My friend from Utah has asked if he can go ahead of me to speak on another subject for about 10 minutes. I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Utah be recognized for 10 minutes to speak on a subject that he will address; then, following the Senator from Utah, that I be recognized for up to 20 minutes; following my statement that Senator DURBIN be recognized for up to 15 minutes.

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

The Senator from Utah.

FISA MODERNIZATION

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, following the unauthorized public disclosure in 2005 of what has become known as the Terrorism Surveillance Program, numerous lawsuits were filed against electronic communication service providers for their alleged participation. Currently, more than 40 lawsuits are pending, which collectively seek hundreds of billions of dollars in damages. Let me repeat that figure, hundreds of billions of dollars.

For myriad reasons which I am going to discuss, these service providers alleged to have participated deserve a round of applause and a helping hand, not a slap in the face and a kick to the gut.

The amount of misinformation concerning this issue is staggering. Given that this dialogue involves highly classified details, there are many things that simply can't be discussed. However, the committee report for the recently passed FISA modernization bill, S. 2248, from the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is public, and contains very pertinent information.

The report mentions that as with other intelligence matters, the identities of persons or entities that provide assistance to the U.S. Government are protected as vital sources and methods of intelligence. Details of any such assistance can not be discussed. However, the committee report does mention that beginning soon after September 11, the executive branch provided written requests or directives to U.S. electronic communication service providers to obtain their assistance with communications intelligence activities that had been authorized by the President.

During consideration of FISA modernization legislation, the Intelligence Committee examined classified documents relating to this issue.

The committee, in an overwhelmingly bipartisan tally, voted to include retroactive immunity for service providers that were alleged to have cooperated with the intelligence community in the implementation of the President's surveillance program. Senators from both sides of the aisle, after careful consideration, came to this conclusion. Make no mistake, this was the right conclusion.

It was the right conclusion for the Intelligence Committee, and it should be the right conclusion for the Judiciary Committee, when it considers this bill tomorrow.

Given the astounding amount of misinformation in the public domain concerning the Terrorism Surveillance Program, it is not surprising that these lawsuits are filled with false information and baseless allegations.

Some have asked a valid question, if the companies did not break the law, why do they need immunity? Quite simply, the Government's assertion of the state secrets privilege prevents these companies from defending themselves.

This assertion by the Government is absolutely essential, as the possible disclosure of classified materials from ongoing court proceedings is a grave threat to national security. Given the necessity for the state secrets privilege, the drawback is that the companies being sued are forbidden from making their case.

In fact, the companies cannot even confirm or deny any involvement in the program whatsoever. They have no ability to defend themselves.

Ordinarily, these companies would be able to address allegations and make their case. However, the classified nature of the topic means that companies are not free to do so. They can't even have discussions with shareholders or business partners. But we need to remember, lawful silence does not equate to guilt.

Another point not mentioned nearly enough is that the Government cannot obtain the intelligence it needs without the assistance of telecommunication companies. This means that our collection capabilities are dependent on the support and collaboration of private businesses.

If retroactive immunity is not provided, these private businesses will certainly be extremely hesitant to provide any future assistance to our intelligence community. This could have a crippling effect on the security of millions of people in our society; thus, it's simply an unacceptable outcome for the safety and security of our Nation.

Any hesitation from companies to provide assistance with future Government requests could be disastrous. This could affect not only our intelligence community but domestic law enforcement efforts. The next time a child is kidnapped, and law enforcement needs help with communications, would that situation allow any hesitation from the service provider? If your son or daughter was missing, would you stand for any lack of cooperation from companies? Do we want endless teams of private company lawyers second, third, fourth, and fifth guessing lawful orders to compel their assistance?

This is not the only problem with not including retroactive immunity. As the duration of these lawsuits increases, so does the chance that highly classified sources and methods of our intelligence community will be unnecessarily and unlawfully disclosed. Our enemies are acutely aware of these proceedings, and are certainly attempting to gather information previously unknown to them. The potential disclosure of classified information also puts the personnel and facilities of electronic communication service providers at risk.

Given all of the tremendous harm and damage that will occur by not passing a form of limited liability, I am amazed at the number of individuals who fail to grasp the seriousness of the issue before us.

To those who purport to oppose immunity in any form, I would hope that they take the time to actually read the bill. For those unable to tear themselves away from their favorite partisan blog, I am going to quickly tell you what the immunity provision says, and what it does not say. Remember, this bill passed 13-2 in the Intelligence Committee.

A civil action may be dismissed only if a certification is made to the court certifying that either (1) the electronic service provider did not provide the alleged assistance, or (2) the assistance was provided after the 9/11 attacks, and was described in a written request indicating that the activity was authorized by the President and determined to be lawful.

Furthermore, this certification has to be reviewed by the court before a civil action can be dismissed.

It does not provide for immunity for Government officials. It does not provide for immunity for criminal acts. Instead, it is a narrowly tailored provision that strikes a proper balance. This point can't be overlooked; the immunity provision in the current bill has absolutely zero effect on the numerous lawsuits pending against Federal Government agencies. These cases will go on, with their questionable constitutional challenges, with no impact from this bill.

Some Senators have suggested that indemnification or substitution would be possible solutions. Let me be perfectly clear, neither one is appropriate or acceptable in this situation. The Intelligence Committee considered both of these ideas, and rejected them for good reason. Indemnification, where the Federal Government would be responsible for any damages awarded against the providers, is not advisable since the providers would still be parties to the lawsuits, and thus the suits would continue with the consequences of disclosure and discovery. Not only does this further the likelihood of disclosure of classified material, but the companies will face serious damage to their business reputations, relationships with foreign countries, and stock prices. This is extremely unfair, if handled improperly.

Substitution, where the Government would litigate in place of the service providers, is not a viable solution since all of the same concerns just mentioned still apply. Even though the providers will not be parties to the litigation, discovery will still apply.

Don't we realize that having the Government fund unnecessary litigation is a tremendous waste of taxpayer dollars? The Government does not magically create dollars, it taxes hard-working Americans. When it comes to funding, who do we think the Government is?

To say that the Government should pay is to say that our mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters should have money forcefully taken from their paychecks to fund frivolous lawsuits. This is Alice in Wonderland, and down the rabbit hole we go.

Finally, for those who love to expound the catch phrase ''warrantless wiretapping'' to assert some theory of illegality, I encourage you to carefully read the fourth amendment.

Contrary to any other assertion, the fourth amendment does not always require a warrant and is based on the reasonableness of searches. While the phrase is meant to scare people, ''warrantless wiretapping'' in this instance is perfectly legal and constitutional.

Immunity is an appropriate remedy. It is just. It is necessary. It is imperative for the continued success of our intelligence gathering.

While reasonable minds can disagree about political topics, this issue requires disciplined logic, not political hyperbole. I hope that people keep the following facts in mind when considering this topic.

The program did not involve interception of domestic to domestic phone calls.

