ELECTING A MINORITY MEMBER TO CERTAIN STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the House Republican Conference, I send to the desk a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 1196

Resolved, That the following Member is, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committees:

(1) COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES.—Mr. Scalise; and,

(2) COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS.—Mr. Scalise.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 5534

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to have my name removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 5534.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROSS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Louisiana?

There was no objection.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2419, FOOD, CONSERVATION, AND ENERGY ACT OF 2008

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 2419) to provide for the continuation of agricultural programs through fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1189, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of May 13, 2008, at page H3409.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1189, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. GOODLATTE) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Minnesota.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 minutes of my time to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) and ask unanimous consent that he be allowed to control that time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 4 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a long road to get to this point, and I want to start off by thanking Mr. GOODLATTE, the ranking member of the committee, again for his great work; my subcommittee chairmen, who started this process off; the ranking members on the Republican side; my friends on the Ways and Means Committee, Mr. RANGEL especially, Mr. POMEROY, for their hard work to get to this point; the Speaker for backing us up and helping us keep on track here to get to a final consideration; and for all of my colleagues in the House for being patient and working with us and giving us your input.

We have come to a point where I believe we have a good bill that should be supported by all Members of this Congress from both urban, suburban and rural areas.

I have here a chart that shows how the current farm bill spending is going to be allocated on a 10-year basis, which is what we have to go by.

Nutrition in this new Food, Conservation, and Energy Act is 74 percent of the spending over the next 10 years in this food bill, commodities are 16 percent. Back in 2002, these numbers were 65 and 35 or something. Conservation is 7 percent; and energy and the specialty crops, the other items, are 3 percent.

This shows on another chart how we got to those numbers. We had a $58 billion reduction in our baseline. What happened, before we started because the prices were up and the amount of money going out to farmers was down, so we started off $58 billion in the hole. We were provided $10 billion from our friends in the Ways and Means Committee of additional spending over the baseline, and this is how that spending was allocated out.

Nutrition was more than the $10 billion of new money that was put in the bill, $10.3 billion; conservation, an additional $4 billion; specialty crops, $2.3 billion; and in the commodity title, we actually had a reduction. In addition to the $58 billion that we reduced, we had another $3.6 billion that we took out of the commodity title to help put money into these other areas.

Having done that, we still have an adequate safety net for farmers. It's very much like the current law that we have been operating under. We have made some minor changes, and we have brought the AGI limits down from $2.5 million to $500,000 on non-farm income, $750,000 on farm income. So we've made some reform, not as much as some people would like, but more than others would like. We got both sides a little bit upset so I think we're doing something pretty close to what we should.

And to show you how the allocation is based on what the 2002 bill was and what the current bill is, this shows in yellow the 2002 bill and in the kind of purple color the current bill. In nutrition, you can see there's a substantial increase. Conservation, the commodity title is down, and energy is up a little bit.

So we have I think a balanced bill that maintains a safety net. It includes a new disaster program that is paid for. This bill is paid for. The $10 billion comes out of a custom user fee extension which is not a tax increase, which has allowed us to have a bipartisan bill.

We've put a bill together here that I think addresses what people are concerned about in this country. It has a loan guarantee program for cellulosic ethanol.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. I yield myself an additional 1 minute.

It has a bioenergy reserve program to allow us to learn how to grow switch grass and how to harvest it and store it and move it; woody biomass so we can get cellulosic ethanol going.

We have for the first time significant money in for fruits and vegetables, which are 50 percent of the agriculture in the United States.

We have country-of-origin labeling. It's going to be mandatory on fruits and vegetables and meats starting September 30. We have interstate meat shipment, another issue that's been hanging on for 20 years.

We've solved a lot of problems in this bill. We have a bill I think that covers all the interests in the country, and we have a bill that we should all be proud to vote for in this House.

Again, I want to thank all my colleagues for their hard work and look forward to having a strong vote on this and encourage you all to support this bill.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that 10 minutes of the time allocated to me be granted to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE) so that he can manage that time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

I rise today in support of the farm bill conference report. I thank the chairman and all of the other members of the Agriculture Committee on both sides of the aisle for working in such a bipartisan spirit to produce good legislation. I also thank my staff and the majority staff for their hard and, I know to them, seemingly endless work on this legislation.

This farm bill contains solid reforms while addressing a variety of issues including forestry, rural development, renewable energy, nutrition, conservation, research, specialty crops, and livestock and still maintains the safety net necessary to ensure a safe, reliable and affordable domestic food supply. This farm bill is a good work product, and I am proud of the work we have done.

The bill contains more reforms than any previous farm bill, eliminating payments to millionaire farmers, eliminating the three-entity rule, and increasing the efficiency of the crop insurance program among numerous other reforms.

It's 100 percent PAYGO-compliant and is fiscally responsible, scoring $4

billion less than the House bill and $5 billion less than the Senate bill. I think you would be hard-pressed, Mr. Speaker, to find a conference report in the history of this body that came back scoring less than the House and Senate bills. That is a significant achievement, and I think it would be foolish to overlook the positive changes this farm bill has undergone.

When we talk about the farm bill, many believe that the Congress is voting on a $288 billion bill that goes directly to farmers. The truth is that only 17 percent of the farm bill spending is devoted to farm programs, while nearly 70 percent goes to the nutrition title alone. In fact, there is very little farm in a farm bill anymore.

In 2002, the farm program funding comprised just three-quarters of 1 percent of the Federal budget. Today, farm program funding accounts for just one-quarter of 1 percent of the Federal budget, a twofold reduction in just 5 years.

Agriculture policy is essential to the lives of every American, and it is important that the policy we formulate is responsible, effective and at a low cost to the taxpayer.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. GOODLATTE. I yield myself an additional 30 seconds.

This bill meets those requirements. I support the farm bill because I believe American agriculture is vital to our national security, health and way of life, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 3 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, it's planting season back home in Wisconsin. I still represent one of the largest agricultural producing districts in the entire Nation. Our farmers need a new farm bill. They need to know what the rules are that they have to work and live under.

But we need to do a farm bill the right way, not the wrong way, one that maintains an important safety net for family farmers across the country and is also responsible to the American taxpayer.

Unfortunately, I kind of feel like Paul Harvey here in the well today about to give the rest of the story. This farm bill could be summed up in simple words, it's a missed opportunity. In fact, it could be summarized by the phrase: Where's the beef? Where's the real reform?

Why do I say that? Let's take a look for a second at the so-called reforms under the commodity subsidy programs. By the time you include off-farm and on-farm income and allow double entities, dual entities on the same farm, and their adjusted gross income, you have adjusted gross income up to $2.5 million and you still qualify for taxpayer subsidies. That would constitute approximately two-tenths of 1 percent of farm entities throughout the country that might be affected by these so-called reforms under the direct payments.

Now let's remind ourselves, these direct payments are $25 billion, that go out over the next 5 years, regardless of price, regardless of production. It's not a safety net. It's an entitlement program that each and every one of us will have to go home and look our taxpayers in the eyes and try to explain to them why some of their tax dollars are going to go to a farm entity with an adjusted gross income of $2.5 million.

□ 1415

If you look at the loan deficiency program and the countercyclical, the two other subsidy programs that currently exist, we went in the wrong direction rather than the right direction with reform.

There will still be allowed double dipping under the loan deficiency program. And the loan rates are being increased rather than decreased. And under the countercyclical, the target prices are going to be increased. What does that mean? It means that they will be triggered much earlier and will cost the taxpayer much more if prices start to decline.

One of the reasons there is less funding under the commodity title is because we're at a record time of commodity prices throughout the country. In fact, since the last time the farm bill was on the floor last year for consideration, you look at the five major commodity titles, and they have gone up tremendously since that time: Wheat, an additional 126 percent; soybeans up 57 percent; corn up 45 percent; cotton, 32 percent; and rice, 31 percent. Those are the main subsidized crops that we have throughout the country. Yet, instead of going forward with some reasonable and imminently justifiable reform to tighten up these programs so it is more justifiable to the taxpayer, they're going in the opposite direction.

I always believed that we had the capability, in light of current market prices, to produce a farm bill that maintains an important safety net for our family farmers but in a way that's less market and less trade distorting and is also justifiable to the American taxpayer.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. KIND. I yield myself an additional 30 seconds.

Unfortunately, this farm bill falls short on that worthwhile goal. And unfortunately it's the American taxpayer who is currently facing increased costs of food and fuel that will be paying more over the next 5 to 6 or 7 years by the time we get a chance to look at the next farm bill and talk about the reforms that may be needed.

I led an effort 5 years ago under the last farm bill for some commonsense reforms. People back then said wait for the next one, it's coming. Well, I've been here long enough to understand that tomorrow never comes, and today is the opportunity we have, in light of current market prices, to do the right thing.

I would encourage my colleagues to vote ''no'' on the farm bill.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I am going to recognize my good friend, Mr. RANGEL, but before I do I would like to recognize Mr. HALL for a colloquy.

Mr. HALL of New York. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for recognizing me in a colloquy regarding this bill, which I do support.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. I would be happy to engage in a colloquy with my friend from New York.

Mr. HALL of New York. I thank the chairman for his prior support of a muck soils conservation program. Unfortunately, this House language did not survive in conference.

Existing programs like CREP do not address the needs of muck farmers, like the black dirt farmers in Orange County, New York. In the Hudson Valley, this has led to full retirement of soil and rent inflation.

The needs that would have been addressed in the House bill remain. Proposed administrative changes in future CREP contracts will not address impacts of contracts that are in place today and will be for several years. These are ongoing challenges for farmers in my district and throughout the northeast, growers of specialty crops and producers of muck crops who have been thrice underserved by previous farm bills.

Again, I thank the chairman and ask if he would be willing to continue working with USDA on solutions that will meet conservation goals and address unintended economic consequences of existing programs.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. I thank the Congressman from New York for his remarks and his work on this issue.

These are, indeed, some serious concerns about the implementation of the New York CREP and its impact on the gentleman's muck farmers. It is my understanding that USDA and the State of New York have taken steps to ensure that any new enrollments will not have such negative impacts.

The conference report under consideration directs the Secretary to work with the producers in New York's muck soil areas to use existing programs to help implement farm bill conservation programs on acres still under production.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Congressman from New York on this issue in the future.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to my good friend, the gentleman from New York, the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, without whose tremendous work we wouldn't be here today. So, Mr. RANGEL, we very much appreciate, on the Agriculture Committee, your effort, and you, Mr. POMEROY, as well, to help us get this bill to the final end.

(Mr. RANGEL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RANGEL. I know that some of you may wonder why an old man like me from Harlem would have an interest in the ag bill, but when I hear my distinguished colleague from New York talk about muck farming, it's very important to us as a farm State that we be involved in those type of things. But the truth of the matter is that, while I recognize there are times to be quiet and to listen and look intelligent, I had Earl Pomeroy right there at my side asking, what are they talking about?

I've learned a lot about trust funds that I didn't even know existed—and some of you didn't know. But the truth of the matter is that, while I recognize that Mr. KIND was looking for a bill that, as a person that concerned themselves in agriculture, that at the end of the day we have to play the cards that have been given to us. And so I do know the good that has come out of this bill and the pride that I got as a Member of this Congress and seeing the work that Mr. PETERSON has been able to do, working with the Republicans on the other side, in all parts of the bill, in all parts of the leadership on the House and on the Senate side and with them. And I'm telling you, if all of us could have the optimism that he has displayed in the last few years about the salvation of our country, we would have no problems.

It was like a big jigsaw puzzle, and each time he told me we got the last piece there, and when he plugged it in, something even bigger dropped out. We buried this bill so many times, but I'm glad to see that, through the bipartisanship, the friendship, and the cooperation, we will be able to give this country and the world a product that we're proud of, a product that our farmers have worked on to be able to be the food basket not only of the world, with special provisions, but of the many people in our great country that are so in need of food. I'm proud to be a Member and proud to be a part of this.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I say this regretfully, but this bill is an absence of leadership. This bill shows that we're not leading, that America is not leading, that the new majority is not leading.

Why do I say that? The new majority brought this bill to the floor and they waived PAYGO. They swept PAYGO under the rug and they're violating PAYGO in two places in this bill alone. They'll say, we're trying to conform with the Senate PAYGO rules. Well, that does so at the very expense of the House PAYGO rules. What I find interesting is, right after this bill is passed they're bringing up the new budget resolution, which if that passed before this bill passed would violate the Senate PAYGO rules. How convenient.

The point is this: We're sweeping money under the rug; this bill is hiding $23 billion in extra costs, it's not even measuring the amount of payment increases and price increases that are in here. But where this is really a loss in leadership is, I don't think the American taxpayer, who is having a hard time making ends meet today, who is stretching their paycheck really far with high gas and food prices, likes the idea that we're going to give couples earning $2.5 million subsidies for growing agriculture. Why are we giving agriculture subsidies to multimillionaires? This does not reflect the values that the taxpayers sent us here to achieve.

More to the point, Mr. Speaker, this will hurt the family farmers. That's what a farm bill ought to be about, helping family farmers, not corporate farmers. But by doing it this way, we're making it harder to open up markets for our family farmers so they can sell their corn, their beans, their dairy, and all their other products in foreign markets. Ninety-seven percent of the world's consumers don't live in this country, they're in other countries. We should open those markets for their products.

This bill, with its huge subsidies, closes those markets, it hurts the Third World from being able to lift their life out of poverty, and it wastes taxpayer dollars. And all you have to do is look at the rule that passed that says, ''Waive PAYGO one more time. The rules don't apply. Let's hide all this extra spending.''

This, among many other reasons, is why people should vote against this bill.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS), a ranking member of one of our subcommittees.

(Mr. LUCAS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer a few brief observations about H.R. 2419, the farm bill.

Now, let me preface my comments by noting that this is a representative democracy. And while I may not always agree with the actions of this body, I am obligated to vote the will of my Oklahoma constituents.

