, American farmers were stuck with huge piles of grain they had produced on the theory that the Pacific Rim boom would be sustained into the new century. From planning to planting to harvest takes many months. When conditions change, it's too late if the crop is in the ground.

The transition payments, instead of descending as planned, have skyrocketed. Since 1996, when the total was \$7 billion, the amount quadrupled. This year's \$28 billion constituted half of all the revenues that farmers received from their operations.

This isn't healthy. But the best idea to come out of a federal panel, created to monitor the outcome of the 1996 approach, is a new variety of subsidy to provide income maintenance for farmers when hit by sagging market demand for their products.

Subsidies have a downside. They keep inefficient operations from being squeezed out by efficient competitors. This creates a self-fulfilling cycle. Inefficiency intensifies the demand for subsidies, leading to more inefficiency.

Subsidies, in addition, sometimes undermine the political support for agriculture in parts of the country where the Midwestern corn-wheat-cattle-hogs economy is not well understood. Eastern commentators include farms among the recipients of corporate welfare. They seem to forget that subsidies have been part of a cheap-food policy under which Americans pay a lower percentage of their income for food than is possible in nearly any other part of the world.

So the aid the government has given to agriculture is not necessarily bad. Indeed, former Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman said the alternative would have been chaos in rural America last year. And the current secretary, Ann Veneman, says a "safety net" of some sort has to be kept in place, although she has not been more specific.

Few farmers and ranchers, given a choice, would accept the subsidized way of life as opposed to an economic system in which they had an even chance to get a fair return on their labor and investment. On the other hand, survival would be difficult, with conditions as they currently are, without what Veneman calls a safety net.

Accordingly, designing a system that makes sense financially, politically and socially is a task for the sharpest economic minds. As they proceed, some thought should be given to what returns—such as habitat restoration, wetlands preservation and the safeguarding of productive land in the form of conservation reserves—might be secured, in the process, for the tax-payers.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate on February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules committee—of the time, place, and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled, and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, February 8, 2001 may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

FEBRUARY 9

10 a.m.

Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

To hold hearings to examine the current state of California's electricity crisis and the use of the Defense Production Act.

SD-538

FEBRUARY 12

2:30 p.m.

Budget

To hold hearings to examine the current outlook for the national defense budget.

SD-608

FEBRUARY 13

9:30 a.m.

Armed Services

To hold hearings on current and future worldwide threats to the national security of the United States, to be followed by closed hearings (in Room S-407, Capitol).

SD-106

10 a.m.

Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

To hold oversight hearings to examine the first Monetary Policy Report for 2001.

SH-216

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions
Aging Subcommittee

To hold hearings to examine the nursing shortage and its impact on America's health care delivery system.

SD-430

Judiciary

To hold hearings to examine the Hart/Rudman Commission findings on terrorism.

SD-226

10:30 a.m.

Governmental Affairs

To hold hearings on the nomination of Joe M. Allbaugh, of Texas, to be Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

SD-342

FEBRUARY 14

10 a.m.

Judiciary

To hold hearings to examine the impact of recent pardons granted by President Clinton.

SD-226

2 p.m.

Appropriations

Transportation Subcommittee

To hold oversight hearings on the Department of Transportation's management challenges.

SD-124

2:30 p.m.

Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

To hold hearings to examine the issues of saving investors money and strengthening the Security and Exchange Commission.

SD-538

FEBRUARY 15

9:30 a.m.

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

To hold hearings on proposed legislation to strengthen certain education programs.

SD-430