The President and the highest levels of the executive branch determined the program to be lawful and conveyed this fact repeatedly in writing to service providers.

The electronic service providers' participation was vital to the security of our country.

Lives have been saved by this program.

The companies were called on to support a lawful program that was vital to the security of our country. Do the companies require thanks or appreciation? No, but they certainly do not deserve illegitimate and false criticisms that affect their financial well being.

A grateful public should certainly appreciate the critical assistance the companies alone can provide for the public's defense. These companies are quite possibly facing irreversible harm to their business reputation and cannot defend themselves due to state secrets.

This debate has far too many Monday morning quarterbacks, applying their revisionist history to best represent their political mantra. I strongly urge all of my colleagues to support the limited immunity provided for in S. 2248. Any company that has done its part to provide for the protection of American families deserves protection in return. If not, the next time we reach out for a helping hand, we will be the ones who receive a slap to the face. And really, who could blame them?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, on November 5, almost 10 days ago, I came to the floor to say there it was a proud day in my time as a Senator because we were moving forward with consideration of the 2007 farm bill. Almost 10 days have passed and we are stuck. In being stuck, we are doing a disservice to the people of America, to the people of rural America. It behooves us to move forward with the kind of process that put together the 2002 farm bill and farm bills before that, where there was a procedure set out that there was an agreed-upon set of relevant amendments that were discussed and debated on the farm bill and then a farm bill was passed. To do otherwise is, frankly, letting down the farmers and ranchers. From my point of view, that is something which we ought not to do. It is something we have a moral obligation to avoid and where both Republicans and Democrats coming together can figure out a way forward to make sure we are addressing the realities and challenges of rural America, the realities and challenges of our farmers and ranchers, and the issues related to nutrition and all of the rest of the components of this very good farm bill which has been written by the Agriculture Committee, a committee which is composed of Republicans and Democrats, of which the Presiding Officer played a significant role in putting this farm bill together. It is important we move forward.

Let me talk about why I believe it is important to move forward. I decided to run for this position in the Senate several years ago in large part because there aren't enough people in Washington and on the floor of the Senate who cared much about what happens to rural America. There are very few people here, frankly, who have lived through the hard times and celebrated the joys of being a farmer or a rancher. It is important the voices of farmers and ranchers, who have dirt under their fingernails, whose hands are unmistakably calloused by the hard work they do, be heard in this Chamber. We do a tremendous dishonor to those hard-working Americans when there are the procedural and political games that are being played here today.

The majority leader came forward and said what we ought to do is go to the farm bill. It is a good farm bill. We ought to decide that there is maybe a subset of amendments, 10, 15, 20, whatever it is, and get on with the farm bill. Yet 10 days later, we are not making very much progress. Why aren't we making progress? Is it possible that some people on the other side simply do not want a farm bill, that they would rather see this work, which has been a labor for several years by many people, be killed? Is that their agenda, to kill the farm bill?

To all the farmers and ranchers who are listening across America today, to all those organizations which have been a part of this effort over the last several years, to all those people who care about nutrition in schools, to all those who care about making sure the hungriest are being fed, the faith community and others, I ask them to make their voices heard in Washington today so we are able to move forward to get a farm bill done and to get it done before we go back for Thanksgiving. I believe if those voices are heard here, that in fact will happen.

For me, much of my life has been spent on a farm and on a ranch. I know what the joys of farming and ranching are. I know what the joy is after you have prepared a field and you go out to the field after you have applied the fertilizer and you have watered the soil and you start seeing the shoots of wheat or barley or the young plants of alfalfa spring up like magic from the soil. I know the joy of what it is like to go out in the middle of the night and to watch a baby calf being born and then, within 4 or 5 hours, to watch the baby calf begin to stand on its legs, suck on the milk, and then be out prancing around within 12 hours. It is almost a spiritual experience when you think about the beauty of nature that you get to experience firsthand as a rancher and as a farmer.

I know the joys of being there for harvest time. I know the joy of being on a combine and watching the golden color of the grain collected in the combine and dumping it out through the chutes into the trucks that take it into the bins for storage. I know the joy of putting up stacks of hay, 20,000 bales of the greenest hay that is possible. It makes you proud when your haystack is finally completed. I know all the joys that come with farming from what you get to see on the land itself.

I also know the joy that comes from the effort where a family works together, where you have, in many cases around America, family farmers and ranchers who have been on the same land for generations, as is the case with my family, where they have been on the same farm for five generations. I know the joy and special meaning of those lands, where you know the reality of every fencepost because it was my great-grandfather who put that fencepost up. I know where the ditches were built in our case on our ranch on May 15 of 1857, when they were finally adjudicated and given a water right for that ditch. We know the reality of our land and our water.

There needs to be voices in the Senate, Democrats, such as the Presiding Officer from Pennsylvania, and Republicans as well who come up and say: We are not going to let rural America down. We are not going to let this farm bill die. We are not going to let those who have some political agenda kill this farm bill, to turn their back on rural America and do what they are trying to do. It is unconscionable that they would be engaging on that agenda.

Like I know the joys of farming, I also know the hardships that come as a rancher and a farmer. I know the concerns you can have when you have cut a crop of hay and you see the clouds coming up at 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning, knowing that maybe before you get to a point where you are going to bale the hay, you are going to have a crop that will be ruined. I also know the fear of watching those clouds rise over the horizon, when you can know from the color of the cloud itself that a hailstorm is on the way and you wonder whether that storm is going to hit your crop or it is going to hit a neighbor's crop, whether devastation is going to be caused by that storm.

I also know the pain of being in a position where ranchers, farmers go to the bank and they say to the banker: I need some assistance because I can't afford to pay back my operating line because either the prices are too low this year or because we have had some kind of disaster that has affected our ability to pay you back.

I know farmers and ranchers personally who have lost their farms, who have lost their ranches, and there is nothing that is anymore painful than going to those auctions and watching those farmers and ranchers who have built their life and their entire dream around their farm or their ranch and the equipment they have and being there in a position where they are having to sell what, essentially, is the soul of their life, their farm or their ranch.

So what we do here today—what we are doing here on this farm bill—in incredibly important for rural America. It is incredibly important for farmers and ranchers. It is incredibly important for those of us who want to feed this Nation. Yet, somehow, as I see the debate taking place here, at last count there were some 255 amendments to this farm bill. Well, why are there 255 amendments to this farm bill, when we have been working on this legislation for a number of different years?

The distinguished ranking member of the committee, Senator CHAMBLISS, started to hold hearings on the farm bill several years ago. He held them all over the country—from Iowa to Georgia to other places. Then Senator HARKIN, the chairman of the committee, held hearings in my State of Colorado on the farm bill, held hearings all over the country—each of us working to produce the very best farm bill we possibly could.

In my own State of Colorado, I worked with the great agricultural organizations—from the Colorado Cattlemen's Association to the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union to a whole host of others—to make sure we were putting together the very best farm bill for America.