My farmers and ranchers want a farm bill. They know how important it is to have a comprehensive Federal farm policy for both producers and consumers of American's food and fiber. They've watched as the majority leadership of this body ordered the cut of $300 million of direct farm commodity support. And soon they will figure out that a single—maybe earmark is not the proper phrase, a single project in this package will spend almost $250 million to subsidize the land purchased by a private entity.

They know that the committee had no new money to spend on production agriculture when we started to write this bill. And they will be amazed when they realize that the majority leadership of the House demanded and received $10 billion in new government nutrition programs.

They thrived under the flexibility of the last two farm bills. They understand that raising target prices and loan rates is a step back to the old days of Federal Government making planting decisions for them.

Mr. Speaker, it's not hard to read between the lines. The elected leaderships of my farm groups back home fear that this is the best that this body is capable of with this House leadership. And they are frightened of all the leading candidates for President.

I understand the fear my fellow farmers and ranchers in Oklahoma have for the future of agriculture, and at their request I will vote for this, as we would say back home in Oklahoma, ''half a loaf.'' But this process and this policy, I fear, aren't good for American food producers or American food consumers.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to my vice chairman and the distinguished chairman of the Conservation, Credit, Energy, and Research Subcommittee, Mr. HOLDEN from Pennsylvania.

Mr. HOLDEN. I thank the chairman for yielding to me and I rise in support of the conference report. But I also rise to congratulate and commend our chairman and ranking member for a job well done.

This is a bipartisan product. This committee, we very seldom have partisan disagreements, but we have regional differences, and this bill reflects those regional differences. It also reflects that all of us had to give, all of us had to compromise. Every title of this bill is a compromise that all of us worked together so that we can accomplish.

In title I, we were able to maintain the safety net at the same time to have reform written into this law. Title II on conservation, an increase of $4 billion of investment in conservation programs.

Everyone is talking about the price of energy in this country, and for the first time in an ag bill we have a significant investment in energy. We have a loan guarantee program for cellulosic ethanol that's going to allow us to begin to wean ourselves off dependency on foreign energy.

And the nutrition title in this bill is over a $10 billion increase in investment in nutrition programs in the Department of Agriculture. This is a good bipartisan agreement, and I urge its adoption.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, I represent one of the largest agriculture districts in the Nation, western Wisconsin. We do a lot of corn, a lot of soybeans, a lot of beef cattle, obviously a lot of dairy. I've got a 200-acre farm myself, and we rotate corn and soybeans, have some beef cattle on it. One

of the additional concerns I have with the subsidy programs is how skewed it is to the very biggest entities.

Over two-thirds of these commodity subsidy programs are going to the 10 percent largest entities in agriculture today. Why is this a problem where I'm from? Well, a lot of these big entities are using the additional subsidy money to gobble up the family farms that exist around them. It's driving up land prices in Wisconsin and making it virtually impossible for new beginning farmers to enter agriculture.

If you look at the reforms that are being touted in this farm bill before us today, they just don't meet the test of time. The income limits that apply currently to direct payments, by the time you count dual incomes on the same farm go as high as 2.5 million in adjusted gross income. That's after expenses. That's after all the cost of doing business is deducted out. And according to last year's tax returns, for those who filed a Schedule F Farm Income Report for tax purposes, these reforms that are being touted today might affect two-tenths of 1 percent of farm entities throughout the country, two-tenths of 1 percent. Give me a break. And the income limits have been lifted for the other two subsidy programs, the loan deficiency program and the countercyclical program.

And to top it all off, they've created the granddaddy of all earmarks in this Permanent Disaster Fund, which we all know, based on past history, is going to be a very targeted, very regional dispersion of this new Disaster Relief Fund.

□ 1430

Now, when you think about the fact you've got three existing subsidy programs already, LDP, counter-cyclical, the direct payments, you throw on top of that the crop insurance subsidization that goes on in the farm bill, why do we need to add another layer of entitlement funding with this new disaster relief program? But we all understand how these farm bills come together. They usually go above baseline. They have to come to the Ways and Means Committee to find offsets in order to pay for it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself an additional 30 seconds.

They come up with enough money to throw at enough groups, at enough individuals, at enough programs in order to buy people off around here. And it's the reform effort that's the first casualty in this entire process. We saw it 5 years ago. We're seeing it today. My fear is we're going to see it 6 or 7 years from now when the next farm bill is up for consideration.

It is a missed opportunity. The President is right. We ought not be giving taxpayer subsidies to wealthy individuals at a time of record-high commodity prices in the marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the chairman of the Specialty Crops, Rural Development and Foreign Agriculture Subcommittee, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCINTYRE) for 1 minute.

(Mr. MCINTYRE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, this bill is a victory for farmers, a victory for communities, a victory for rural America.

As chairman of the Rural Development Subcommittee, I'm pleased that this conference report contains strong rural development title that supports small business, expands access to broadband, and addresses the critical infrastructure backlog at the USDA. I'm very excited that this conference report also authorizes regional development economic commissions across the country to put a Federal focus on jobs and economic development.

At a time when our economy is struggling, the authorization of the Southeast Crescent Authority, or called the Southern Regional Economic Commission in this bill, represents a great opportunity to help our rural communities thrive for generations to come. It will also help small business through the new Rural Entrepreneur and Microenterprise Assistance Program that will provide technical and financial assistance to businesses employing less than ten people, which are the fastest generators of new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we have an opportunity to move rural America forward and no longer leave it behind with business and economic opportunity, and that's what this farm bill does. And may Congress follow suit to do the same.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes here in Washington, we tend to drink our own bath water and believe our own press releases. And to hear some of the debate here, you would think this is the best bill in the world and that everybody out there has got to support it.

Let me just read a couple of editorials from around the country to give you an idea of how this bill is being played outside of Washington:

The Columbus Dispatch: ''The current compromise version of the farm bill includes little retreat from the subsidy program that for decades has bled taxpayers, fattened the already fat, distorted market incentives, soured U.S. trade, hurt the environment, and done little for family farmers.''

The San Francisco Chronicle: ''From the fiscal watchdog perspective, this bill is a sign that the new Democratic leadership is as profligate as the Republican leadership it replaced. Make that more profligate . . . The $286 billion farm bill is good politics only because the millions of taxpayers who are paying the bill are not pushing as hard as the relatively few who benefit.''

The Albany Times: ''Corn prices are up. Same for flour. That means farmers are enjoying boom times . . . So why would Congress even think of giving more generous subsidies?'' That's a good question.

The Spartanburg Herald-Journal: '' . . . The fact that reform has failed, and Congress is about to pass a renewal of the same failed, wasteful subsidies, is a testament to all that's wrong with politics in Washington . . . Congress has reached a House/Senate compromise bill that will continue to take money from you and other families struggling with high food prices to further enrich big corporate farmers who are already earning record prices for their crops.''

The Dallas Morning News: ''The legislators negotiating the new farm bill evidently don't do their own grocery shopping. Otherwise, they'd have seen the dramatic rise in food prices. And they'd have done more than trim only $400 million from the $26 billion in direct-payment subsidies they're planning for farmers . . .''

We can do a lot better than this. I want to associate myself with the comments of Mr. KIND from Wisconsin. Taxpayers expect more.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, at this time it's my pleasure to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HAYES), a ranking member on the Agriculture Committee.

Mr. HAYES. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support this farm bill and especially to thank Chairman PETERSON and Ranking Member GOODLATTE and really especially the incredible members of the House Republican and Democrat staff for their tremendous work on this very difficult legislation.

However, I must oppose a provision that should not be in this conference report.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation needs an agriculture policy for the 21st century. Anyone who is paying attention to their grocery bill lately can see that things are changing around the world and in this country. It's showing up in the price of food. If you're keeping up with the news, the changes we are seeing in higher prices are being played out as full-blown food shortages in other parts of the world. Sound agriculture policy is not just about our economy; it's a key component in our national security.

Mr. Speaker, we need this legislation, and I support the passage of the agriculture provisions. But there is a provision that was added late in the process that has nothing to do with agriculture, nothing to do with farmers or our food supply. It's a provision that will liberalize our current trade practices with Haiti.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the impact of this Haiti provision will be. Two of the leading textile groups say the impact will be minimal while the positive benefits of the farm bill will be

much greater. While I would reject this policy change under any procedure, this Haiti provision was added without hearings, without any debate. Mr. Speaker, out of principle I don't think this is the time or the place to add this trade provision with Haiti. And, therefore, to make that point, I am going to cast a ''no'' vote on the farm bill conference report today.

Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. My vote today is to protest this Haiti provision, but my goal is to ensure passage of the farm bill. I know there's a veto threat from the White House. If the President decides to follow through, I will be there voting to override him because we need this update for our Nation's policy.

Mr. Speaker, after a very lengthy conference process, I am pleased to report significant victories in the ag portion of this bill. As the Ranking Member of Livestock, Dairy and Poultry, I worked with my colleagues to eliminate or water down many of the Livestock Competition issues that were included in the Senate passed Farm bill. Most importantly, we were able to defeat the inclusion of the ban on packer ownership. This ban would have been detrimental to North Carolina and the livestock industry across the nation.

The economic adjustment assistance program for textile mills is another significant provision included in this bill. This important provision will provide critical assistance to textile manufactures for the modernization of equipment and operations. This is a priority for our leading domestic textile organizations including the National Council of Textile Organizations, the Cotton Council and the American Manufacturing and Trade Action Coalition.

The White House or anyone else watching, should not read my ''no'' vote today as opposition to passage of the agriculture provisions in the Farm Bill. Our Nation needs updated agriculture policy. As a member of the Agriculture Committee and conferee to this bill, I had a hand in shaping these changes. We ultimately need to get this done, and I will be there to make sure it does.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I am now pleased to recognize the distinguished chairman of the Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry Subcommittee, who is responsible for having the first-ever livestock title in the farm bill, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. BOSWELL) for 1 minute.

(Mr. BOSWELL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BOSWELL. Thank you, Mr. PETERSON, for the time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference report. And I would just say to my friend Mr. KIND, we all want the whole loaf of bread but sometimes we take a few slices, and you have to know that lots of reform has taken place.

As chairman of the Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry Subcommittee, working with my ranking member over here, Mr. HAYES, we have got the first-ever livestock title. It offers producers much-needed protections and ensures fairness and transparency within the marketplace.

I'm proud of this bipartisan bill. It also has a strong title for the dairy industry. Together we were able to bring producers and processors together on issues that have divided the industry for years. We were able to bring together the National Milk Producers Association and the International Dairy Food Association, with their excellent leadership, to avoid a very controversial issue in the dairy forward pricing program. Also, in the dairy title we ensure our dairy producers have an adequate safety net and our dairy industry continues to thrive.

The farm bill will provide a safety net for farmers and increase conservation efforts so that we can protect the land for future generations.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 10 seconds.

Mr. BOSWELL. Everybody, every man, woman, and child, has a vested interest in the farm bill. We have access to the most plentiful, safest, least expensive food in the world. Mr. RANGEL gets it. Mr. ACKERMAN gets it. We should all get it.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE).

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, Indiana is agriculture, but Hoosiers on and off the farm also believe in fiscal discipline and reform. And it's for these reasons that I regretfully express my opposition to this farm bill, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

During my years of service on the House Agriculture Committee, I have sought to be a voice for Indiana family farmers and an advocate for reform. I have worked to advocate changes in this legislation. And I want to express my profound appreciation to Chairman PETERSON and to Ranking Member GOODLATTE for including provisions in this farm bill that will save Indiana jobs and create new opportunities for farmers across the Midwest. While I differ ultimately in the support for the final product, I respect deeply these two men and am grateful for their work on behalf of these issues.

I'm opposing the farm bill because I believe it's fiscally irresponsible and does not contain the kind of reforms in American agriculture that these times demand. This bill fails to reduce government subsidies to farmers, fails to encourage market-based reforms to the Nation's agricultural policy, and fails to promote international trade. It also fails to meet our Nation's farm policy needs within our own budget guidelines.

The farm bill being considered today will actually increase the size and scope of government and will cost taxpayers more than $650 billion over the next 10 years. In comparison with the previous farm bill, this bill will cost $65 billion a year as opposed to the $45 billion before. It is in effect a 44 percent increase in spending.

And let me say I support family farming and I loathe the demagoguery of many who criticize farm subsidy programs, ignoring completely the real world input costs that American farmers face. But this bill still goes too far, in my judgment. It will continue to allow married couples with household incomes up to $2.5 million to receive subsidies. Subsidy payments oftentimes, under this legislation and previous bills, are concentrated in the hands of a few with the top 10 percent of recipients receiving nearly two-thirds of all farm payments.

There are other problems with this bill as well. It will allow farmers to lock in price support payments at the lowest possible market price and sell their crops at the highest price. And the bill also ignores the plight of consumers facing skyrocketing food prices by making a bad sugar program worse.

Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor with a sense of melancholy about this, having been on the Agriculture Committee during development of the last farm bill and coming from the great State of Indiana. It has always been my ambition to support Indiana farmers, to support them with Federal policy that enables farmers to sustain the American cutting edge in global agriculture. But I have always sought to do that in a way that protects our Federal budget and protects the American taxpayer at large.

It's for those reasons that I am opposing this farm bill legislation and urge my colleagues to do likewise.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. HULSHOF).

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, I will yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. HULSHOF).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Missouri is recognized for 2 minutes.

(Mr. HULSHOF asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HULSHOF. I thank the tag team here for allowing me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference report, and I commend my friend for his patience and his persistence in bringing to this body this consensus product.

I realize that fewer and fewer Americans have a direct connection to the land. One reason is because it's becoming quite tough to make a living in production agriculture. And certainly that disconnect to rural America is evident here on the floor of the House. Dwight Eisenhower once said, ''Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you're a thousand miles away from the cornfield.''

