

and confrontational at times, but he kept his cool and responded within reasonable parameters. The Judiciary Committee and the full Senate cannot be guarantors that Judge Roberts will fulfill ours or anyone's expectations. The Court's history is full of justices who have surprised or disappointed their appointers or inquisitors.

But the process has been full, fair and dignified. On some questions, Judge Roberts, as the song about the Kansas City burlesque queen in the stage play "Oklahoma" says: "She (he) went about as far as she (he) could go" without committing himself to votes on cases likely to come before the court. When all the facts are considered, my judgment is that Judge Roberts is qualified, has the potential to serve with distinction as Chief Justice and should be confirmed. I will vote "yea."

Mr. SPECTER. I thank the Chair, yield the floor, and, in the absence of any Senator seeking recognition, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEWINE). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 3 p.m. having arrived, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 2744, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 2744) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Bennett-Kohl amendment No. 1726, to amend the Rural Electrification Act of 1936.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, we are pleased to present to the Senate today the fiscal year 2006 appropriations bill for the Department of Agriculture, rural development, and related agencies. The bill is before the Senate and is open for amendment or discussion and debate. I am pleased to announce to the Senate that this reflects a lot of hard work through hearings, examining the President's budget request for these Departments for this next fiscal year.

The subcommittee was very capably managed by the distinguished Senator from Utah, Mr. BENNETT, who is chairman of this subcommittee. The bill is within the budget authority outlined

by the budget resolution adopted by the Senate. Specifically, section 302(b) of the budget resolution allocates \$17.348 billion to this subcommittee's authority for appropriations. It is within the outlay allocation of \$18.816 billion.

Throughout the past 7 months, the committee has reviewed suggestions by Senators and others who are interested in the provisions of this bill. The bill, as reported by the subcommittee, was approved unanimously and submitted to the full committee. And after review by a bipartisan group of Senators in that subcommittee, all of the Senators in the full committee approved the allocation and the appropriation of funds as reported in this bill.

We hope if any Senators have any suggestions for amendments, they will bring them to the attention of the managers of the bill. We will be happy to discuss those and review them. We hope we can complete action on this bill at an early date. There are other bills that need to be considered by the Senate, so we hope we can take up these suggestions, and if there are amendments, we can vote on them expeditiously.

We appreciate Senator KOHL, who is the ranking minority member of this subcommittee, for his hard work and leadership in the development of this bill. Their staff has worked with the staff on the majority side in a cooperative way. This is a truly bipartisan effort. The Senate appreciates that fact. I congratulate all who have been actively involved in the development of the legislation.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise as a member of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee to discuss the fiscal year 2006 Agriculture appropriations bill. I applaud the chairman, Senator COCHRAN of Mississippi, as well as Chairman BENNETT and Ranking Member KOHL for their diligence on this spending bill and for ensuring that we have arrived at as sound a financial package as was possible, given the pending budget resolution's mandate to cut funds from USDA. At a time of significant budgetary deficits and increasingly tight funding, I worked with my colleagues to maintain a secure package for our producers and rural communities, especially in light of a sorely inadequate proposed USDA budget from the administration.

Producers and ranchers in my State of South Dakota and across the Nation would simply prefer a fair price for what they produce at the day's end. USDA programs and Federal funding are crucial for producers, however, when markets are challenging and prices are depressed. The farm bill that was hammered out in 2002 is a contract with rural America, with South Dakota, to ensure adequate safety nets and increased opportunities for rural communities. Numerous Members of

Congress, as well as agricultural organizations concerned with the President's proposed budget, have pointed out that the farm bill has already come in at \$14 billion under its original projected costs.

At a time when producers need the contract negotiated by Congress and signed into law by this President, the administration proposed limiting the benefits promised to producers. We cannot balance the national deficit on the backs of our Nation's producers. I voted to restore the cuts that were made to the agricultural spending package, and I am concerned for the adjustments that will be made to the agricultural spending bill in light of the budget reconciliation instructions advocated by this administration. I am concerned for the impact these cuts will have on our rural communities and our producers.

There are several initiatives, however, that I am pleased to see in this spending measure. I would like to touch on a few of those priorities. As a member of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, there are a few South-Dakota-specific items that I am pleased are included in this measure. A few of them include funding for a collaborative four-State effort led by South Dakota State University. These funds will increase opportunities for South Dakota sheep and cattle producers, building a better climate for livestock feeding in our State. There is funding to work at South Dakota State University to integrate pulse crops in crop rotations for South Dakota farmers. By integrating pulse crops into rotations, farmers can increase profits and improve soil quality.

There is some funding for the Seed Technology Center at South Dakota State University. Funds will be used to conduct seed technology and biotechnology research to benefit agricultural producers and consumers, enhancing profitability for producers and resulting in better food production.

Lastly, there is funding for the South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks Department to continue animal damage control work. The funds allow the South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks Department to continue to meet the growing demands of controlling predatory nuisance and diseased animals. SDSU, a land grant university in Brookings, is significantly impacted by Hatch, McIntire-Stennis, and animal health Federal formula funds. SDSU is an institution that makes enormous contributions to our agricultural industry through the research initiatives that it spearheads.

The President's proposed cuts on their research centers would have greatly impacted this land grant institution's ability to function in an effective manner. The President's proposed budget would have cut 45 faculty and staff at South Dakota State University, with a 25- to 50-percent reduction in graduate students. These cuts would have resulted in closure of at least one