It is a farm bill that, in my view, is one which would give us a great opportunity to revitalize rural America, to make sure that when we look back at the dawn of this century we did not allow rural America to be sunsetted but that instead we reinvigorated rural America in a way that has not ever happened before.

We have some great opportunities to do that because this farm bill is not just about farms; it is about fuel, it is about our energy security, it is about the future of our country in so many different ways. Yet we are being stalled here. We are not being allowed to move forward to consider this legislation and the substance of this legislation.

Let me say from my point of view, when I look at the future of agriculture, the future of ranching, and the future of rural America, what I see. First, I see great promise, and then I see great hope. I see great promise and great hope if we can do for rural development that which needs to be done.

We know today that per capita income in rural America is a lot less than it is in urban America. We know today that the infrastructure issues that are faced in the small towns of rural America exceed the capacity of those communities to be able to deal with those infrastructure needs by multiple times. We know that in many towns in every one of the 50 States, and represented here, you can go through those towns and you can see what has happened as rural America has been more and more forgotten year after year.

As to the town of Antonito, located within 5 miles of part of our ranch, you can drive in that town today and can see the devastation of a great part of rural America. At one point in time there were four or five gas stations in the town of Antonito. Today, there is one gas station. At one point in time in this town of Antonito, which has a population of less than 1,000, there used be a number of different grocery stores to go and buy your food. I remember ShopRite because that is where I used to go and buy lunch sometimes when I was working out on the farm. ShopRite has closed. So have other stores. There is only one small store that survives today. You see the boarded-up streets of that town where probably 50 percent of all of the buildings today are vacant.

You see a whole host of other problems in rural America. What we have tried to do with this farm bill is to address those issues. If we are successful—as we should be—if we are successful—as we must be, as we are required to do if we are going to do our job—then we are going to open a new chapter of opportunity for America and for rural America.

That chapter of opportunity has several very important features to it. First, it will make sure we have food security for the United States of America. We do not want to become dependent on foreign sources for our food in the same say we have for oil. For me, for the time I have been in public service—and before—I have had a sign on my desk that says: "No farms, no food." So no matter where you are, the 300 million people of America every day should remind themselves of that reality: "No farms, no food." This is about the food security of our Nation.

Secondly, the vision that we have with this farm bill we have worked on so hard for so many years is that we will contribute significantly to making sure we get rid of our addiction to foreign oil and that we grow our way to energy independence. The energy aspects of title IX of this farm bill are the most robust in the history of the United States of America. What you will see with this legislation, as it is implemented, is a rural America helping us grow our way to energy independence.

Senator GRASSLEY and I cosponsored legislation, a resolution which passed both this body as well as the House of Representatives, that says we can grow 25 percent of our energy from renewable energy resources. That is the ambitious vision that is included in this legislation. The energy components of the farm bill are incredibly important to the national security of the United States, to the environmental security of our world, as well as to the economic opportunities for America.

So I am hopeful we will open this chapter of energy opportunity with the passage of this farm bill, and that we will get it done as soon as possible.

Finally, when we think about the great conservationists of our country, there are no better people to take care of their land and their water than those who depend on it for a living. If you are a farmer or you are a rancher, you know you have to take care of your land and your water because that is your way of life. If something happens to your land and to your water, your way of life is taken away from you. So the conservation programs which are such a major part of this legislation are a keystone to the future of how we take care of our planet.

This legislation, under the leadership of Senator HARKIN, is the best legislation that has ever come forward on a farm bill with respect to the many conservation programs that include the Wetlands Reserve Program, the Conservation Reserve Program, and a whole host of other programs that are going to be important to make sure we have the best conservation agenda possible for our Nation.

In conclusion, I would make a plea to my colleagues, and that is that we work together to narrow down the number of amendments that need to be considered, and that we set about a process that will bring about a conclusion to this farm bill, so that then we can go to conference and we can get a farm bill that is a good farm bill for America, delivered to the President.

I also say to my colleagues—and there are some—who want this bill killed, don't do it. Don't kill this bill. It is too important for this country. Across America, people ought to be beating the drums in every State, in every county, in every village, on every farm and every ranch. They ought to be beating the drums and using their

telephones calling the Members of this Senate, telling us we ought not to leave here until the job is done. And the job will be done when we get this farm bill adopted by this Senate, which I predict if this bill, in its current fashion, were to be brought to a vote today, it would pass with about 70 to 75 votes.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MENENDEZ). The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I thank my colleague from Colorado. He comes to the Senate with an amazing background. I have sat and talked to him from time to time about his family. Senator SALAZAR's family came to the United States 400 or 500 years ago. They were some of the earliest settlers of our country, in the southwestern part of the United States. The founding of the city of Santa Fe, NM, his family was directly involved in; the naming of mountain ranges and rivers. They were there long before my ancestors ever had the good fortune to come to these shores.

I have also heard the stories of his youth, how he grew up on a ranch in Colorado with some very difficult circumstances, without the creature comforts many of us in the cities were used to. It is clearly in his blood and in his heart. When he speaks about this farm bill, he is not talking about some academic conversation but, rather, about the reason he came to the Senate, to make sure families such as his would have a voice in so many different areas but particularly when it came to this bill.

This monster of a bill, 1,600 pages, is a bill we take up every 5 years. It is the farm bill. But it includes so much more, as Senator SALAZAR has told us. It is not just about keeping our farms productive and our ranches profitable, but it is about rural America, small town America, the America of the Senator's youth, and the America I was fortunate enough to represent as a Congressman in downstate Illinois for so long.

His statement on the subject is not just another political speech. I know it came from the heart. I thank him for reminding us about the importance of this bill to small town America, to farmers and ranchers across America, and why these very practical, commonsense, hardheaded folks would find it hard to understand what is happening on the Senate floor over the last week and a half.

You see, for 10 days we have virtually tied up and stopped the Senate in the consideration of this farm bill. It should have been passed a long time ago. When you take a look back at previous farm bills, in 1990 there were 7 days of consideration of the farm bill. Mr. President, 122 amendments were dealt with. There were only 2 that were not relevant to a farm bill—only 2—and 122 were.

In 1996, 4 days were spent on the farm bill, and 24 amendments were considered to the bill. None of them were about anything other than farming and agriculture.

In 2001 and 2002, there were about 16 days of consideration on the farm bill, with 53 amendments. Only one was offered that did not have anything to do with the farm bill, which was offered by Senator KYL of Arizona on the estate tax. There was one side-by-side amendment offered by Senator CONRAD. That was it.

Well, it is a different story today. Senator SALAZAR has told us. This morning, Senator REID, the majority leader, the Democratic leader, gave me a list of the Republican amendments they want to call on this farm bill. We have been tied in knots now for almost 10 days in the Senate because the Republicans refuse to come up with a list of amendments we could consider.

