

have voted "aye" on rollcall Nos. 474, 475, 476, and 477. I would have voted "no" on rollcall No. 478.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER  
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

OPEN SPACE AND FARMLAND  
PRESERVATION ACT

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5313) to reserve a small percentage of the amounts made available to the Secretary of Agriculture for the farmland protection program to fund challenge grants to encourage the purchase of conservation easements and other interests in land to be held by a State agency, county, or other eligible entity, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 5313

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

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

This Act may be cited as the "Open Space and Farmland Preservation Act".

**SEC. 2. ADDITIONAL TITLE-HOLDING OPTION UNDER FARMLAND PROTECTION PROGRAM.**

(a) **ADDITIONAL TITLE-HOLDING OPTION; RESERVATION OF FUNDS.**—Section 1238I of the Farm Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3838i) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d) **OPTION FOR TITLE TO BE HELD BY ELIGIBLE ENTITY.**—

“(1) **RESERVATION OF FUNDS; PURPOSE.**—Of the funds made available under section 1241(a)(4) for a fiscal year to carry out this section, the Secretary shall reserve not less than 15 percent to make grants to support cooperative efforts by an eligible State agency, a county, and one or more other eligible entities to purchase conservation easements and other interests in eligible land under subsection (a), the title to which will be held by an eligible entity rather than the United States.

“(2) **COST SHARING.**—Notwithstanding subsection (c)(1), the share of the cost of purchasing a conservation easement or other interest in eligible land borne by the United States under this subsection shall not exceed 25 percent. The State agency involved in the purchase shall contribute 25 percent of the purchase price, the county involved in the purchase shall contribute 25 percent of the purchase price, and the other eligible entities involved in the purchase shall contribute 25 percent of the purchase price.

“(3) **PROHIBITION ON USE OF GRANT FUNDS.**—Federal funds made available under this subsection may not be used by grant recipients for administrative purposes.”

(b) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on October 1, 2006.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from

Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia.

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

Madam Speaker, urban sprawl continues to threaten the Nation's farmland. Social and economic changes over the past three decades have influenced the rate at which land is converted to nonagricultural uses. Population growth, demographic changes, preferences for larger lots, expansion of transportation systems, and economic prosperity have contributed to increases in agricultural land conversion rates.

The amount of farmland lost to development is not the only significant concern. Another cause for concern is the quality and pattern of farmland being converted. In most States, prime farmland is being converted at two to four times the rate of other, less-productive agricultural land.

There continues to be an important national interest in the protection of farmland. Land use devoted to agriculture provides an important contribution to meeting the Nation's food and fiber needs, environmental quality, protection of the Nation's historical and archeological resources and scenic beauty.

The farmland protection program is administered by NRCS and provides funds to State, tribal, and local governments and nongovernmental organizations to help them purchase conservation easements from willing sellers to limit conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses.

The farmland protection program has received funding applications for 300 percent more dollars than the program was appropriated. The result in fiscal year 2005 was \$262 million in unfunded projects. There simply weren't enough Federal dollars to match the number of applications to preserve farmland.

H.R. 5313, the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Challenge Grant Act, was introduced to aid in reducing the number of unfunded projects. Currently, the farmland protection program provides up to a 50 percent Federal match on these easement projects. By lowering the Federal match on a small portion of farmland protection program funding, we believe that less Federal funds can be used to protect more land.

The bill before us today, H.R. 5313, amends the Farm Security Act of 1985 to set aside 15 percent of farmland protection funds for cost-share grants, 25 percent maximum Federal share, to support eligible State agencies, county, and one or more eligible entities, local government or private entities, to purchase conservation easements.

This bill allows Federal dollars to go further by lowering the Federal match fund to a maximum of 25 percent and allowing other entities to make up the

other 75 percent. States where the State, county, and local grassroots effort is strong can make better use of increasingly limited dollars. For example, Pennsylvania, which has great grassroots efforts to protect farmland, had the most unfunded easement applications, 65 for fiscal year 2005, which accounted for 6,200 acres not being able to be put into this program. By being able to use these reserved funds, more acres, with help from more groups, can be protected.

There is no new spending authorized in this bill. It simply creates a set-aside out of existing Federal farmland protection dollars. Any funds not used will go back into the general disbursement of farmland protection funds.

Madam Speaker, obviously, it is in this country's best interests to protect some of its great farmland. This program is immensely popular in many States, proven by the numbers of applications for the program each year. States like Connecticut, with \$14 million in projects that could not be funded; Maryland had \$17 million; Michigan, \$22 million; New Hampshire, \$15 million; Ohio, \$12 million; and Pennsylvania, \$20 million. This bill gives States that have tremendous grassroots organizations the ability to protect more farmland with less Federal money.

I would like to thank the ranking member of the committee, Congressman PETERSON, for working with us on this matter, as well as Congressman GERLACH, who introduced the measure, and Congressman TIM HOLDEN, a member of the committee, from Pennsylvania, who has legislation addressing this issue.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, the farmland protection program is an important program that helps farmers preserve their land for the future and to combat urban sprawl.

The program works with State and local groups to purchase conservation easements to ensure farmland is kept continually in agricultural use for future generations.

I want to thank the chairman for recognizing the importance of preserving open space and hope that we can continue to work together to strengthen the Federal program in the next farm bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GERLACH) 3 minutes.

Mr. GERLACH. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 5313, the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Act, a bill I introduced to strengthen the Federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

Under the bill, 15 percent of the funds made available for the program would be reserved in order to make challenge