Or to put it another way, Mr. Chairman, I quote from the saying on the plaque in your office that says, ''If farming were easy, Congressmen would do it.''

Well, I am a farmer. I'm the son of a farmer. I'm the grandson of a farmer.

Agriculture runs in cycles, and sometimes those cycles are pretty volatile. In September of 2005 during our corn harvest after Hurricane Katrina, the price of corn at a river terminal in Southeast Missouri was $1.40, and I don't recall anybody other than yours truly coming to the floor to extol that fact.

□ 1445

Yesterday, that same bushel of corn would have brought $5.97 at least on the Chicago Board of Trade, and even that isn't a windfall. And because we know that it is 47 percent more this year to plant one acre of corn in Missouri than it was last year, fertilizer is up 112 percent. Grain contracts and loans are getting harder to come by. Debt has increased by 30 percent in the last 5 years. We know farming looks a lot today like it did before the crash of the 1980s.

And we also know with all respect to those who talk about profligate spending, that about three-quarters of the farm bill dollar in this bill will not go to farmers but to the equally noble goal of ensuring that Americans have enough to eat. And quite frankly I expect that most of the farm payments to production agriculture in this bill will never have to be paid because the market price is going to be above the trigger level.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the farm bill. In doing so, I thank my good friend Chairman PETERSON for bringing a bill we can all support to the floor. I must say that without his leadership, we would have never reached this point.

This, Mr. Speaker, is the last farm bill I will vote on as a Member of this great House. And as I do so, I think of my dad, the founder of my family's farm. He built our farm using not Government handouts but hard work, business savvy and penny-pinching.

By creating this successful small business he was able to save just enough to plant the next year's crop and send his only son to college. Many who oppose this bill would probably point to my dad as one of those rich farmers who doesn't need a safety net. In response, I quote Dwight Eisenhower, "farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you're a thousand miles from the corn field."

Those of us who actually farm, know farming isn't easy. We know that it now costs $534, or 47 percent more than last year, to plant 1 acre of corn in Missouri and we know fertilizer is up 112 percent from last year. We know that farming looks a lot like it did in the 1970s.

For those who don't remember, during the 1970s we had conditions much like today; healthy world demand took prices to all-time highs. Many farmers cashed in their land's equity and bought new land to chase these high prices. Then Government policies changed, including the grain embargo to the Soviet Union after their invasion of Afghanistan, and the market crashed.

I remember that policy well; it was the first time I realized that factors beyond our farm gate could determine the fate of our farm. I later learned that it nearly cost us our farm.

Ultimately, the crash of the 1980s caused thousands of farms to go under and when they did they took with them 300 agricultural banks, countless business that depended on farmers, and even some entire rural communities.

The similarities to today are striking. Today farm debt sets a new record every year, increasing 30 percent, or $52.8 billion, in the last 5 years. The price of land has once again risen to 1970s-esque highs, climbing 67 percent since 2003.

Now I am not saying that we can expect a crash, I don't know what the market will do over the next few years—no one does. What I am saying is that now is not the time to support irresponsible cuts to the safety net.

Now I know, the opponents of the farm bill will say they don't support irresponsible cuts, they only want "reform." There is reform in this bill, there is a lower income cap, there are reforms to the loan programs and the bill does away with the three-entity rule.

I know, the reformers will counter by saying these reforms don't go far enough. But if their reform plan—the Kind-Flake Amendment—would have passed and prices would have declined during the life of the farm bill, then "most of the farms and ranches would not be able to survive the erosion in farm income," according to the independent Agriculture and Food Policy Center at Texas A&M University.

The bottom line is that Chairman PETERSON has engineered an excellent compromise. It provides $209 billion for food stamps and school lunches. The bill also provides $25 billion for conservation programs, including enough funding to enroll nearly 13 million acres, or an area the size of West Virginia, into the Conservation Security Program. And the bill provides $35 billion to help farmers stay afloat.

The good news is if prices stay at their current level, most of those authorized dollars will never have to be paid. The safety net in the 2002 Farm Bill cost $20 billion less than what it was projected to cost, because commodity prices stayed high.

This bill is not a windfall; it is a basic safety net for our farmers. This safety net costs each taxpayer 6 cents a day. In return, farmers provide the safest, most abundant food supply at the lowest cost—just 11 percent of our income goes toward food, the lowest total in the world.

So I ask all of my colleagues to support this compromise. I am sure every Member can find things to oppose in this bill, there are certainly parts I oppose and I know there are even parts of the bill that Chairman PETERSON opposes. But at the end of the day, we cannot allow the perfect to be the enemy of the farmer. Support the farm bill.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I am now pleased to recognize the chairman of the General Farm Commodities and Risk Management subcommittee, the outstanding chairman from North Carolina (Mr. ETHERIDGE) for 1 minute.

(Mr. ETHERIDGE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, let me commend the chairman and ranking member for their hard work. And I stand in support of this conference report.

This truly is a bipartisan piece of legislation that the House Agriculture Committee has produced and one that affects every citizen in this country.

Agriculture is the number one industry in my home State of North Carolina. It is responsible for $66 billion in income and employs almost one-fifth of the State's workforce.

Mr. Speaker, it is critical that we have a stable farm policy in this country, not just for North Carolina, but for every child that participates in the nutrition program, for every food bank and for every school lunch program.

The bill increases the funding for the Nation's nutrition programs by over $10 billion, provides over $1.1 billion for renewable energy, and increases funding for conservation efforts by $6.6 billion.

And for new and growing sectors of agriculture like organic foods, we have included, for the first time, mandatory funding for specialty crop research and marketing.

And we are able to do all this while ensuring that the safety net for our farmers remains intact, ensuring that no matter what, our citizens will always have a stable food supply.

Mr. FLAKE. I yield 1 minute to the minority leader, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BOEHNER).

Mr. BOEHNER. Let me thank my colleague for yielding.

Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, I have been around the House Agriculture Committee for nearly 18 years. The chairman and I came together. We are good friends, and so is the ranking Republican, Mr. GOODLATTE. And I know they have worked hard to produce this bill.

But clearly, most Americans think that Washington is broken. And this farm bill frankly is another example of that. I know there is some reform in this bill. But when you begin to step back and look at the bill, we didn't get anywhere near the reform that I think most Americans would expect.

At a time when we have got the highest commodity prices that we have seen in a generation, you would think that we would take a slightly different approach to the farm bill. But unfortunately, because of the process, because of the negotiations, it didn't happen. I just want to point out what I would describe as the most egregious part of this.

I, or one of my designees, will have a motion to recommit this conference report. And it is no secret that politicians have traditionally used and abused the farm bill for their own pet projects. There are three pet projects in this bill that I am going to single out in my motion to recommit.

One, it would strip out the "Trail to Nowhere," a land swap that was airdropped into the bill by the senior Senator from Vermont. The language would require the U.S. Forest Service to sell portions of the Green Mountain National Forest exclusively to Vermont's Bromley Ski Resort. And believe it or not, to accommodate this obscure demand, portions of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail may

have to be moved. They are actually going to move the Appalachian Scenic Trail, possibly have to move it, because we are going to sell this land to a ski resort. I don't think the taxpayers ought to have to bankroll this boondoggle.

Secondly, our motion will strip out a $170 million earmark for the salmon industry that was airdropped into this bill in secret. The provision was never considered in the House. It was never considered in the Senate. One hundred seventy million dollars to bail out salmon fisheries. Now you should also note that after Hurricane Katrina, when the entire gulf coast fishing industry was annihilated, they actually only got $126 million from the Federal Government to fix their fisheries. I don't think taxpayers ought to be required to put up the money for an airdropped earmark that was brought into this bill never having been considered in either body.

Finally, our proposal would strip out a $250 million earmark secured by the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, the gentleman from Montana. This earmark, incredibly enough, is targeted for forests to house fish. Yes. We are going to target a forest that houses fish, incredibly, what we would call ''forest fish.'' Only one forest in the country happens to have fish in it. And it just happens to be based in Montana, located in Montana where the Senator is from. I don't think the taxpayers ought to have to pay $250 million to take care of forest fish.

Listen, the American people are struggling with the high cost of living, whether it is the cost of gasoline, the cost of food, trying to make sure that they have got health care, concerned about whether they have a job tomorrow or will be able to afford their home mortgage. And here we are moving a farm bill that has earmarks in it that just don't pass the straight-face test.

And so I would ask my colleagues, if you think that this is a wise use of taxpayer funds, you can go ahead and vote against this motion to recommit. But I would invite my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, if you think that taxpayer funds could be spent more wisely, vote for the motion to recommit, and let's make this bill a better bill. We can do better.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to yield 2 minutes to a strong advocate of reform and for a strong conservation title in this farm bill, my good friend from Oregon, EARL BLUMENAUER.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I appreciate the gentleman's courtesy as I appreciate his leadership.

I heard my friend from Missouri talk about the lack of connection to rural America. And I think that is, in fact, the case. And we are missing an opportunity with this farm bill to try to strengthen it because this farm bill continues to shortchange most farmers. It will fail to fund the majority of the environmental programs that go lacking. And most farmers will continue to get nothing, nothing from this bill. The richest 10 percent will get two-thirds to three-quarters of the total direct farm payments.

There are a number of things in this bill that I like, that I have been working for since the last farm bill to help provide some support for people who grow food, not just the five big commodities. I am glad that there is an increase in nutrition. But the reason the President should, and I think will, veto this bill has nothing to do with the good stuff. It is time to reform the farm bill, to reduce to $200,000 limit on AGI to qualify for subsidy. That is what the President is arguing for. That is the right thing to do. It is something that we ought to be able to have a bipartisan majority to support.

It will save the taxpayers money. It will enable us to fully fund the environmental programs that are so critical, particularly for small and medium-sized farmers and ranchers. We don't have to shortchange nutrition. The nutrition provisions ought to be strengthened with money we save from unneeded payments to the rich.

We have lots of money that is flowing to the richest farmers in America who don't need it. That's wrong. In fact, they have assumed that this bill is so egregious, I invite any of my colleagues to look at section 1619. The authors of the bill carve out an exemption to the Freedom of Information Act so that the recent Circuit Court ruling that would open this up to a spotlight is off limits.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from Oregon has expired.

Mr. KIND. I yield the gentleman 30 additional seconds.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. We should not drop a veil of secrecy over this bill. We should open it up. Let the American public know what is in it. If for no other reason, the notion that we are going to play a game of ''hide-the-marble'' with them, and not be honest about the true cost and the true benefits is another illustration of what is wrong with this bill, why the President should veto it, and why each and every Member should sustain that veto.

We can do a lot better for less money to help more farmers and ranchers. And I urge my colleagues to do so.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I am now pleased to recognize the distinguished chairman of the Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry Subcommittee, one of our outstanding chairmen, Mr. BACA of California.

Mr. BACA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for yielding. I want to thank our chairman, COLLIN PETERSON, for his leadership. I want to thank the minority ranking member, Mr. GOODLATTE, in supporting this historic farm bill which I strongly support. As Chair of the Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry Subcommittee, I am strongly supportive of this bill that increases nutrition by $10.364 billion.

Right now, there are 38 million Americans who do not have enough food to eat. This farm bill helps these people. It fights hunger in America by making an historic investment in nutrition programs that will help 13 million American families. This will help an additional 10 million Americans, including 320,000 working poor families, 380,000 elderly and disabled, plus our veterans. This will help put food on the table for many individuals that don't have food.

This farm bill also ensures that low-income elementary school children will have access to fresh fruits and vegetables in schools by expanding the USDA snack program to all 50 States leaving no child behind who is left hungry.

I ask you to support this farm bill. It is an important farm bill. I urge everyone to vote for it.

Mr. FLAKE. I yield myself 1 minute.

We have mentioned the generous subsidies that still flow to multimillionaire farmers. Let me just put that in perspective in this legislation. With this legislation, a farm couple earning $2.5 million in combined on-farm and off-farm income is still eligible for hundreds of thousands of dollars in farm payments. Yet an urban couple earning a little more than $17,800 or owning more than one vehicle can become ineligible for food stamp benefits.

Now I am not making an argument that we should raise the threshold for food stamp benefits. But look at the difference here. How in the world can you justify having a farm couple with on-farm and off-farm income of $2.5 million still eligible for hundreds of thousands of dollars in subsidies? It is simply indefensible.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, may I ask how much time is remaining.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Virginia has 12½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Minnesota has 6¼ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Arizona has 15 seconds remaining. The gentleman from Wisconsin has 1½ minutes remaining.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 15 seconds to say to my friend from Arizona that if you know of the farm couple where each person has $500,000 in off-farm income and each has $750,000 in farm income, the two limits we have imposed, down from $2.5 million to $500,000 for nonfarm income and never before limited to $750,000, I would like to meet that couple, and then we will fix that problem.

I yield to the gentleman from New York 1 minute.

(Mr. KUHL of New York asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KUHL of New York. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating Chairman PETERSON and Ranking Minority Member GOODLATTE in bringing this bill to the floor in very difficult times. I rise in support of the farm bill conference agreement.

Agriculture is one of the most important industries in New York State, believe it or not. In the 29th District alone, there are over 6,000 farms covering more than 1.2 million acres and employing thousands of workers. Annually, the farm economy generates over $360 million in my district alone.

During the writing of the farm bill, I hoped to address some of the most pressing issues facing New York farmers without destroying important provisions for other States, districts or industries.

□ 1500

The committee held a field hearing in my district, where we heard about issues such as extending the MILC program, increasing funding for specialty crops such as apples and grapes, enhancing conservation programs such as FRPP and EQIP, augmenting nutrition and food assistance policy, and utilizing our crops to assist in developing a strong renewable energy portfolio.

This bill makes historic investments in priorities to strengthen the fruit and the vegetable industry and expands a variety of things like the snack program. I hope my colleagues will support it.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I am now pleased to recognize one of the members of the conference committee, a valuable member of our committee, Mr. SCOTT of Georgia, for 1 minute.