They finally came up with this list. When you take a look at the amendments on this list, you can understand what their game plan is. After all the time we spent in preparing this bill, it is very clear they do not want this bill to be called. They do not want us to debate it. They want to talk about everything under the Sun except a farm bill.

Here are a couple examples of things they think should be talked about: Senator MURKOWSKI of Alaska thinks the farm bill is a good time to talk about *Exxon Valdez* litigation. Senator KYL of Arizona believes this is the tax bill, so he wants to talk about the alternative minimum tax. In fact, he has filed at least one amendment, maybe more, on the subject. Senator LOTT, the Republican whip, thinks this is a good tax bill, too. Let's get into a debate about the alternative minimum tax, an issue which clearly we will debate and will decide before the end of the year.

Senator COBURN believes we should talk about the estate tax. Senator MCCONNELL also wants to talk about the estate tax. He also wants to talk about the alternative minimum tax. Senator STEVENS of Alaska wants to talk about protecting kids from online predators. I am all for that. I am trying to figure out what the connection is with the farm bill, though.

Senator GREGG is one of the most prolific when it comes to producing amendments which have little or nothing to do with the farm bill. He wants us to get into a debate on the mortgage crisis in America. It truly is a crisis. He thinks the farm bill is the place to do it. He wants to talk about immigration, too, while we are on the farm bill—not ag workers and immigrants brought in for that purpose—but the issue of driver's licenses for the undocumented. He also thinks it is important for us to get into an issue of collective bargaining for firefighters. I happen to be a cosponsor of that bill. I never would have dreamed that amendment should be offered on a farm bill. Senator GREGG of New Hampshire—I don't know how many farmers there are in his State. I don't know what they grow; I am sure they are very good people—has decided their interests have to be set aside. He has other things he wants to talk about.

He also has the notion in which he thinks, in addition to immigration, mortgages, firefighters' right to collective bargaining, we should in the farm bill say women who live in rural areas of America will be denied the right to sue doctors guilty of malpractice. Women in rural areas will have a limited legal right to sue doctors guilty of malpractice. Well, I am sure the rural women of America are grateful Senator GREGG wants to make sure they are a special class, unable to use their constitutional legal rights in court if they are injured or a member of their family is killed as a result of medical malpractice. He thinks that belongs on the farm bill. He also has one about the Gulf of Mexico. I will have to dig into that. He has gone far afield. I think he turned his legislative staff loose and said: Got any ideas? Let's put an amendment on the farm bill.

Senator DOLE wants to get into taxes. It goes on and on; page after page of amendments.

Well, clearly, we can't consider those amendments if we are serious about passing a farm bill. So what Senator REID and Senator HARKIN, the chairman of the Agriculture Committee, did was say to the Republican side: Let's get serious. Let's get down to business. Let's cooperate. Let's bring up the amendments that relate to the farm bill, and let's do it on a bipartisan basis.

So this morning Senator HARKIN said: How about starting with the amendment of the Senator from North Dakota, Senator DORGAN, cosponsored by Senator GRASSLEY, a Republican of Iowa. Let's have limited time for debate, and then let's vote on it. Well, Senator SAXBY CHAMBLISS of Georgia, the ranking Republican on the Senate Agriculture Committee, objected. He didn't want to bring up a bipartisan amendment to be debated for 60 minutes and vote on it.

Then Senator HARKIN said: Well, let's pick another bipartisan amendment, the Lugar-Lautenberg amendment regarding farm program reform, 2 hours of debate and a vote. Senator SAXBY CHAMBLISS, the Republican on the Senate Agriculture Committee, objected.

Senator HARKIN, undaunted, then suggested that Senator PAT ROBERTS of Kansas, a man who has an extensive background in the House and Senate on ag programs, be given 90 minutes on his amendment, and then a vote. Senator SAXBY CHAMBLISS, the Republican ranking member on the Senate Agriculture Committee, objected to even calling up his colleague's amendment for a vote. Do you see a pattern emerging? It isn't so much about amendments and votes; it is a matter of stopping the bill.

Senator HARKIN, indefatigable, then suggested that Senator STEVENS of Alaska—another Republican—be allowed to call up his amendment with 60

minutes of debate and a vote. Senator CHAMBLISS, still stuck on the agenda of stopping this bill, objected.

Then Senator HARKIN, showing the magnanimity of a great corn husker from Iowa, suggested we proceed to the amendment by Senator ALLARD, a Republican from Colorado, 60 minutes of debate and a vote. Senator CHAMBLISS, unmoved by the generosity of Senator HARKIN, objected. Five requests, every one of them but one an amendment either sponsored by a Republican or cosponsored by a Republican, and the Republicans objected.

Well, you don't need to be a C–SPAN addict to figure out what is going on. The Republicans don't want us to finish the farm bill. After months and months of hearings, after an elaborate process, after negotiations and compromises on both sides, after a lot of hard work, 1,600 pages of policy are rejected by the Republicans. I am not surprised. This is the party that failed for 6 years—6 straight years—to pass the Water Resources Development Act, a critical bill for farmers in my State. This bill will provide the funds to upgrade the locks and dams so important for ag commerce. It wasn't a major priority for the Republican Congress. For 6 years, they ignored it, failed to pass it. We finally passed it this year, and last week, in a historic Senate vote, overrode the President's veto the 107th time it has occurred on the floor of the Senate. The Republicans, left to their own devices, couldn't pass the bill. When we finally passed it on a bipartisan basis, their President vetoed it, and they joined us in overriding the veto.

Now comes the farm bill, which doesn't come around that often—it has been about 5 years—and they want to stop this one too. They want to stop it by killing it with amendments. Senator HARKIN has gone out of his way to give them votes and debate on critical amendments that do relate to the farm bill, but that is not their strategy and that is not their goal. Their goal is to kill the farm bill. I am not sure why.

In my State, I would hazard a guess that there are more Republicans who are farmers than Democrats. It doesn't make much difference from my point of view as a Senator; I am going to help farmers in general, and their political identity is secondary. But why would they turn their backs on so many farmers across America when we have a chance to pass this farm bill? Why wouldn't they agree to a reasonable number of amendments that stick with the farm bill and what it is all about? Well, because, frankly, they don't want us to achieve the goal of passing the farm bill. It isn't new to many of us. We have seen it happen over and over again.

We have something in the Senate called a filibuster, and a filibuster goes back in history at least 90 years. We said at that time, any Senator can stop any bill from being debated and considered. About 90 years ago, we amended that and said: Well, I will tell you, if 67 Senators step forward and say we want to go to the bill anyway, they can overrule that one Senator who said no—67. That was back 90 years ago. About 40 years ago, that was changed to 60 Senators. So you have a filibuster, which is an attempt to stop the debate, stop the progress of the bill, and if 60 Senators will step forward and say we disagree, then you move forward with the amendment, you move forward with the bill. That is the filibuster in the simplest terms.

