

Wheat harvest is a tradition, a legacy, and our livelihood, and as goes the wheat crop, so goes the Kansas economy. A good wheat harvest is the leading contributor to our State's revenue, about \$1 billion annually.

So Mr. Speaker, as the combines roll northward and the harvest continues, it is good for all of us to take a few moments to recognize the lessons of the wheat field, to remember that there is satisfaction in making the right decisions and putting in the hard work to produce a bumper crop but ultimately mother nature has the final say in whether or not the yield is bountiful. That cautious optimism is the hallmark of every farmer who puts the seed in the ground hoping for a good harvest months later, and there are few things in life more rewarding than working with family side by side to complete the job of the wheat harvest. Wheat harvest is important to the Kansas economy but even more important as a way of life.

Kansans have been saying their prayers throughout the years of drought for rain and snowfall. Those prayers have been answered. Now we pray for abundant crops, good prices, and a safe harvest. Once again the old hymn reminds us: God our Maker doth provide.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### PORT SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about port security and the critical importance that increased funding for port security would have for my region of Long Beach and Los Angeles and to the American people.

Mr. Speaker, last night I appeared before the Committee on Rules about an amendment that would provide funding for container security and port security. Regrettably, this amendment was not made in order. If my amendment had been made in order, this germane amendment would designate \$20 million to establish a secure container and safe mobility pilot program. Further, this project would be carried out at the Nation's port with the highest volume of container traffic. This program would work in conjunction with existing city and local infrastructure in developing fast, efficient, effective and secure ways to move containers through the port complex and through surrounding cities and communities throughout the Nation.

We recognize that not all containers that come into our country are inspected. We must provide resources to port security initiatives that help us utilize our existing infrastructure while making sure that our communities that receive these containers are protected. A program like this will set the standard for similar communities around the Nation that provide the infrastructure that move our Nation's goods out of the Nation and keep our economy moving forward.

Long Beach and Los Angeles, our port complex, the largest in the country and the third largest in the world, receive 45 percent of the Nation's containers. These ports are a vital economic link to the rest of the Nation. Eighty percent of the goods that come into the country from the Pacific rim comes into our ports. If these ports in the communities that support this supply chain of goods movement were ever threatened or damaged, our economy would be stalled.

In October of 2002 our Nation witnessed firsthand what happened to our economy when our ports are not moving goods out of the country. The lockout that occurred at the western ports served as a grim reminder of just how interconnected and how dependent we are on one another in moving our Nation's goods. The lockout that occurred at the western ports cost the U.S. economy an estimated \$1 billion a day.

We must provide support and precious resources to our ports to ensure that they are secure. In addition, we must provide security to the communities that are connected and support our ports. We cannot view port security as merely inside the gates. Ports are a part of our communities. The resources that we provide for port security also provide security for our Nation's communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would have offered this amendment, and I offer this statement for the RECORD.

#### THE RURAL VETERANS ACCESS TO CARE ACT

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

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, I represent a rural area, 64,000 square miles, 68 counties, and it goes without saying it is a long ways between towns. In an area like this, veterans oftentimes have a hard time accessing healthcare. Let me give a real example. Let us say a veteran lives in Ogalala, Nebraska, which is in the western part of the State but is by no means the most remote part of the State, and let us say that individual has to go to Omaha, Nebraska to a VA hospital which is 350 miles away, and he may just be going for a routine blood test, diabetes checkup, blood pressure checkup, or any type of simple checkup of that nature. Oftentimes when he makes an appointment, the appointment will not be fulfilled for 6 months.

So he waits for 6 months, and that veteran at that time then gets up at 4 a.m. and leaves for North Platte, Nebraska, which is 50 miles away. After he gets to North Platte, he boards a van to go to Grand Island, Nebraska, where he spends the night and that is another 140 miles, and early the next day he gets on another van, goes to the VA hospital in Omaha, a 3-hour trip. He completes the test that day and then he returns to Grand Island for the night, and the next day he takes the van from Grand Island to North Platte, another 140 miles, and then he gets a ride to Ogalala, another 50 miles. So he has waited 6 months, he has had a 3-day trip to go 660 miles for routine tests. This is ridiculous.

Had the veteran driven his own car or had somebody drive his own car, he still would have had an 11-hour trip and it would have taken at least 2 days, if not 3.

Let me give an urban example. Let us say that someone, a veteran with the same health problem lived in Richmond, Virginia. It would be the same as if that individual from Richmond, Virginia drove to New York City and back for basic medical care. Those same tests that were performed in Omaha, Nebraska at the VA hospital could have been done at the local hospital in a matter of three or four blocks away or maybe a couple of minutes away from that veteran, and sometimes because of their age some of our World War II veterans are having a hard time traveling today, maybe a disability, maybe the weather, a blizzard or a snowstorm, and the veteran simply does not get the healthcare at all. He does not even try because he is not able to make the trip.

So that is why I have introduced H.R. 2973, the Rural Veterans Access to Care Act. H.R. 2973 would allow the VA to contract for care with local medical facilities. The only stipulation is that the veteran must travel at least 60 miles or more for the care. Some people say that only happens in Montana or North Dakota or South Dakota or Nebraska. And it is true. Those States would be hard hit. But there probably are hardly any States in the Union with the exception of maybe Rhode Island or Connecticut or someplace like that where we do not have at least some veterans who are somewhat isolated from VA hospitals and are having to go great lengths to get their medical care. H.R. 2973 would set aside 5 percent of the VA funding to contract with local medical facilities for veterans living in rural areas. By contracting with local clinics in remote areas, number one, medical care would be prompt, it would not be a four to five to six-month wait. Number two, veterans who have difficulty traveling would be served. They would not have to just simply give up on getting medical care. Number three, there will be no additional cost and might even cost