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, let me just say, is this a perfect bill? No, but is it a good bill, yes. It's a good bill for the people of America in response precisely to their needs now.

The American people are concerned about high food prices, this brings it down. They are concerned about high gas prices, this bill brings it down. One of the most pressing areas that this bill does good on, it corrects a major injustice to African American farmers by passing a bill which includes $100 million to set up a fund so that these black farmers can have their day in court, something they fought for for years.

It also has money in here to set up research grants for predominantly African American land-grant colleges of 1890, Florida A&M University, agriculture, mechanical; Arkansas A&M University, agriculture, mechanical; North Carolina A&T, agriculture and technical. These schools were grounded in agriculture. But, yet, because of past discrimination, the black farmers and black colleges have been denied.

This good bill corrects that. We must pass this bill and make sure that this bill passes.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Texas (Mr. NEUGEBAUER) who is a subcommittee ranking member on the Agriculture Committee.

(Mr. NEUGEBAUER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

There have been a lot of figures and a lot of terms thrown around in this room today about payment limits and adjusted gross income, but let's really talk about what this bill is about, and what this bill is about is feeding and clothing the American people, to making sure that they continue to have access to the safest, highest quality products in the world. By the way, they are also the most affordable.

Now, one of the things that some people talk about is all of these rich farmers. Now, I will tell you it's very interesting. If it is as lucrative as everyone says, why is the number of farmers in America dropping? Go to a Farm Bureau meeting some evening in west Texas and see how many young farmers are dying to get into the farming business, or even have the capacity to get into the farming business.

I think it's also interesting, when we look at this bill, that about 70 percent of this bill has to do with providing an opportunity for those people that need a little extra helping hand to make sure that they do have a quality meal during the day, and that is in some of our food stamp and nutrition programs. Yet only 12 percent of this bill has anything to do with growing something.

Now, let me tell you that if you are going to feed and clothe people, I want everybody to know that those things just don't show up at the department store and the grocery store. Somebody actually has to produce it. We have hardworking farm families all over America that are fulfilling that commitment.

Let me tell you, it's difficult, the prices that some people have been talking about, well, the prices of these commodities are up. Yes, they are up, but let me tell you, look back 2 or 3 years ago when a lot of people wouldn't plant certain commodities because they couldn't make any money doing it.

The other question about this bill is, yes, it's about making sure Americans have quality agricultural products, but it's also about who is going to provide it.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 15 seconds.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER. We have to make a decision today. In this energy situation this country is in, we are relying on other people to provide energy for America. Are we going to let American agriculture die so we have to let other countries feed and clothe America? I don't think the American people want that.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this bill.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING), a member of the committee.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman from Virginia for his hard work and the chairman for his hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I will hit a quick list in my 1 minute. This bill cuts direct payments. We should not do that. That's green box, and that helps us stay in compliance with WTO.

It cuts a blenders' credit on ethanol. We should not do that, because that slows capital investment into ethanol production from corn.

It requires Davis-Bacon wage scales, which will reduce the numbers of ethanol plants we can build from five with the same money down to four. It imposes union scale in the countryside. We should not do that.

It has in it Pigford farms, which the gentleman spoke to, that's ripe with fraud. I will prove that over the months as it unfolds.

The other side of this coin is—you have to ask and answer this question—how does this bill get better if it fails here on the floor of this Congress? What comes out of the House and the Senate in a better configuration? Does it get better or does it get worse?

If you can paint a scenario by which it gets better, then you vote ''no.'' If you paint a scenario by which it gets worse, you vote ''yes.''

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I am now pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentlelady from South Dakota (Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN), a valuable member of our committee.

Ms. HERSETH SANDLIN. I want to congratulate the chairman and the ranking member of the full committee for this conference report.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the important reforms and preserving the safety net and the commodity title as well as important increases in the nutrition and conservation titles, I worked with the chairman of the full committee during the House version of the markup to place an emphasis on beginning farmers and ranchers. This conference report includes a number of important provisions, including reauthorizing tax-exempt bonds to provide low-interest loans to beginning farmers and ranchers, increasing the loan limit for them from $250,000 to $450,000 and indexing that limit amount for inflation. There are also important provisions in the credit and research titles of this conference report for beginning farmers and ranchers.

The energy title is another area that as Mr. HOLDEN, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy and Research, pointed out, the loan guarantees for advance biofuel production plants, reauthorizing the Rural Energy for America Program which provides the loans, loan guarantees and grants for producers to purchase and install on-the-farm renewable energy systems, establishing a forest bioenergy program; and, of course, championed by the chairman of the full committee, the biomass crop assistance program.

I encourage all of my colleagues for these reasons, as pointed out by many other colleagues, to support the conference report.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to recognize the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA), another outstanding member of our committee, for 1 minute.

Mr. COSTA. I, too, want to congratulate the chairman and the ranking member for an effort that has extended now over 2½ years.

Mr. Speaker, certainly the measure before us, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, reflects a bipartisan compromise and consensus not easily gained.

I represent three of the country's most productive agricultural counties in the Nation. In my district alone, farmers grow over 300 various crops, which oftentimes are referred to as specialty crops, fruits, vegetables all sorts of diversified good food in America.

For the first time the important segment of American agriculture is being recognized, not in the form of subsidies, but in support of research, competitiveness programs, focusing on pest and disease prevention efforts. Not only does this help our growers, but it helps our consumers to ensure availability of safe, healthy fruits and vegetables for our citizens, a diet that's based upon good science.

Our farmers are working hard to implement better environmental stewardship programs, but they face continued challenges as it relates to air quality concerns and water shortages. This makes improvements in those areas as well.

Is this bill perfect? Certainly not, but it represents a hard-fought compromise.

I urge my colleagues to support the conference report.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said about whether or not there is reform in the legislation.

Let me point out that there is very substantial reform. We have caps on adjusted gross income limits on farmers and on nonfarmers. We require direct attribution of benefits. We reform the dairy and sugar support programs. We create revenue-based countercyclical programs. We address the beneficial interest problem. We reform the crop insurance program, and we eliminate the three-entity rule.

Those of you who are not in agriculture may wonder what some of those things are. They are all significant reforms resulting in this. For those who say we are not making cuts in the commodity programs, this orange bar represents payment for commodity programs under the last 3 years of the so-called Freedom to Farm Act, which some have touted as being more reform oriented in agriculture, $24.7 billion a year.

During the last farm bill, the 2002 to 2007 farm bill, it averages $12.1 billion per year. The projected average cost for the current farm bill that we are debating right now, $7.6 billion a year, less than one-third of what was spent per year under the Freedom to Farm program. This is real reform, these are real cuts in the commodity title for America's farmers and ranchers.

This gives you an illustration of what we are talking about, what we are debating about. This thing that looks like a pin, this little tiny slice of overall total Federal spending, is what goes to commodity programs, one-quarter of 1 percent of the Federal budget, down from three-fourths of 1 percent during the first year of the 2002 farm bill.

You might say we are dancing on the head of a pin when we have this much debate about reform for one-fourth of 1 percent of the farm programs.

I urge my colleagues to support this reform legislation.

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, in my very short time remaining, let me simply say that we have a huge problem with entitlements in this country, one of which is the entitlement, direct payment system for farmers. This is not serious reform, when you are still paying farmers that make up to $2.5 million in subsidies from the taxpayer.

I urge a ''no'' vote on the bill.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the gentleman from Virginia, he really is an expert on these programs, but he knows as well as anyone the reason commodity spending is down is because commodity prices are up.

Two of the three subsidy programs are based on the amount farmers are getting in the marketplace. But that can all return in a heartbeat, and he knows it.

The fact is that you need a few Members of Congress here today to stand up and say the emperor has no clothes. As I said from the beginning, where's the beef, where's the real reform?

When you still allow taxpayer subsidies going to a farm couple with an adjusted gross of $2.5 million, that's not reform. When you lift the income limits under the LDP and the countercyclical program, that's not reform. When you increased the loan rate and the target price, it's not reform.

You have marginal reform with the crop insurance. Instead of having a farm bill today that has reasonable reform for taxpayers throughout the country, and has the great conservation title for the 21st century, or the healthy food bill of the 21st century, it's more status quo. It's more wait for 5 years, we will do it then.

Well, those 5 years never come. The time has never been better today, and the President is right. We should not be spending taxpayer subsidies for wealthy individuals at a time of record prices in the marketplace. When people are facing increased food and fuel costs, let us not do this to the American taxpayer and use their money needlessly.

I encourage my colleagues to vote ''no.'' We can do better. I know we can do better in producing a bill that provides a safety net for family farmers but is also responsible to the American taxpayer.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, at this time it's my pleasure to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. MILLER).

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. I certainly thank the gentleman for yielding and certainly appreciate his work and the chairman's very, very diligent work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in very strong support of the 2007 farm bill. This bipartisan legislation will ensure a secure food supply and the continuance of a strong agricultural sector. A very important part of that agricultural sector in my district, actually, is the production of sugar beets, which is helped greatly by this bill.

□ 1515

The increase in sugar loan rates, the first since 1985, is widely supported by Michigan farmers.

Also including sugar producers in the development of alternative energies I think is very important and can help to make them an integral part of developing energy resources that will only help consumers and reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy.

While the sugar program faces some criticism, which we have all heard on the floor today, I think it is important that Members be reminded that this program comes at little or no cost to the taxpayers.

As well, our specialty crop farmers will also be protected in this bill while ensuring that the wealthiest farmers are not receiving government subsidies.

I don't believe anyone understands more about how to strengthen our agricultural sector than farmers themselves, so I certainly listened, as I am sure all Members did, to our local farmers while this bill was being negotiated and I sought their input and their counsel, and I am glad that much of what they stated was needed was included in this legislation and they strongly support this final product.

I believe this bill is a great example of bipartisan compromise, and I also believe it is good for the future of American agriculture and thereby our entire Nation. I would urge my colleagues to support this critical legislation.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I am now pleased to recognize for 1 minute the distinguished Speaker of the House without whose support and backing we wouldn't be here today. From the start when she came to Farm Fest a couple years ago until now, she has become an agriculture expert. We appreciate her involvement.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I want

to congratulate the distinguished chairman of our Agriculture Committee for his important work in bringing this legislation to the floor today. I also want to commend Mr. GOODLATTE for his leadership as well, so we can come to the floor with bipartisan legislation that will help lower food prices, invest in energy independence, support conservation, and recognize the importance of specialty crops.

I want to commend Mr. KIND also for his leadership. It is very important for us to reform the farm subsidy programs in our country. I think where we have a disagreement is I think this bill is a good first step in that direction. I don't think we will ever see another bill that will look this way. And when we come to the place where our situation is addressed again in a bipartisan way on the next farm bill, I think your work will be repaid. But I hope, Mr. KIND, that you take some satisfaction in the fact that from your leadership and advocacy, this farm bill is moving in the right direction. I too am not satisfied that it does enough in terms of farm subsidies, but I want to talk about what it does do.

And what it does do is much better because of the leadership of Mr. GOODLATTE, our distinguished chairman Mr. PETERSON, the work of the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee who just did a phenomenal job. Chairman RANGEL did a phenomenal job on his aspect of the bill. And Mr. POMEROY, who serves on both the Ways and Means Committee and the Agriculture Committee, was a wonderful bridge in terms of these initiatives. I also commend Congresswoman HERSETH SANDLIN for her leadership, and all of our colleagues who are here today, including Mr. HOLDEN who is number two on the Ag Committee. All across America, we are proud of the work that has been done.

In California, we are proud of the work of Dennis Cardoza, a member of the Ag Committee, representing some new ideas about fresh fruits and vegetables and how they should be part of this initiative. We on the coast, to my colleague Mr. SCOTT, we wanted to see some initiatives about fresh fruits and vegetables and specialty crops, and they are contained in here. And I commend Congresswoman ROSA DELAURO for her incredible work on the nutrition piece of this.

As part of the Agriculture Committee, Mr. BACA was a leader in terms of the nutrition piece, and Congresswoman DELAURO as Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture was an important voice and strong leader and advocate for increasing the nutrition initiatives in this legislation. If there was one reason for Members to vote for this bill, it would be to support the nutrition piece of it, but there are other reasons as well.

I talked about how it could lower grocery prices. Time magazine recently had this on its Web site, four ways the farm bill could lower grocery bills. First with the disaster relief, a $3.8 billion program for farmers hit by drought and flooding could speed up compensation, allowing them to bring crops to market faster.

Cuts in ethanol subsidies. Demand for corn-based ethanol has increased corn prices. This bill cuts the producers' tax credit and creates a subsidy for more efficient cellulosic ethanol made from stalks, grass, and wood rather than from corn.

Food stamps. Payments to those on assistance will be more responsive to inflation. The minimum monthly benefit will increase from $10, where it has been since 1977, and may I say, probably since they put this out.

The final bill has strong support for the food pantries, food banks throughout America. Now if you go to a food bank, you will see a sign that says you can only come one time a month to pick up food because the shelves are bare in those food pantries. This bill will go a long way to filling those shelves. So for emergency food assistance, this program would supply food banks and pantries and could add up to $100 million more in funding per year as more Americans affected by the sluggish economy visit its distribution centers.

Some people in our country are concerned as our economy is in a downturn, they are concerned about losing their jobs. Many people are concerned about losing their homes; but almost everyone is concerned about losing his or her living standard. The purchasing power of middle-income families has been reduced while costs have gone up for necessities like gasoline and groceries and health care and education. The issue of gasoline and groceries are addressed somewhat, one more than the other, in this legislation.

In terms of energy, high energy costs are a contributing factor to our high food prices, which is why the Food and Energy Security Act, which this is, will help reduce gas prices and ensure that America's family farmers fuel America's energy independence. Think of this. We are talking about energy independence, and with this legislation we take a step for America's farmers to fuel America's energy independence, following up on the work we did last year in the energy bill.