In the history of the Senate, the most prolific use of the filibuster to delay votes and kill bills produced 58—58—filibusters over 2 years—58 over 2 years. Well, our colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle are about to break through that record dramatically. Senator STABENOW has created this chart. It shows to date 52 Republican filibusters on motions for cloture—52 this year. We still have another year and 2 months to go. The Republicans have tried to stop legislation on this floor with a filibuster and a motion for cloture 52 times. So this is certainly going to be the Republican Senate on steroids when it comes to filibusters. They are going to bust through the old record, and they are going to stop everything they can, including a bipartisan farm bill.

They accomplished so little when they were in charge and in control that they want to make sure we accomplish as little as possible. That is unfortunate. It is unfortunate because the American people want us to cooperate. They want us to compromise. They want us to try to come up with legislation that solves America's problems, not squabble and fight and exalt our differences.

Luckily, there have been a few things—in fact, a significant number of things—that have been enacted by this Congress, despite 52 filibusters. I think back on passing the increase in the minimum wage, and I think it was the first time in 10 years we finally passed an increase in the Federal minimum wage. We passed historic legislation to provide student loans for students from families with limited means, reducing the cost of those loans and forgiving some of those loans. We passed that. We also managed to pass the Children's Health Insurance Program, a program that would extend coverage to another 4 million uninsured children in America—children who weren't the poorest, because those kids are taken care of in our caring Nation; and not the luckiest, because their parents don't have health insurance—but those caught right in the middle. Mom and dad go to work, no benefits, and we had a program that said let's help them. Let's provide private health insurance for those kids. Well, the President stopped that, vetoed it, and the Republicans refused to override that veto. We passed it, not once but twice, despite the odds against us in passing important legislation.

I think about stem cell research, too—the first President in history to have a Federal prohibition against medical research when it involves stem cells. We passed it with a bipartisan vote to override this prohibition. The President vetoed it.

So time and again, whether it is help for education or health care, we have been up against it: The failure of the Republicans to cooperate and pass the legislation, or the President's veto that they are afraid to override. That, I think, is the story of the Republican strategy of this session. It puzzles me. Do they think this is a winning strategy in America, a party so bereft of ideas and policies that all they can do is stop us?

This bill is not a Democratic bill, this farm bill. I think Senator CHAMBLISS, if he were on the floor today, would readily concede he played a big role in writing this bill. Senator ROBERTS of Kansas played a major role in writing this bill. Two Republican Senators who were involved in this legislation. Yet when it comes to trying to pass it, unfortunately, Senator CHAMBLISS objected five times in our attempts to bring this bill forward and move it forward.

They don't want this Senate to achieve anything, whether it is a farm bill or whatever it happens to be. But we are not going to quit. We are not going to be discouraged. We can only hope that those who follow this debate will respond. If you live in rural America, small town America, a farm family, a ranching family; if you know the importance of rural electric; if you know what it means to have soil and water conservation programs to protect the area you live in; if you think that bringing broadband Internet to all of America, including small towns and rural areas is important; if you think our Food Stamp Program to make sure the poorest in our country have something to eat is important; if you are worried about school lunch programs and whether they have good quality so our kids get nutritious food; if you happen to believe that the WIC Program, which is a program which helps low-income mothers and their babies is important; if you believe that making certain our farm sector in America can survive difficult times—a bad year—whether it is a drought or a flood, a tornado; if you think it is important we have programs to protect that part of America; if you believe we need to have alternative sources of fuel and not be at the mercy of OPEC and the Middle East sheiks and we should be producing ethanol and other forms of fuel that can help us move toward energy independence; if you think any of those things are important, I encourage you to contact your Senator and tell them to get moving.

Ten days on the farm bill with nothing happening is unacceptable. It is the Senate at its worst. It is the minority with their program at its worst.

We need to have bipartisan cooperation. Senator HARKIN tried repeatedly.

We will keep trying. But if the object of the Republicans is to run out the clock, to have us break and go home for Thanksgiving with no farm bill passed, I assume they can achieve that. Boy, talk about bragging rights, going home to your State and saying: We stopped the farm bill. You know, every 5 years, it comes around. We stopped it cold, even though it is a bipartisan bill. That is what they will be able to brag about.

Senator GREGG has told me he has lots of amendments. He is thinking of even more. He is ingenious when it comes to different subjects, and I am sure his staff is busy right now thinking of other amendments they can add to this bill that have nothing to do with the farm bill, and he is going to want to ask that we vote on every single one of them. We could all do that. I guess there would be some personal satisfaction, but at the end of the day, very little legislation and very little to show for our efforts. This list, this three-page list of Republican amendments, is an indication of bad faith. If they are serious about a farm bill—and we should be—let's agree to a reasonable number of germane, relevant amendments that have something to do with the farm bill. Let's not make this a bill for all seasons; let's make this a bill for America's agricultural sector that counts on us.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ORDER FOR RECESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess today from 2 to 3:30 p.m.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, we have for many weeks now been debating in this Chamber the 2007 farm bill. In my State of Ohio, passage of this legislation is essential to ensuring the well-being of middle-class and low-income families throughout our State. The bill is an agriculture bill, it is a hunger bill, it is an energy bill, it is a conservation bill. Melding these priorities is not easy. Melding these priorities into a bill that helps farmers, that advances our Nation's energy goals, that increases the focus on conservation, and that bolsters nutrition programs is a profound accomplishment.

As we debate the complex components of this legislation, I applaud Chairman TOM HARKIN, a Senator from Iowa, for his leadership. We must never lose sight that this bill is about families. Families in Ohio and across the Nation are depending on us to pass this legislation in a timely manner.

This spring, I traveled throughout Ohio and heard directly from farmers about what they need in this year's farm bill. They need the same thing any other entrepreneur needs—a fair shake. They need a safety net that makes sense given the revenue fluctuations they experience. They need for Washington rhetoric about conservation and alternative energy to translate into commonsense programs and meaningful incentives.

This bill will help family farmers in Ohio and in New Jersey, the State of the Presiding Officer, and across our country by strengthening and diversifying the farm safety net. Current farm programs protect farmers from chronically low prices. However, these programs do little to help farmers when prices are high but yields are low, resulting in a revenue shortfall. By targeting overall revenue rather than simply price, farmers can receive better protection against swings in prices and natural disasters.

Currently, crop prices are high but volatile. Farmers' input costs are rising, as well as their overall risks. Farmers should be given the opportunity to choose an alternative safety net if it better allows them to manage their own farm's risk in today's uncertain and evolving farm environment.

The average crop revenue program, brought to this bill by Senator DURBIN, Chairman HARKIN, and me, gives farmers a choice. The average crop revenue program will matter to help those farmers with a safety net. For the first time ever, farmers will be able to enroll in a program—it is their choice; they don't have to—they can enroll in a program that insures against revenue instability which for many farmers makes more sense than a price-focused safety net, which is the old farm program.