It makes a $1 billion investment in energy independence. In addition to that, it takes a critical step in transitioning from biofuels, from corn as I mentioned, and creates a new tax credit that will provide a $400 million investment in cellulosic biofuels. These efforts will ensure that we send our energy dollars to the Midwest instead of to the Middle East.

In terms of conservation, the bill recognizes that those who work the land, America's farmers and ranchers, are great stewards of the land. The farm bill improves access to and funding for initiatives that take environmentally sensitive lands out of production. It encourages environmentally friendly practices on working lands, and it invests $5.4 billion to preserve farm and ranchland, improve our air quality, our water quality, and enhance soil conservation and wildlife habitats on working lands.

Others have mentioned the issue of specialty crops. For the first time, the farm bill makes an historic investment in specialty crops, especially important to my State of California, and as I have said, those of us living on the coast as well as in the rest of America. It provides $1.3 billion in mandatory spending. This investment was made possible by the leadership of Congressman DENNIS CARDOZA of California who has worked to ensure that the producers who account for more than half of all crop value in the United States are now represented in our farm policy. Producers who provide one-half of all crop value in the United States are now represented in our farm bill.

Specifically this bill invested $365 million in specialty crop block grants, $230 million to create a new dedicated research program for specialty crops, $377 million to create a new initiative for early detection prevention and eradication of emerging pest and disease. I know that Mr. THOMPSON of California has a special interest in this aspect of the legislation.

The bill takes a critical step toward reforming farm programs, not enough I agree, Mr. KIND, by eliminating payments to the ultra-rich and closing loopholes that for decades have allowed some to evade farm-payment limits. This is the most significant reform in farm policy in more than 30 years. This Food and Energy Security Act will ensure that future farm bills will never again look like this.

Thanks to the efforts of Chairman PETERSON and many others who have made this historic investment in energy independence and nutrition assistance, this bill's effects will also be felt far from farm country. As George Washington our first President whom we visit every day when we come to the Chamber said, ''I know of no pursuit in which more real and important services can be rendered to any country than by improving its agriculture.'' Well, we were an agrarian society then, but there is still a great deal of truth in that statement today.

With this legislation we will help families facing high food prices; fuel our Nation's energy needs with American-made, renewable energy; and be better stewards of the land and protect our environment. In addition to all of that, we will have fresh snacks, fresh fruit and vegetable snacks for our children in the schools.

I urge my colleagues to support this new direction in American farm policy. I urge an ''aye'' vote. Again, I salute Mr. PETERSON and Mr. GOODLATTE for their leadership. It is wonderful for us to have this bipartisanship on the floor today.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, how much time remains?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Virginia has 4½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Minnesota has 2¼ minutes remaining.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to give one of my minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mr. GOODLATTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, the Speaker just mentioned the bipartisanship in this legislation, and that is very true. But this legislation is not bipartisan because many Republicans will be supporting a Democratic bill, this legislation is bipartisan because it was crafted by both Republicans and Democrats throughout the conference process, and this legislation is very, very different than the legislation that passed the House last summer which I voted against primarily because there were tax increases to pay for the legislation. There are no more tax increases paying for this legislation. In fact, this legislation is paid for by a means that is acceptable to both sides and acceptable to the administration.

But there are more reforms in this legislation that Republicans prevailed upon our Democratic colleagues on in the conference. The effort to prohibit States, most particularly the State of Indiana, from being able to seek outside help to reform their flawed food stamp program was removed from this bill, and so now not just Indiana but all 50 States will be able to continue to use appropriate means to modernize their food stamp programs.

Davis-Bacon provisions in the Northern Border Economic Development Commission, the Southeast Crescent, and the Southwest Border Regional Commissions, those Davis-Bacon provisions have been removed from this legislation.

An effort to undermine the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 by providing increased food stamp benefits to adults, able-bodied adults without dependents was removed from this legislation.

And anticompetition livestock provisions, which were very troubling to many Members on this side of the aisle and on the other side of the aisle as well, were removed.

So while there are certainly advocates for each of those provisions in this bill, this bill is bipartisan because we worked together to give on both sides to make sure that we came up with a good farm bill that could command strong bipartisan support.

□ 1530

This bill promotes energy independence by expanding investment in cellulosic biofuels and helping move away from corn-based ethanol. It cuts the ethanol subsidy by 12 percent. It's fiscally responsible because it contains no tax increases and is PAYGO compliant. It boosts conservation programs benefiting our environment. It aids food banks and nutrition in our schools in its nutrition programs. It preserves the farm safety net and assures that we continue to have the safest, most affordable, most abundant food supply in the world. This is real reform. This is a real farm bill for the 21st century.

I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation.

I want to thank, again, the chairman of the committee, the chairmen of the subcommittees, the ranking members on my side of the aisle, but most importantly, the staff on both the majority and the minority side who worked many, many, many weekends over the last 2½ years, but particularly in the last few months, to craft this legislation, to address all of the concerns that were raised, to go down blind alleys, find that something didn't work, come back up, find a different way to make it work, and to reach this point today, the staff has helped make that possible.

I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the remaining time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to echo Mr. GOODLATTE's comments. I have a list of all of the staff members, majority and minority, that I would like entered into the RECORD to honor their work. You think we've been through a process here. It's nothing compared to what the staff has done, and so they deserve our thanks. And they're going to, hopefully, get a little bit of rest now once we get this over with.

To follow on Mr. GOODLATTE's comments, there's a lot of reform in this bill that I would call real reform, as opposed to ginned-up reform that's been done by different folks. We have made huge changes in the conservation programs that are going to make those programs work a lot better in the future, work for more different parts of the country.

We have a new revenue-based countercyclical program that we're going to try out on an optional basis for the next 5 years that may be the new future direction of the farm bill, depending on how it works out. So we've got a lot of reforms in this bill that never get talked about because all anybody wants to focus on is AGI.

Well, I don't have any problem putting an AGI limit on nonfarmers, because, frankly, I don't think they should be in farming in the first place. We've got enough capital in agriculture. We don't need folks from outside of agriculture coming in and being involved. That's my personal opinion.

But, you know, we've got a $500,000 limit. We'd have gone lower, but that's as far as we could get.

We put a limit on farmers, on farm income for the first time, in spite of the fact that this is the only part of business people in this country that are getting benefits from the Federal Government that are requiring an AGI, that I know of. I don't know why farmers get singled out and nobody else does, why we don't have an AGI on oil companies and whoever else is getting benefits from the Federal Government. That continues to mystify me.

But I just have to clarify, you know, people keep manipulating these statistics. We've fixed some of that in this bill as well, which I would call reform. But as to what Mr. GOODLATTE said earlier, we have a $500,000 hard cap on nonfarm income. So I suppose that if you earn $500,000 as a doctor or something, your wife earned $500,000 as a doctor, and then you had a farm and you earned $750,000 as a farmer, and your wife had a real farm and earned $750,000 you could get to $2.5 million. But I think you need to understand that, in order for you to qualify for that, you're going to have a real genuine farm, and it has to be your income, certified by a CPA or a lawyer, and if it's not, if they do it wrong they're going to go to jail and you are, too.

So I think the likelihood of anybody getting to this $2.5 million limit is almost nonexistent. That is a bogus argument that's being put out there, being ginned up by people that want to keep this fight going on.

So if you want to put a $200,000 cap on everybody that gets money from the Federal Government on AGI, then we'll be right there with you. But I don't think that's going to happen.

Just like we tried to put AGI limits on conservation. We had a revolt. Some of these conservation groups that have been pushing these payment limits, as soon as we said we're going to have the same limit on them as farmers, we had a revolt.

This is a good bill. It's got a lot of reform. I thank everybody. We'll appreciate a good vote to get this over with.

Majority Staff: Andy Baker, Christy Birdsong, Wynn Bott, Aleta Botts, Claiborn Crain, Jack Danielson, Nona Darrell, Adam Durand, Nathan Fretz, Alejandra Gonzalez-Arias, Chandler Goule, Tony Jackson, Craig Jagger, Tyler Jameson, Keith Jones, Martha Josephson, John Konya, Scott Kuschmider, Rob Larew, Merrick Munday, Clark Ogilvie, John Riley, Sharon Rusnak, Lisa Shelton, Anne Simmons, April Slayton, Cherie Slayton, Debbie Smith, Kristin Sosanie, and Jamie Weyer.

Minority Staff: Patricia Barr, Brent Blevins, Bryan Dierlam, Mike Dunlap, John Goldberg, Alise Kowalski, Kevin Kramp, Scott Martin, Josh Maxwell, Pam Miller, Rita Neznek, Bill O'Conner, Pelham Straughn, and Pete Thomson.

Fellow/Intern: Rob McAfee, Rachel Huhn, Randi Hughes, Jennifer Spraberry, Olivia Vickers, Melinda Cep, and J.D. Hale.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2419, the 2008 Farm Bill Conference Report. This bill provides a breakthrough for the Chesapeake Bay by providing an unprecedented level of funding to aid in the cleanup of this national treasure. H.R. 2419 provides, for the first time, a bay specific program to ensure that farmers in the watershed will get their fair share of conservation funding. The Conference Report provides $188 million,

over 5 years, in bay-specific conservation funding. Moreover, the bill includes a baseline of funding in the amount of $438 million over 10 years. This will enable the program to be extended at the expiration of this 5-year bill. Additionally, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation estimates that farmers in the bay watershed will be eligible for an additional $252 million in national program funding in working land programs in addition to conservation set-aside programs. This funding will be over and above the annual conservation funding in the last year of the previous farm bill that provided $80 million to the Bay watershed.

I want to thank the chairman of the Agriculture Committee, COLLIN PETERSON, and the chairman of the Conservation Subcommittee, TIM HOLDEN, for the programs and funding that they have provided to assist farmers in controlling sediment and nutrient runoff into the Chesapeake Bay. Moreover, the program would not have been possible without the support of the many Members of Congress on the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Taskforce. In addition, the work of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, in providing technical assistance and grass roots support, was essential to the success of the establishment of this program. The Chesapeake Bay Commission also provided assistance in the crafting of an initial legislation, CHESSEA, that helped galvanize the support of Members who are committed to restoring the health of the Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the U.S. Its watershed includes 66,000 farms with an estimated 8.5 million acres of land. The watershed contains 150 tributary streams and rivers. The watershed spans 6 States and the District of Columbia. Almost half of the nitrogen and phosphorus pollutant load in the bay is caused by agricultural runoff—from fertilizer and animal waste.

In 1987 there was the first attempt to clean up the bay with an agreement between the States and the Federal Government. The goal was to clean up the bay by 2000. When the deadline passed, a more detailed agreement was developed and the leaders of Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, and the EPA pledged to fix the bay's water, its oyster population, its beds of underwater grass, and other environmental indicators by 2010—which will require the reduction of 110 million pounds of pollution.

Every environmental assessment indicates that the 2010 deadline will not be met and that the environmental condition of the bay is continuing to deteriorate. A recent report by the Chesapeake Bay Program's Health and Restoration Assessment found that most of the bay's waters are degraded, the bay's critical habitats, like grasses, are at risk and that many of the bay's blue crabs, striped bass and oyster populations are below historic levels. This bill provides the much needed resources to restore the Chesapeake Bay to its original vitality.

NATIONAL CONSERVATION

In addition to the conservation funding for the bay, this bill boosts conservation programs by $7.9 billion, to nationally reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water and air quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters. Moreover, fruit and vegetable producers will have their own place in the farm bill for the first time and will benefit from more than $1.3 billion for new programs that support research, pest management, and trade promotion to help the industry.

NUTRITION

Nearly three-fourths of the farm bill before us today, an additional $10.4 billion in new spending, goes to nutrition programs that help 38 million American families afford healthy food. These critical food stamp provisions will help about 11 million people by 2012. Households with children receive 77 percent of food stamp benefits. Moreover, during this time of fiscal austerity for many families in our Nation, this bill provides much-needed support to emergency feeding organizations, such as food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens, by increasing funding for TEFAP by $1.25 billion—with $50 million for immediate shortages at food pantries. The farm bill also will assist schools in providing healthy snacks to students, with $1 billion for free fresh fruits and vegetables. Finally, it provides international nutrition assistance by providing $60 million, in addition to the existing Food for Peace international aid program, to purchase emergency food aid overseas and provides an additional $84 million for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program for infant, child, and school nutrition programs in underdeveloped countries.

RENEWABLE FUELS

The farm bill we are considering today will assist Congress in promoting the development of biofuels from noncorn sources. The Renewable Fuels Standard that was part of the 2007 Energy law requires that two-thirds of our fuel needs be met by nonfood feedstocks for biofuels, such as switchgrass and woodchips. The farm bill takes another critical step in transitioning biofuels beyond corn—by reducing the current tax credit for corn-based ethanol by 6 cents per gallon and creating a new tax credit to promote the production of cellulosic biofuels. Moreover, the farm bill invests $1 billion in renewable energy, focusing on new technologies and new sources, including $320 million in loan guarantees for biorefineries that produce advanced biofuels and a new program to encourage the production of new biomass for cellulosic ethanol and other energy production, helping producers learn how to harvest, store, and transport biomass to bioenergy facilities.

CRITICAL REFORMS

The Conferees have made many reforms to commodity subsidies in this bill. Commodity programs account for less than 13 percent of the farm bill. This bill will reduce the cap for nonfarm income by 80 percent, to $500,000, and puts in place the first-ever cap for farm income at $750,000 for fixed direct payments. The bill reduces direct farm payments by $300 million; the Administration proposed increasing these fixed payments by $5.5 billion, even though they are paid out regardless of farm prices. The bill also closes a loophole (the three-entity rule) that for decades has permitted the collection of double the farm payment limits by collecting cash on more than one business. Moreover, it includes tax reforms to limit the use of farming losses to reduce their taxes on nonfarm income.