As I traveled around Ohio, I met with Mark Schweibert, a corn farmer in Henry County in northwest Ohio who will likely take advantage of average crop revenue. He will be supplying corn to one of the first ethanol plants in Ohio. I met that same week with Ralph Dull, a hog farmer from Montgomery County, who uses wind turbines to provide on-farm energy.

This farm bill makes a commitment to move beyond antiquated energy sources and to prepare American agriculture to lead the world in renewable energy production. With the right resources, the right incentives, farmers can help decrease our dependence on foreign oil and produce cleaner, sustainable, renewable energy. In a State such as Ohio, with a talented labor force and a proud manufacturing history, that just doesn't mean stronger farms, more prosperous farms; it means a better Ohio and a stronger economy.

This bill will provide more than $4 billion in additional funding for conservation programs to help farmers protect our water quality, expand our wildlife habitat, and preserve endangered farmland. And this bill does something else equally important: It fights hunger.

Earlier this year, when the Agriculture Committee began this process, we heard from Rhonda Stewart of Hamilton, OH. Rhonda Stewart, a single mother, came with her young son. She told us a story. She told us that she works a full-time job, has no health care, and makes about, I believe, $9 an hour. She teaches Sunday school, She is involved with the Cub Scouts for her son, and she is president of the PTA at her son's school. She plays by the rules. She works hard. She said that at the beginning of the month, as she is a food stamp beneficiary, she makes pork chops for her son once or twice that first week. Later on in the month, maybe she takes him to a fast food restaurant. Almost invariably at the end of the month, she says she sits down at the kitchen table and her son is eating dinner and she does not.

Her son says: Mom, what is wrong? Are you not hungry?

She says: I am not feeling well tonight.

For Rhonda Stewart, who teaches Sunday school, is involved with the Cub Scouts, is president of the PTA, works hard, pays her taxes, raises a son, is a food stamp beneficiary of $1 per person per meal, and $6 a day roughly for Rhonda Stewart does not go far enough. What we do in this Chamber can help Rhonda Stewart, her family, and millions of families such as hers. The farm bill increases food stamp benefits and indexes those benefits to inflation. When the purchasing power of food stamps erodes, so does our Nation's progress against hunger. We are the wealthiest country in the world. We are a caring, compassionate people. Families in our country, especially families who work hard, such as Rhonda Stewart and her family, should not go hungry.

I am pleased with the overall bill. There are some things we can do to improve it. The public is perfectly willing to help family farmers when they need it, as we should. However, taxpayers will not support massive payments to farms that have substantial net incomes or huge payments to farmers who are not really farmers, who have huge off-farm income and really just happen to own farmland.

I will be offering an amendment to return some of the excess subsidies in the Crop Insurance Program to the American taxpayers and to provide funding for the McGovern-Dole program.

We have heard, of course, tales of woe from the crop insurance industry over

the past few weeks as they furiously lobby against this amendment. But the facts tell a different story. Instead of letting the crop insurance industry exceed even their already record returns, I think we will get far better returns with modest investments at home and abroad. The McGovern-Dole program—which would be funded with part of the revenues from the crop insurance amendment—provides funding for school lunches in developing nations. The potential benefits are immense for our national security. We responded decades ago to a hostile Communist threat in Europe with the Marshall Plan. Our best response to a hostile threat overseas is to provide help in nutrition and education for people who desperately need it.

Passage of the 2007 farm bill is not just a responsible thing to do for this body, it is the right thing to do for our families, for our farmers, and for our Nation.

I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I personally thank you for your courtesy in taking over the Presiding Officer duties so that I may make these comments. I appreciate your courtesy.

IRAQ

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, 3 weeks ago, I began a series of speeches on the price America is paying for the failed war in Iraq, and I wish to continue today. The number of American service men and women killed in action has risen to 3,855, and with every death of a husband or wife, a son or daughter, a mom or dad, the suffering of a family soars to that place where numbers do not matter, to that place where pain is beyond infinite.

I have spoken about what the war has cost us financially. Since the war began more than 4 long years ago, we have spent over $455 billion. Over the long run, it will cost almost $2 trillion. Again, those are not just numbers, those were cargo scanners that could have been installed at our ports, safer bridges that could have been built, life-saving cancer research that could have been done, children who could have been educated, lives that could have been saved—a world of possibilities that passed by us all. I have tried to help us all imagine what we are giving up by failing to awaken ourselves from the living nightmare that is the war in Iraq.

Today, I wish to talk about the people who have given so much, people who will be paying for this war for the rest of their lives—our veterans and their families.

On Sunday, we celebrated Veterans Day. I wish to talk about how much we could do for those who have served with the amount of money we have used to send them into harm's way.

Mr. President, 28,451 troops have come back from Iraq with horrible wounds. Some wounds are physical. Some have had their legs or arms blown off by bombs. Some are blind from shrapnel in their eyes.

And some wounds are mental. Denying that war can wound a brain along with the rest of the body is denying so many veterans' nightmares, flashbacks, shocks or changes in personality so radical—so radical—that loved ones can no longer recognize the person they once knew.

Today, Army researchers are releasing a study showing that the full psychological impact of the war tends to hit soldiers even harder 6 months after they have returned from the war. So the ranks of those suffering are about to grow by many thousands.

Beyond the human cost of these injuries, the financial costs to our society are tremendous. A report released by Physicians for Social Responsibility puts the cost of medical care and disability benefits for veterans returning from Iraq at over $660 billion. So in a very direct sense, the war has been more than twice as financially expensive as we might think just looking at the combat costs.

The human and financial costs don't end with just health care. Here is a shocking statistic, Mr. President: Veterans make up one in four homeless people in this country. That means almost 200,000 veterans don't have a home to go back to tonight. Experts say the rates of homelessness are spiraling up faster than they did after the war in Vietnam.

Mr. President, that is a moral outrage. These people put their lives on the line for our country, no questions asked. It is a shame our men and women in uniform would be sent to patrol the streets of Baghdad only to have to come back and sleep on the streets of their own hometowns.

That is why Democrats in Congress are working to give veterans the support they deserve. The Senate recently passed a bill that contains the largest increase in funding for our veterans in history. We are reinvigorating our Veterans Affairs Department with a record $87 billion, which is several billion dollars more than President Bush said he was willing to spend on our veterans, with $37 billion for veterans health care. Billions of dollars are headed to expand medical services and beef up the administrative side so vets spend less time waiting to get their benefits.

Now, compare this to the costs of combat. Let's compare the investment in the men and women who serve in the uniform of the United States to the costs of combat. We could pay for the entire Veterans Health Administration budget—the entire Veterans Health Administration budget, all $37 billion—with what we spend in less than 4 months of combat in Iraq. Take care of every veteran, in terms of the veterans health care system. We could pay for that entire budget, $37 billion, with what we spend in less than 4 months of combat in Iraq. And some say it is too much? Where are their priorities?

Just as important as making sure vets have excellent health care is making sure they have an opportunity to get an excellent education. I am proud to be a cosponsor of a bill offered by Senator WEBB that would be the biggest boost to veterans education since World War II. Preparing thousands of veterans to enter the civilian workforce with a first-rate education would cost about $5.4 billion next year—$5.4 billion—for, in essence, a new GI education bill. In other words, it would cost what it takes to fund combat in Iraq for roughly 2 weeks to make sure thousands of veterans can enter the civilian workforce when they come back.

Here is one of our challenges. Many of our vets come back and find the jobs they once had are no longer there. They find themselves, after serving their Nation, unemployed. The type of first-rate education we could give them would clearly create an opportunity to ensure they would have greater skills, greater employability, and that would take roughly 2 weeks of funding for the war in Iraq.

Democrats in Congress are also working to end the pandemic of homelessness. I joined with Senator OBAMA to support a bill called Homes for Heroes. The bill would establish permanent housing and services for low-income veterans and their families. It would make more rental assistance available to help providers of veteran housing and services, and focus more attention on vets who are homeless. Of course, the more soldiers who go off to war, the more necessary this bill becomes.

The portion of the bill that helps community and nonprofit organizations offer housing to low-income veterans would require about $225 million to fund. We grind up enough money to house thousands of veterans in 16 hours in Iraq—not even a day. The costs of combat compared to the opportunity to providing a year of expanded housing for homeless veterans would cost the same as 16 hours of the amount we spend in Iraq. Some say too much. Where are your values? What are your priorities? How is it that you choose?

Of course, the price we pay in dollars can never compare to the price our wounded warriors and their families pay in lost limbs, in haunted dreams, and in lives changed forever. That is a price not one more soldier should be asked to pay for a pointless war. In the meantime, we need to act fast to get returning vets the help they need. Veterans got their wounds following their

Government's orders. Those wounds can only heal if the Government reorders its priorities.

Democrats wanted to send the bill increasing funding for veterans to the President before Veterans Day, but President Bush is trying to use veterans funding as an excuse to veto other programs on which America depends. The President has also said funding a new GI bill for veterans' education is too expensive. Too expensive. Never have calls for fiscal responsibility been so morally irresponsible.

First and foremost, we can never forget the price tag our veterans have ultimately paid with their service, and the price tag for veterans services wouldn't be so high if this administration didn't recklessly send them into harm's way to begin with. The President seems to think we can't afford to spend on both veterans health and children's health. He seems to think we can't afford to treat the wounds our soldiers suffer and fund cancer research to save civilians from that brutal killer. He seems to think we can't afford to ensure the safety of our returning soldiers and make sure all Americans find safety in the workplace. But he did seem to think we could afford to chase Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan—as we should have—and then invade Iraq, even though both situations today are major challenges. He did seem to think we could fight a $2 trillion war in Iraq and give a massive tax cut to millionaires and billionaires, even though the economy hovers near recession and most American families are no better off now than they were at the beginning of this administration. He did seem to think he could sign every bill—every bill—the Republican-controlled Congress sent him, running up a debt to the tune of $3 trillion, borrowing money from foreign countries to pay for a war that makes no sense, ignoring pressing national priorities, underfunding care for veterans, leaving our ports vulnerable, leaving our educational systems underfunded, leaving the massive crisis in global climate change completely ignored, leaving children in this country without health care—because we have wanted to expand the number of uninsured children who have no health care coverage to those who would have health care coverage under our bill—leaving 47 million Americans with no health insurance whatsoever, and he thought that he could get away with all of it.

Well, Mr. President, now is the time for us to stand up and say: Sometimes you can't have it both ways. When it comes to children's health, when it comes to education and homeland security and veterans care, we had better be getting all the support we need.

On Sunday, our Nation devoted a day to those who devoted themselves to the Nation for military service. We took that day to celebrate how lucky we are—how lucky we are—and how unbelievably blessed we are as a nation to have such brave men and women rise again and again to offer their service when they hear the call. I hope we took that day to offer not just words but deeds of thanks.

A grateful nation not only goes to a Veterans Day observance or marches in a Memorial Day parade, as we should, but a grateful nation shows their gratitude by how we treat veterans in terms of getting them the health care they need, how we treat them in terms of taking care of their disabilities, and how we take care of the survivors of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. That is the true measure of a grateful nation.

We took that day to remember the duty we have to them because of the devotion they have shown to us. Veterans Day is about a fundamental principle. When soldiers are shipped off to war, if we can look them in the eye and tell them there is a good reason we are waving goodbye, we better be able to look them in the eye when they come back and tell them we mean it when we say: Welcome home.

With 171,000 troops still in Iraq, I hope America's message on Sunday was: We look forward to the soonest possible year when you will celebrate Veterans Day here with all of us. We welcome you back, and we honor you by how we take care of you in your health care, for those who have disabilities, and how we have taken care of the families of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. That will be the true measure of whether we are a grateful nation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MENENDEZ). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am here to speak on the farm bill once again. I have done this before, but I wish to urge my colleagues across the aisle to move on this farm bill. I think it is incredibly important for my State of Minnesota and for our country that we move forward.

Minnesota is one of the largest agricultural States in the Nation. As a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, where we worked hard to reach a bipartisan compromise under the leadership of Chairman HARKIN and Ranking Member CHAMBLISS, as well as Senator CONRAD and Senator BAUCUS—they worked hard on this—I believe we need to move forward. The bipartisan farm bill before us will invest in our farms and our rural communities so they will be a strong, growing, and innovative part of the 21st Century.

I have seen firsthand in my State, where I visited all 87 counties 2 years in a row, what the 2002 farm bill meant for rural America. It revitalized our communities. It gave our farmers the chance to take a risk and expand their production. We are on the cusp of starting to move forward toward energy independence. We are on the cusp of not depending on these oil cartels in the Mideast and instead investing in the farmers and the workers of the Midwest. I do not believe we should turn away from that. I believe it is time to move forward.

America's farm safety net was created during the Great Depression as an essential reform to help support rural communities and protect struggling family farmers from the financial shocks of volatile prices and equally volatile weather. Almost 75 years later, the reasons for maintaining that safety net still exist.

As I said, the 2002 farm bill spurred rural development by allowing farmers across Minnesota and across this country to expand production. Because of the gains in productivity and the expansion of the last farm bill, the 2002 farm bill came in, under a 10-year period, $17 billion under budget.

As we continue to debate the 2007 farm bill—and I hope my colleagues on the other side of the aisle will allow us to debate this farm bill—it is important not to underestimate the value of a strong farm bill. That is why, as a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I support this bill.