I applaud the Conferees for these reforms. Unfortunately, these measures do not go far enough. I would have preferred the elimination of subsidies to wealthy agri-business interests in their entirety. We need to continue to work to reduce the reliance of our farm program on commodity supports that often benefit the farmers who need support the least.

CONCLUSION

However, the Commodity Title is included in a comprehensive bill that contains many good programs, including: the Chesapeake Bay conservation provision, as well as significant funding for farm conservation across the Nation. Moreover, the robust nutrition program that aids the disadvantaged here and abroad, coupled with the recognition of specialty crops and the inclusion of the proper incentives to increase the production and refinement of renewable fuel from nonfood sources are extraordinary advancements that are worthy of support. I believe that, on balance, this bill provides many worthwhile benefits which prompt me to cast my vote in support of this Conference Agreement.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, the nutrition title in the Conference Report for the 2008 Farm Bill is a monumental achievement for the millions of Americans who struggle to put enough healthy, nutritious food on the table. I know it's not always easy to make ends meet and to put food on the table each day. I've walked in those shoes, and I've sat at that table. But with this bill we start to fulfill our responsibility to our neighbors. We have improved and strengthened food stamps and other important nutrition programs for our children and seniors. I want to take a few minutes to expand upon some of the accomplishments that are in this nutrition title.

First off, we have updated the name of the program. The new name will be SNAP: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. We needed a new name because there are no places left in this country where food stamps actually are ''stamps.'' Instead, like with other modern transactions, people swipe their cards at the store to access their benefits. This has been a huge success for reducing fraud and stigma in the program. We hope and expect that the new name and new image for the program will help us to continue to chip away at the stigma that keeps some proud people, especially senior citizens, from signing up for help in paying for their groceries and puts them at risk of hunger.

The name reflects the fact that the program provides a ''supplement'' to help people afford an adequate diet when their own resources are not quite enough. We also say ''nutrition,'' instead of ''food,'' because the program is about more than just food. It has got a vibrant nutrition education component to help our low-income population learn about healthy diets and make the choices that will improve their health status over their lifetimes. So I'm very proud of this new name for food stamps: an established program that is one of the best Government programs we've got. Let me be clear, however, that in changing the name and eliminating food stamp coupons we did not intend to make any other policy changes to the program.

I think the biggest single accomplishment in the nutrition title is to end the decades of erosion in the value of food stamp benefits. We're all aware of the rising gas and food prices of recent months and the bite they've taken out of the pocketbooks of most Americans. But for many low-income Americans the squeeze has been getting tighter for decades, as the value of their food stamps has been able to purchase less and less food with each passing year. Food stamp benefits average only $1

per person per day. It's not easy to purchase a healthy, nutritious diet on such a limited amount.

So in this bill we have addressed this problem. We made critical improvements, and, for the first time in the program's history, we have ensured that, in every aspect, the food stamp program keeps its purchasing power over time. We raise the standard deduction from $134 to $144 and index it for inflation. That is an important accomplishment. It helps about 10 million people afford more food—families, seniors, people with disabilities—all types of low-income food stamp recipients are helped by this change. We raise the minimum benefit, and index it for inflation. We uncap the dependent care deduction so that families can deduct the full cost of the child care they so desperately depend on to hold down their jobs. And we index the asset limits. We don't know what the future will hold. Hopefully, the high inflation of the past months will shortly subside as the country gets back on track. But we now can rest assured, as never before, that if there is substantial inflation our low-income families and senior citizens won't lose out on food.

For me what this bill really is about is people. It's about our senior citizens who have worked hard their whole lives and deserve better than to face the fear of hunger in their last years. It's about children, who come home from school and look to their parents to put a nutritious meal on the table.

One of the groups that will be most helped are our Nation's senior citizens. We were able to increase the minimum benefit, which goes predominantly to senior citizens, from $10 to about $14 a month. This is the first increase in almost 30 years in the minimum benefit. I would have liked to have increased it even more, but this change will help make it worthwhile for some of our seniors who qualify for a low benefit to participate in the program. We did this by setting the minimum benefit at 8 percent of the thrifty food plan for a single person. Because USDA adjusts the thrifty food plan every year for increases in food prices, so too will the minimum benefit now adjust. In addition, because of higher food prices in some places, like Alaska, Hawaii, and some of the territories, seniors in these places will now also see a modestly higher minimum benefit. For example in some parts of Alaska, the minimum benefit will be as high as $25 per month.

In this bill we've also excluded retirement accounts from assets and indexed the asset limits to inflation. These changes will help seniors and working families to save for the future. It makes no sense to require people who fall on hard times to virtually liquidate all of the savings they've managed to put away in order to get help paying for groceries for themselves and their families. Our seniors, especially, may have no ability to replace these savings, and as a result, no cushion to deal with unexpected expenses. And a working family who is forced to spend down savings now will be that much closer to poverty in their older years. So this is an important change for the long-term ability of low-income individuals to move toward financial independence and for our senior citizens to be able to retain an ability to support themselves in their retirement.

But I also want to reaffirm that we did not take away, as President Bush proposed, the State option in the food stamp program to design a more appropriate asset test at the State level. In my home State of California the legislature and Governor have been working together to design an ''expanded categorical eligibility'' program that will revise the asset limit for many food stamp recipients and make it easier for them to save for the future. I hope that other States consider this option, and I urge USDA to work with other States to promote this important policy.

In another major improvement for senior citizens, we have expanded to seniors a State option from the 2002 farm bill that dramatically reduces paperwork requirements. This policy is known as ''simplified reporting'' and it will allow seniors to participate without filing paperwork for 12-month periods, unless they have a major increase in their income that makes them ineligible for food stamps. I urge USDA to make this option as simple and streamlined for seniors and States as possible, and to find ways to insulate food stamp benefits from interactions with other programs that low-income seniors participate in, particularly Medicaid.

Finally, we have heard reports that despite the overwhelming success of the electronic benefits, some seniors can find the technology confusing. For those at the minimum benefit who receive maybe only $10 to $20 a month, we've heard concerns that if they don't use their benefits fast enough those benefits can be taken away—or moved ''offline''—sometimes in as short a period as 3 months, with the senior citizen not understanding why this has occurred. I don't think this is a very common problem, but it is understandable that a senior citizen might want to store up small benefits to use at one shopping trip every few months, rather than have to keep track of the card every month. This bill allows States to move benefits off-line after 6 months of inactivity, but requires them to notify the household and restore the benefits within 48 hours upon request. This benefit reinstatement should be a simple process, and States should aim to help seniors navigate it, so we don't have our seniors being bounced around an EBT call center trying to figure out what happened to their food stamp benefits.

For children and families, the biggest change we make is the increase and indexing of the standard deduction which will significantly boost the ability of low-wage workers to afford food for their families, especially over time. More than $5 billion of the nutrition title's 10-year investment go to this change, which primarily benefits families with children.

We also lift the limit on the dependent care deduction. This change will help about 100,000 families who pay out-of-pocket child care costs above $175 per child per month, or $200 for infants, by recognizing that money that is needed to pay for child care so that a parent can work is not available to purchase food. On average, families who are helped will receive an additional $40 a month, or $500 a year, according to the Congressional Budget Office. The dependent care cap has not been raised since the early 1990s, despite the increases in the costs of safe, reliable child care. Families incur all types of costs in order to secure child care for their children, and USDA should continue to allow all of these expenses to count toward the deduction—such as transportation costs to and from day care and the cost of informal care. Finally, as States roll this out to the 100,000 families currently on the program, it is important that they make it easy for eligible families to claim the new deduction. Families shouldn't have to make extra trips to the food stamp office or be at risk of losing benefits if they fail to claim a new higher deduction. A household should never have its benefits cut or reduced because of a failure to document child care expenses, but should be given a full opportunity to receive the higher deduction if they have expenses above the current capped amounts.

We hear all the time that despite the importance and success of the food stamp program, for most families the benefits run out before the end of the month. That is why it is so important that we provide more than $1.2 billion in this farm bill for additional food purchases for emergency food organizations, like church food pantries and soup kitchens, to feed our families and seniors. We provide $50 million in additional funds this year to help meet food banks' needs in light of rising food costs. And, we increase the basic Emergency Food Assistance Program annual funding level to $250 million. That amount will be adjusted for inflation in future years to ensure that this program does not lose any of its food purchasing power.

Another important provision for our children is a provision that ensures that children who receive food stamps can automatically, or ''directly'' be certified as eligible for free meals. The eligibility rules for the two programs overlap: Virtually every child who receives food stamps is eligible for free meals. So making that connection in an automated way can save the family from falling through the cracks or from having to file duplicative paperwork. Unfortunately, too many States and schools don't currently make the connection adequately. So this bill requires USDA to report to Congress annually on each State's progress in directly certifying food stamp recipients for free school meals, and asks for USDA to report on best practices among the various States and school districts. This is a provision that is about good Government—there is no reason the Government can't make these connections, instead of requiring school administrators and families to be responsible for duplicative paperwork.

In addition to my role as Agriculture's Subcommittee Chair on Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry, I also have the great pleasure to assess this bill from the perspective of my role as the chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. More than 5 million Latinos, or more than 10 percent of the Latino population, receive food stamps each month. Food stamps constitute 25 percent of total monthly income for a typical Latino family that participates in the Food Stamp Program. All of the changes that I have just described will benefit low-income Latinos who rely upon this program.

I must take one moment to express my deep personal disappointment that we were not able to restore food stamp benefits to all legal immigrants who are currently ineligible for the program. Keeping food assistance from hard-working immigrants with whom we live side by side is simply wrong and I will not stop fighting until we fully repeal the benefit cuts to legal immigrants enacted in 1996.

In spite of this major setback, we have achieved a number of important improvements for the Latino community. First, USDA will conduct a study on the possibility of bringing

the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico back into the national Food Stamp Program. Since 1982 Puerto Rico has received a fixed block grant amount for food assistance, rather than be a part of the U.S. program like the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. This block grant does not take into account changes in economic or demographic conditions, such as unemployment or the number of people who are in need of food assistance.

The poverty rate in Puerto Rico, 45 percent, is more than three times the national poverty rate. However, because of the block grant, Puerto Rico cannot afford to provide benefits to all households poor enough to qualify for benefits using Food Stamp Program standards. Instead, they have been forced to impose rigid eligibility criteria. For example, a family of four with net income above about $600 a month, or 34 percent of the Federal poverty level, cannot get any food assistance in Puerto Rico. The same family living in California, or any other State on the mainland, could have almost three times as much income and still be eligible for food assistance. An elderly person living alone faces an income limit of $192 per month—just 23 percent of the poverty level.

Clearly, some of our most vulnerable American citizens are at risk of being denied food assistance they greatly need. It seems just plain wrong to knowingly leave some Americans with insufficient food. With this study we hope to get a better understanding of what the local conditions are in Puerto Rico, in terms of food costs, poverty and other programmatic factors so that we can figure out how to address the issue in the next farm bill, or earlier if possible.

Another important achievement of the bill is to ensure that both Federal statute and regulations have the full force of law, ensuring that clients who do not receive adequate service under these rules and standards may bring suit. Recently, a district court in Ohio dismissed a case brought against the State to enforce the Department's regulations for serving people whose primary language is not English. I can't speak to whether the case had any merit, but my colleagues and I were surprised and disturbed to learn about the court's dismissal. We felt that it was critical to clarify in this bill that it has always been Congress's intent that the program's regulations should be fully enforceable and fully complied with to the same extent as the statute. The farm bill, therefore, clarifies that the Department's rules on serving non- and limited-English speaking people have the force of law and create rights for households.

Beyond the issue of bilingual access rules, this legislation makes clear that the Department's civil rights regulations are among those which have the full force of law and which households have the right to enforce. Discrimination is not acceptable in any form or at any point in the food stamp certification process. Households should not be assisted, or not assisted, approved or denied for any reason other than an individual assessment of their need for help or their eligibility by the state. I am pleased to be playing a role in making clear that the Committee and the Congress wish the program to be administered in compliance with the Food Stamp Act and its regulations.

I'd like to also talk about a somewhat related matter that we did not manage to agree to include in this farm bill, much to my disappointment. I worked hard to include in the House bill, and shepherd through the conference negotiations, a provision that would have strengthened the longstanding policy in the food stamp program that certification and eligibility decisions should be done by State employees, rather than private companies. We would have added to the traditional restrictions around merit systems and provided specific exceptions for certain activities, such as outreach. In recent years the Bush Administration has let two States, Texas and Indiana, experiment with using private companies to collect and review food stamp applications and conduct the sensitive eligibility interview. In my view, these projects are not consistent with current law or good sense. These experiments have been disastrous to the States' treasuries but, more importantly, to the vulnerable families and senior citizens who rely on food stamps and found their applications delayed or improperly denied. Some people even had their private, personal information shared inappropriately. The activities involved in determining eligibility—and ineligibility—for food stamps should be public functions and should not be governed by profit motive or a company's responsibility to its shareholders.

While the House voted to include this provision in the Conference agreement, the Senate did not because of opposition from the other party and a veto threat from President Bush, I regret this outcome and I am determined to not drop this issue until we have restored the proper balance to food stamp administration.

But I urge my colleagues to not forget, that separate from this "privatization" issue, in recent years States have been experimenting with a wide variety of changes to food stamp policies and practices that incorporate new technologies and modern business practices. For example, some States are using technology to create new pathways to apply for and retain benefits such as food stamps, health insurance, and child care, including online applications, online program redetermination or recertification, phone interviews, and call centers where changes in circumstances can be reported.

On the one hand, creating ways for families to participate in these programs without having to travel to a human service office can expand access and save time and money for States and families alike. In fact, in this bill we've created a new option for States to accept food stamp applications over the telephone. No doubt technology offers numerous opportunities for improved customer service and simpler application and retention processes.