I do believe, as I know the Presiding Officer does, there should be more reform. I support the Dorgan-Grassley amendment to put some limits on subsidies. I also believe we should have some limits on eligibility—I suggest $750,000 for a full-time farmer, $250,000 income for a part-time farmer. I don't think there are the significant limits we need in the current farm bill. But, that said, we are not even going to be able to get to talk about those important reforms if we do not allow this bill to move forward. I think that is what our leadership is trying to do every day with this farm bill.

One of the issues that most interests me about this bill is the increased focus on cellulosic-based ethanol. That is a part our office worked on. Actually, the bill we drafted is a part of this bill. The idea is to build on our corn-based ethanol and soybean-based biodiesel to a new generation of cellulosic ethanol. It is better for the environment. It puts carbon back in the soil and is higher in energy content. We are not going to get there unless we have the incentives in place.

I know there are people who complain about ethanol, but I tell you I think of it as the computer industry in the 1970s, when the computers were in these huge rooms and they got more and more efficient and changed our country. It is the same with fuel. Right now we are at the infancy of an industry, ethanol and biomass and other kinds of farm-based fuel. We are at the beginning. If we let the oil companies have their way and tell us it is stopping them from building their refineries and allow them to get in the way

and not allow us to retail the fuel as we should—there are outrageous stories of them not allowing the prices to be posted or the pumps to be put in. There are only 1,200 ethanol pumps in this country and 320 of them are in my State, but who is counting. If we are going to move forward with biomass and with our own energy, we have to allow this industry to develop.

When I talk to farmers across our State, what they like most about the 2002 farm bill is the safety net and the way it worked. It worked well for the first time in a long time. What we did with this farm bill was basically allow that safety net to stay in place and also rebalance the commodity programs to be more equitable for some northern crops such as wheat, oats, barley, soybeans, and canola.

I met with our wheat and barley growers a few hours ago. They are one of the many groups that care a lot about this. Again, they revitalized a lot of the areas of our State that had been troubled because of the fact that we have a thriving rural economy.

Another top priority for Minnesota farmers was creating a permanent program for disaster assistance. I thank Senator BAUCUS and the Finance Committee for their work in this area. Farmers are tired of coming back to Congress every year with a tin cup. We have been hit by drought, flooding, and everything in between. They had to wait for 3 years for Congress to pass the ad hoc disaster relief bill, and the permanent program of disaster relief will give farmers the security they need in moving forward.

I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who are from farm States to think about the importance of this disaster program for their States.

The farm bill is not, as we know, just about the commodity programs and the safety net. It is also about energy. It is also, as I mentioned, about biofuels. I mentioned the cellulosic piece of it that is so important. It also includes bipartisan legislation Senator CRAPO and I introduced to double the mandatory funding for the Biodiesel Education Program. Spreading the word about biodiesel to drivers and gas stations is very important if we are going to help that industry. Again, I urge every Senator who wants less dependence on foreign oil to look at the energy portion of this farm bill.

One of the things that has plagued our rural communities in the last decade or so is the inability for younger people to get involved in farming. The committee accepted my amendment to improve the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program. There are real opportunities today to start out in farming, especially in growing areas such as organic farming and energy production. But beginning farmers also face big obstacles, including limited access to credit and technical assistance and the high price of land.

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Programs in this farm bill provide mentoring and outreach for new farmers and training in business planning and credit building—the skills they need to succeed and to stay on the land. If you are concerned because you have seen fewer and fewer young people going into farming in your State, I urge you to move this bill forward.

As I said, there are a lot of good things for Minnesota and for our country in this farm bill. There is, however, one area that needs reform and that is that we need to stop urban millionaires from pocketing farm subsidies intended for hard-working farmers. Here are the facts in our State. Minnesota is the sixth largest agricultural-producing State in the Nation and, I would add, as we approach Thanksgiving, the No. 1 turkey producer in our country. I was able to judge a race recently between a Minnesota turkey and a Texas turkey at the King Turkey Days in Worthington, MN, and I would like to report that the Minnesota turkey won the race. The Texas turkey got too cold and had to be carried over the finish line.

Minnesota, as I said, is the sixth largest agricultural-producing State in the Nation. Nationally, 60 farms have collected more than $1 million each under the 2002 farm bill. None of them are in our State. The average income for Minnesota farms, after expenses, is $54,000, but under the current system, a part-time farmer can have an income as high as $2.5 million from outside sources and still qualify for Federal benefits.

I very strongly support this farm bill, but I also believe we need some reform in this area because it makes no sense to hand out payments to multimillionaires when this money should be targeted to family farmers and conservation and nutrition and other programs under the farm bill. Right now, nearly 600 residents of New York City, 559 residents of Washington, DC, and even 21 residents of Beverly Hills 90210 received Federal farm checks in the past 3 years. Some collected hundreds of thousands of dollars.

We have the opportunity to fix this in this farm bill because the administration has not been doing its job in enforcing the rules, so I say let's use this farm bill to do it. Already in this farm bill in both the House and the Senate we have gotten rid of the ''three entity'' rule, of which there is much abuse. The House bill does contain some income eligibility limits. I believe it is $1 million for a full-time farmer, $500,000 for the part-time farmer. We, in this farm bill, have an ability to go further, as I suggested, with an amendment for $750,000 for full time and $250,000 part time. The Dorgan-Grassley amendment, which passed this Chamber in the past, would keep subsidy levels at $250,000. You put that in this farm bill. If we don't have this farm bill, if our colleagues will not allow the Senate to proceed, if we are not allowed to make this reform which the administration has not enforced on its own—I believe this is a great opportunity for us.

For the reasons I laid out there for the energy title, which is forward thinking, for the conservation title, which is more funding and much more aggressive look at conservation, for the nutrition title, where we are finally promoting our fruits and vegetables and are doing new things to promote more healthy kids—these are all things that are different about this farm bill. If we rest on our laurels and don't do anything new, we are not going to be able to move in the direction we want for the energy revolution in this country.

When my daughter did a project for sixth grade on biofuels last year, she actually drew a map of the State of Minnesota.

She had two little dots that said ''Minneapolis'' and ''St. Paul,'' then she had a big circle that said ''Pine City, the home of farmer Tom Peterson.'' That is whom she had talked to about biofuels.

I tell you this story because the future for our economy in Minnesota and across the country, when you look at energy, the rural part of our country is going to have a big piece of this. It is necessary for that development.

If we do not pass this farm bill, we are not going to get there. I urge my colleagues, for that and many other reasons, to move forward with the 2007 farm bill.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 1429

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 3:30 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 1429, Head Start Authorization; that it be considered under the following limitations; that there be 60 minutes of debate with respect to the conference report, with the time equally divided and controlled between the chair and ranking member of the HELP Committee, or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the Senate proceed to vote on adoption of the conference report without further intervening action or debate.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 3:30 p.m.

Thereupon, at 2:01 p.m., the Senate recessed until 3:30 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. SANDERS).

IMPROVING HEAD START FOR SCHOOL READINESS ACT OF 2007—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 1429, which the clerk will report by title.