On the other hand, if these processes are not well-designed, evaluated, and implemented, then families can face new access barriers. Moreover, some States are exploring these options at the same time that they are reducing human service staffing and closing local welfare offices. These steps can create new access barriers for certain groups of families and need to be carefully monitored. And I am concerned because neither States nor USDA appear to be asking the important questions about what has been the effect of these technological changes on access for food stamp households, particularly vulnerable populations like seniors, people with physical or mental disabilities, or people who do not speak English proficiently. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) last year published a report that found that USDA has not sufficiently monitored the States' "modernization" efforts in terms of their effects on program access, payment accuracy, or administrative costs.

So in this bill we have included several provisions to require that States that are eager to pursue modernized systems are pausing to ask the necessary questions about how to ensure that the new systems are designed in such a way that they are effective tools for connecting eligible families to benefits. In this bill we require USDA to establish standards for when States are making major changes in program operations and to monitor the effects on households, especially the types of households I just mentioned. I urge USDA to do this in a way that yields useful information so that States can refine and improve their systems to make them as accessible as possible to all clients.

Another provision requires States to adequately pilot test new computer systems before they go full-scale. This responds to situations where States have implemented new computer systems without adequate testing. This occurred even though some at USDA knew that there were weaknesses in the system and that serious benefit delays and errors were likely to occur. We also included a provision the Administration suggested to require States, instead of households, to repay any overissuances that occur because of one of these preventable major systems failures.

Finally, in light of all of the modernization changes and the potential access to sensitive information that new players may have, we strengthened the Act's privacy protections to ensure that anyone receiving confidential information for appropriate program purposes cannot then share that information with a third party. In addition to our fears that too many people may have access to private food stamp information as a result of new technology, we were also concerned that clients have not been able to access their private records. We heard about clients in Texas who had their benefits cut off, or who never were able to obtain benefits, and could not get access to their case records in order to pursue claims against the State. That is unacceptable. We also clarified that despite all of the changes in how States are storing and maintaining client records, clients can access these records in litigation. These changes are not in conflict because confidential records would continue to be unavailable to the general public and others not having a legitimate reason relating to program administration.

Another concern I have is about two new provisions that would disqualify certain people from food stamps for misusing their benefits. One relates to situations where a recipient of food stamps intentionally uses food stamp benefits to buy a product, like water, that is in a disposable container that can be redeemed for cash, then discards the product and redeems the container in order to obtain the cash deposit. The other new disqualification addresses individuals who intentionally purchase food with food stamp benefits in order to resell the food for a cash profit. I agree that both of these practices are contrary to the purposes of the food stamp program in assisting people in obtaining an adequate diet and it's appropriate to address them in this bill. However, I caution USDA to implement them in a way that ensures that only those who intended

to defraud the system in these manners be disqualified. I do not want to see innocent people—who may simply have bought groceries for a neighbor or relative be caught up as somehow engaging in fraud under this provision.

My concerns here are not completely without precedent. In this bill we are revisiting and clarifying a different disqualification rule that was enacted in 1996, and that has, in fact, ensnared innocent people and denied food stamp benefits in inappropriate ways. The intent of the law was to aid law enforcement and prevent criminals who are fleeing to avoid prosecution from receiving food stamps. Unfortunately, in practice, the provision has disqualified innocent people who had their identities stolen, or who have outstanding warrants for minor infractions that are many years old and where the police have no interest in apprehending and prosecuting the case.

So in this bill we direct USDA to clarify that people should only be subject to disqualification if they are actively fleeing law enforcement authorities who are, in fact, interested in bringing them to justice.

In addition to the very important changes we have made to the food stamp program and new funding for food banks through TEFAP, the bill would expand and improve the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. This program has been receiving $9 million a year in mandatory funds and operates in 14 States. (Three Indian tribes also operate the program.)

Under the conference agreement, mandatory funding would increase to $40 million for the 2008–2009 school year and continue to grow. By 2012, the program would be funded at nearly eight times its current size: $150 million each year, with annual adjustments for inflation in years after that.

In addition to providing increased funding, the conference agreement takes important steps to target program funds to elementary schools with a significant share of low-income children. Our goal is to provide free fresh fruits and vegetables to all elementary schools in the country where more than half of the children are eligible for free or reduced price school meals. This program should expose a whole new generation of children to a healthy way of eating.

To sum up, I am extremely proud of the work that our Committee and our Congress have undertaken in the nutrition title of the farm bill. With these changes, we are building a healthier better fed population. As a result, we are taking a few important steps towards a stronger future for our children and our communities.

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2419, the Food and Energy Security Act of 2007. This bipartisan piece of legislation will better reflect our values, strengthening American agriculture to meet the 21st century needs of the United States and the world with a safe, stable food supply.

I want to commend the work of the chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, COLIN PETERSON, as well as the Senate chairman, Mr. HARKIN. Both men diligently worked to reconcile the differences in both the House and Senate versions of the bill. All of that hard work has paid off. This bill will ease the strain of rising food prices for millions of families, take a first step on much-needed reforms to farm payments, and make a substantial commitment to land conservation and to the fruit and vegetable industry.

Mr. Speaker, while these are important and positive provisions of this bill, I am particularly pleased with the nutrition titles of the bill. An additional $10.4 billion in new spending will be allocated for nutrition programs that help 38 million American families afford healthy food. In addition, there are many updates in the food stamp programs that reflect the current state of our economy. These critical food stamp provisions will help about 11 million people by 2012.

In particular, the reforms found in this bill benefit those individuals who need help. The bill helps these individuals adequately cover food expenses and sustains participants in the Food Stamp Program for the entire month. It also increases the minimum benefit for food stamp recipients, which is especially important for our senior citizens in need. I am also particularly proud that the 2008 Farm Bill extends the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, CSFP, of which my grandmother, the late Representative Julia Carson, was a champion. It is important to help the many low-income elderly individuals in need of additional assistance who are reluctant to apply for food stamps.

The legislation also goes far in addressing the health and nutrition needs of our children by increasing funding by $1.02 billion for the USDA Snack Program. Aiding schools in providing healthy snacks to students during after-school activities and expanding the program to all 50 States is something that Congress must do.

Mr. Speaker, I am also in support of the final bill because of its provisions addressing ethanol. It goes without saying that ethanol is helping to reduce fuel prices at the pump. The prices are almost 15 percent lower from where they might be if biofuel producers were not increasing output. The farm bill also invests $1 billion in renewable energy focusing on new technologies and new sources, including $320 million in loan guarantees for biorefineries that produce advanced biofuels and a new program to encourage the production of biomass for cellulosic ethanol and other energy production, helping producers learn how to harvest, store, and transport biomass to bioenergy facilities.

I am also highly supportive of the bill's increased funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program, TEFAP, by $1.26 billion. I believe in providing commodities and other resources to States to help stock food banks. It is important that Congress continue to provide much-needed support to emergency feeding organizations, such as food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens by increasing this funding for TEFAP.

Mr. Speaker, from increasing conservation programs by $7.9 billion, to containing provisions that help us meet global food shortages, this is a good bill. The bill is fully paid for and prevents further increases to the national debt. It expands food security programs, protects our vital natural resources, promotes healthier foods and local food networks, and reforms commodity and biofuel programs to reflect the priorities of the Nation.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the farm bill conference report. I would like to commend conference committee members for tackling the tough issues, offsetting costs, and producing a conference report that I can support.

To be sure, this is not a perfect bill. Yet, in my estimation, no amount of negotiation could produce a conference report that all would agree is perfect. Rather, what has emerged is a farm bill that is good for my home State of Colorado and good for the country.

For starters, this bill will provide millions of American families with access to healthy food. Nearly three-quarters of the bill's cost will support nutrition programs, including food stamps and emergency food assistance programs, as well as an initiative to provide fresh fruit and vegetables as healthy snack alternatives for a generation of schoolchildren currently battling an epidemic obesity problem.

This farm bill will help Colorado continue to lead in the development of homegrown energy programs that we need to help free us from our national addiction to oil and protect our environment. It increases investments in renewable energy technologies, while reducing the burdensome tax credit for corn-based ethanol and creating a new tax credit for the production of more efficient cellulosic biofuels.

Rural America can plant their fields with confidence, thanks to the farm bill's new disaster relief program, and this provision of the bill also might significantly lower future grocery bills by speeding up compensation for farmers subject to natural disaster and allowing them to bring crops to market faster.

In addition, American consumers will have added confidence knowing that this farm bill mandates critical food labeling for our meat supply, including country of origin, and improves oversight of USDA's enforcement of rules governing meat packers and stockyards.

Along with promoting safe food and renewable energy production, this legislation increases spending for conservation programs by nearly $8 billion. These programs will help protect agricultural lands from urban sprawl; enhance and protect our natural resources; encourage public access to private land; and protect sensitive wetlands and grasslands, areas that are especially vulnerable in Colorado's eastern plains.

Of particular interest to Colorado is that the farm bill includes provisions similar to those in a bill—H.R. 1182—I introduced dealing with the tax treatment of exchanges of mutual ditch stock. Mutual ditch companies are unique to Colorado and are organized for the mutual benefit of shared water rights rather than for profit. This provision allows for tax-free exchanges of shares of these mutual ditch companies.

Another measure included in the farm bill, which I supported during consideration in the House Natural Resources Committee, will protect domestic timber producers by stopping the flow of illegally logged foreign timber imported into the United States.

This bill will also help bolster America's international standing by helping to meet global food shortage demands. America is already the world's largest provider of food aid, but recent riots in developing nations around the world have shown that we must increase our efforts. This legislation will provide additional funding to purchase emergency food aid overseas, and reauthorizes the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program for infant, child and school nutrition programs in underdeveloped countries.

As I said before, this bill is not perfect. I applaud the conference committee for trimming subsidies for already wealthy farmers, but I would prefer tighter reform of these programs, especially at a time when consumers must sacrifice to afford increasing food costs. And any legislation of this size and scope—especially when it is developed as a compromise between the two Chambers—is likely to include provisions that might not deserve to pass on their own.

Taken in whole, however, the farm bill conference report successfully addresses the most important food and agricultural issues facing the Nation today, and fully pays for all new spending initiatives. I agree with the editorial board of the Denver Post, which wrote, ''this latest version of the Farm Bill is good for the entire country,'' and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. MCHUGH. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the conference report to H.R. 2419, the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008. At this time, I would like to recognize the hard work of the Gentleman from Minnesota, Mr. PETERSON, the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. GOODLATTE, and the other conferees that culminated in the conference report before the House today. I also would like to take a moment to mention several items of interest to my constituents in northern and central New York.

Very simply, I could not overstate the importance of dairy farming to the economy of New York's 23rd Congressional District, which I represent. In fact, its importance is readily apparent when one considers that the 2002 Census of Agriculture reported there were 1,989 dairy farms with 188,305 milk cows in the 11 counties that comprise the district. Accordingly, I am pleased that the conference report extends and expands the Milk Income Loss Contract, MILC, Program, continues the Dairy Price Support and Dairy Indemnity Programs, and reauthorizes the Dairy Export Incentive Program.

The conference report also includes a provision to create a Northern Border Regional Commission, which I have been working on a bipartisan basis with the gentleman from Maine, Mr. MICHAUD, and others to enact because it will help further economic development. There is no question this assistance is needed, particularly when one considers that in 2000, seven of the 11 counties I have the privilege of representing had poverty rates in excess of the national rate of 12.4 percent and three—Franklin, Oswego and St. Lawrence counties—had poverty rates in excess of 14 percent. Similarly, from 2004 to 2006, eight of my constituent counties had unemployment rates in excess of the national average.

I was also pleased that the conference report will provide $466 million for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, $10 million annually for efforts to address colony collapse disorder in honey bees, grants and guaranteed loans for broadband development, tax incentives for agricultural businesses to enhance chemical security, and at least $1.19 billion for the Emergency Food Assistance Program. Finally, the conference report increases the amount available for direct loans to farmers and authorizes $120 million to fund pending rural infrastructure programs of importance to my constituents such as the Water and Waste Disposal Grants and the Rural Water and Wastewater Circuit Rider Programs.

Mr. OBERSTAR. Mr. Speaker, I commend my good friend and colleague from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON), chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, for his leadership in bringing the Conference Report on H.R. 2419, the ''Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008,'' to the House. His outstanding work and dedication over the past year and a half have culminated in this important legislation, which includes critical authorizations for farm programs and addresses vital nutrition, conservation, and economic development needs across the Nation.

This Conference Report makes great strides in the fight against hunger by providing an additional $10.4 billion for nutrition programs, which help 35 million low-income families. For the first time in 30 years, the legislation increases the minimum benefit under the Food Stamp Program, which keeps 26 million of our Nation's poorest individuals from going hungry, and indexes the benefit amount to inflation. The Conference Report also provides an additional $1.3 billion for the Emergency Food Assistance Program to provide food banks, soup kitchens, and other emergency feeding sites with much needed resources. The Conference Report also includes $50 million for 2008, which is available immediately to address food shortages at a number of food banks.

The Conference Report also contains a number of provisions that fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, particularly economic and infrastructure development, which I strongly support. The House-Senate agreement voted on today represents a major step forward in delivering critical economic and infrastructure development assistance to the most chronically poor and economically distressed regions of the country. The Conference Report reauthorizes two existing regional economic development commissions and establishes three new regional economic development commissions in economically distressed areas of the Nation.

Section 6026 of the Conference Report reauthorizes the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority through fiscal year 2012 and provides $30 million per year to fully establish this Commission and fulfill the mission Congress intended when it was first authorized in FY 2002. The counties eligible for assistance under the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority, including those in my district, will greatly benefit from the grant funds and planning provisions included in the Conference Report. Section 6025 reauthorizes the Delta Regional Authority, DRA, through FY 2012 at current funding levels of $30 million per year, and includes 12 additional Louisiana parishes and Mississippi counties in the DRA.

The Conference Report also authorizes three new commissions—the Northern Border Regional Commission, the Southeast Crescent Regional Commission, and the Southwest Border Regional Commission—through FY 2012, at an authorization level of $30 million per year for each Commission. I commend Congressman HODES, Congressman MICHAUD, Congresswoman SHEA-PORTER, and other Members representing the Northeast region of the United States for their strong support of regional economic development and for their persistence in bringing this important issue to the attention of Conferees on the farm bill.

These three Commissions are established under a unified administration and management structure as developed in the Regional Economic and Infrastructure Development Act of 2007 (H.R. 3246). We moved this bill expeditiously through the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to the House floor, where, on October 4, 2007, it passed by a strong vote of 264–154. These administrative and management procedures are modeled after the highly successful Appalachian Regional Commission, provide for a consistent method for distributing economic development funds, and ensure a comprehensive regional approach to address problems of systemic poverty in the Nation's most severely distressed areas.

The Conference Report on H.R. 2419 also makes a number of important improvements to conservation programs, including increasing investment in conservation programs that take environmentally sensitive land out of farming and encourage environmentally friendly practices on working farmland. Water conservation provisions under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure in the final legislation include the creation of a new Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program, which provides a commitment of resources from the Department of Agriculture to restore, improve, and protect water quality throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed; and reauthorization of the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act through 2012.

I am also pleased that the Conference Report includes a provision which I strongly support to assist small logging companies who are facing bankruptcy because they are not able to pay off their contracts on National Forest System land. The language contained in Section 8401 gives the Chief of the Forest Service the right to cancel or redetermine a qualified timber contract, and will help a number of small businesses who are suffering, particularly in light of the current housing downturn.

I am proud to lend my support to this important effort and commend Chairman PETERSON for his commitment and determination in getting this legislation to the President's desk.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to strongly support the Food and Energy Security Act of 2007 and I congratulate the Committee on providing a bill that includes needed and critical reforms that improve access to food and nutrition, provide more equitable access to research funding and renew America's commitment to conservation.

This bill correctly focuses on the people who need the most help. In fact, nearly three-quarters of the bill will be directed to nutrition programs that will assist 38 million American families afford healthy food. It updates that Food Stamp program and increases funding for food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens.

I am particularly encouraged that the bill increases agricultural research funding for Historically Black Colleges. This is important because minority institutions are usually left out when it comes to Federal research funding. As an example, I point to a Government Accountability Office study conducted in 2003 which indicated that 1890 Land Grant institutions received less than 2 percent of the competitive funding available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This bill represents a step in the right direction.

The bill also provides for mandatory funding of the 2501 Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Outreach Program. This should

help to slow the troubling trend of significant land loss by African American and other socially disadvantaged producers.

Additionally, the bill significantly boosts spending for conservation programs to reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water and air quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters.

Of particular interest to my home State of North Carolina, fruit and vegetable producers will have their own place in the Farm Bill for the first time. The bill includes more than $1.3 billion to support research, pest management, trade promotion and nutrition for the industry.

Also of interest to North Carolina, this bill takes another important step in moving biofuels beyond focusing on corn. It reduces the current tax credit for corn-based ethanol by 6 cents per gallon and creates a new tax credit to promote the production of cellulosic biofuels.

While the Farm Bill may not be perfect, the good far outweighs any shortcomings.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2419, the Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act of 2007, better known as the Farm Bill. This measure, which reauthorizes federal agriculture and nutrition programs for five years, reflects Rhode Island's priorities: protecting our farmers and surrounding environment and caring for the most vulnerable members of our society.

There has been much discussion about reforming the Farm Bill, particularly with regard to how payments are structured to producers of certain commodities like cotton, rice and sugar. H.R. 2419 begins this process by lowering the annual adjusted gross income of farmers eligible for subsidies from $2.5 million to $750,000 and also excludes farmers making more than $500,000 from non-farm income. This structure will prevent millionaires from receiving farm subsidy benefits, and will also make payments transparent. While I believe we should go further with reform, I look forward to building on this restructuring in future legislation.

This legislation increases funding by nearly $8 billion for the conservation title, which includes programs important to Rhode Island, such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program, and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program. I am also pleased that H.R. 2419 includes funding for specialty crops, which will benefit our fruit, vegetable and nursery crop farmers. These farmers, who make up a large percentage of Rhode Island's farming landscape, will now receive equal assistance and access to conservation programs.

H.R. 2419 includes over $10 billion in increased funding for the nutrition title, which includes food stamps and other programs aimed to combat hunger and improve nutrition for children, the elderly and low-income Americans. Unfortunately, these members of our society face a stigma when they realize they must turn to the government for assistance, and this Farm Bill works to end that by renaming the Food Stamp Program as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and replacing food stamp coupons with Electronic Benefit Transfer cards. This bill also reauthorizes programs such as the Community Food Projects program, which awards grants to nonprofit groups that establish community food projects targeted to low-income individuals, and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, which provides vouchers for low-income seniors to purchase fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets.

This measure also increases funding for school nutrition programs, including the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, which will help purchase fruits, vegetables and nuts, and create more avenues for produce to flow from local farmers to schools. This is especially important in Rhode Island, where state lawmakers and local organizations have already taken the initiative in improving the eating habits of our students. In 2007, 26 of 38 RI school districts participated in the Farm to School Program, where produce is purchased from local farms. This Farm Bill will help those school districts continue in a healthy direction.

H.R. 2419 also helps northeast dairy farmers, including those in Rhode Island, by extending the Milk Income Loss Contract Program, which compensates dairy producers when domestic milk prices fall below a certain level. Further, this measure encourages the expansion of renewable energy research and production, contains a new section for horticulture and organic agriculture, and includes funding to make sure our food supply is safe and stable.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a perfect bill; however, this Farm Bill helps farmers meet growing environmental challenges, gives consumers more healthy food choices, and promotes critical renewable energy development. It was also imperative that the Farm Bill take into consideration the country's current economic state. This bill will help stock food banks across our country by increasing funding to the Emergency Food Assistance Program by $1.26 billion. I look forward to passing this measure into law.

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to a Farm Bill Conference Report (H.R. 2419) that will continue our wasteful agricultural policy for another five years. It is a rare day indeed that I agree with President Bush, but he is absolutely right to have issued a veto threat of this bill.

With farm income and food prices at or near record highs, now is the perfect time for reform. Unfortunately, this conference report, while masquerading as a reform package, simply tinkers around the edges of our bloated agri-business subsidies. Our current "farm policy" is little more than corporate welfare, with benefits flowing to large corporate operations at the expense of small farmers, both here and abroad, who actually need help. Under current policy the top 10 percent of recipients received 75 percent of all subsidies, while 67 percent of farms receive nothing. This is not good for rural communities, small farms, or taxpayers.

At best, this conference report represents "half a loaf," as the group Bread for the World has said. The conferees got the nutrition title right and I commend them for it. There are important changes to the eligibility rules for the food stamps program as well as a raise in the minimum benefit. These changes, along with increases in funding for emergency food aid will have a real impact on the millions of families who are struggling to put food on their tables. If all this bill contained were the nutrition title, I would proudly support it. For all the conference accomplished on nutrition, they failed in greater measure on reforming farm subsidies.

Proponents of the conference report argue that it represents "reform." They can't be serious. Under this so-called reform, farmers filing jointly could have an adjusted gross income, AGI, of $2.5 million, or $1 million if their only source of income is farm-related and they could still receive subsidies. This amounts to cutting off only 0.3 percent of farmers from the dole. The report does nothing to means test countercyclical payments. Furthermore, the report creates an entirely new $4 billion permanent disaster program that is not only wasteful and redundant, but will also encourage pushing marginal and environmentally sensitive land into production. This is not reform.

Real reform would mean eliminating all subsidizes for corn-based ethanol, which have driven up food costs around the world. Real reform would mean ending direct payments except for farmers who actually need assistance. By passing this bill, Congress is missing a golden opportunity to enact real reform. We should not wait another five years to make our farm policy equitable and responsible. By rejecting the conference report we can begin the important work of enacting a fair Farm Bill. I urge all of my colleagues to vote no.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Conference Report on H.R. 2419, the Food and Energy Security Act of 2007.

With the U.S. economy faltering and food prices rising, this conference agreement takes critical steps to reduce hunger, ensure that healthy foods are included in federal nutrition programs, and meet the nutritional needs of many low-income Americans.

To help low-income families hit especially hard by high food prices, this legislation invests more than $7.8 billion in the food stamp program, now renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

This commitment will slow the erosion of food stamp benefits caused by increasing food prices, provide food assistance to recipients without requiring them to spend down their education savings accounts and retirement plan assets, and increase food assistance to households with high child care expenses.

The bill also invests $1.25 billion in commodity purchases for food banks, which will strengthen emergency food assistance programs' efforts to serve needy families.

Our nation is facing a growing child obesity epidemic—an issue that demands strong efforts to improve the quality and nutritional value of foods offered through school meal programs.

H.R. 2419 includes important provisions that will expand children's access to healthy foods during the school day, and that will help inform our efforts to reauthorize the nation's child nutrition programs next year.

I am also pleased that this report increases the volume of fresh fruits and vegetables available through federally-supported domestic nutrition programs, and, as part of that, invests more than one billion dollars in expanding the fruit and vegetable snack program.

Thanks to this significant investment, the snack program, targeted primarily to low- income children and to schools that disproportionately serve low-income families, will now provide thousands of students in every state with greater access to healthy foods.

This bill also supports local food systems and farm-to-school programs by encouraging child nutrition programs to use a geographic

preference when purchasing foods—allowing schools and other programs to select more nutritious agricultural products such as fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products, eggs and meat.

In addition, it will require the U.S. Department of Agriculture to conduct a national survey of the foods purchased by the school lunch programs.

Science and research overwhelmingly tell us that providing our children with healthy, nutritious foods from the earliest years on is one of the best things we can do to help our children succeed.

I am very pleased that all of the child nutrition provisions throughout this bill retain a focus on providing healthier foods and nutritional benefits as supported by scientific research.

When we last reauthorized the child nutrition programs in 2004, we required children in low-income households receiving food stamps to be automatically enrolled for free meals at school through a process known as ''direct certification.''

This simplification reduces work for school administrators, eliminates a duplicative application process for low-income families, and improves the accuracy of the school meal enrollment process.

We had hoped that school districts, states, and the USDA would do everything in their power to make sure that every eligible low-income child would benefit from this simplification. Unfortunately, the evidence to date indicates that the implementation of this provision has been inconsistent.

The USDA must act more aggressively to help states and school districts reach all children who could benefit from this coordination of efforts. This bill will ensure that we get information from USDA that will allow us to monitor this progress and promote best practices through their new annual reports on direct certification.

While this conference report contains many positive accomplishments, I am disappointed that it does not include a proposal from the House-passed bill that would ensure that public employees conduct eligibility determinations for food stamp benefits.

Without this proposal, the food stamp determination process will now be open to for-profit companies, many of which may be more focused on boosting efficiency and revenue than serving the best interests of vulnerable Americans.

The House provision would have re-established longstanding and productive public-private partnerships that help ensure that the right balance of private contractors and public employees are included in this process. It is frustrating that this was excluded from what is otherwise a very strong conference report.

By making the right investments to strengthen the quality of foods provided to our Nation's children, this bill is a down payment on a healthier future for this country.

I would especially like to thank Chairman PETERSON, Congressman GOODLATTE, and Senators HARKIN and CHAMBLISS for their hard work on this conference agreement.

The House Education and Labor Committee is committed to building on this effort to improve child nutrition in this country, and to ensure that the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast program, and the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children (WIC) are available to all eligible children and families.

I urge the passage of this bill.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Chairman PETERSON for working tirelessly over the past year and a half to craft this farm bill—legislation that may not be perfect, but which takes our Nation in a new direction in agriculture policy.

This farm bill makes important reforms in the commodity title, while continuing to provide a safety net for our small- and mid-sized farmers—farmers like those I represent in southern Maryland.

The bill tightens payment limits, eliminates loopholes that have been exploited to get around those limits, and makes payments transparent by requiring direct attribution to a single individual.

I am proud that this bill takes important steps to ensure that our children and those in need will have the resources they need to live healthy lives.

Its nutrition title includes more than $10 billion to better stock food banks and pantries, provide healthy snacks to schoolchildren, and reform the food stamp program by tying it to inflation.

It is important to note that this bill also makes record investments in conservation, renewable energy, and rural development, which will enable our producers to better protect our environment and bolster economic development in our rural communities.

I am particularly pleased that this legislation includes $438 million in direct assistance over the next 10 years to help our farmers in their ongoing efforts to be good stewards of the Chesapeake Bay.

While we have been able to make some strides in our efforts to restore this magnificent estuary, it is clear that there is much work to be done.

Recently, the University of Maryland Center for Environment Science issued a report card which rated the bay's health a C-minus.

Ironically, this slight improvement over the previous year was largely due to drought conditions that limited nutrient and sediment runoff into the bay.

The funds included in this farm bill will help farmers throughout the watershed control erosion and reduce sediment and nutrient levels. Their efforts will help enhance, restore, and conserve this ecologically significant habitat.

The legislation also directs the Secretary of Agriculture to give special consideration to producers in specific, targeted river watersheds, including those of the Potomac and the Patuxent.

Our concerted effort to restore these significant tributaries will go a long way to bolstering the health of the great body of water into which they all empty—the Chesapeake Bay.

Finally, I want to express my support for the Enhanced Use Lease Authority Pilot Program. This program seeks to create a national model at the National Agricultural Library and our Nation's flagship agricultural research facility—the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. This program will enable them to partner onsite with public and private facilities to enhance the mission of USDA–ARS and address much needed facilities upgrades in a timely and efficient fashion.

Again, I want to congratulate Chairman PETERSON on this bill—a farm bill that will be noted for putting America's agricultural policy on the right track and laying the foundation for more far reaching reforms in the future.

I urge my colleagues to join with me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, as a representative of rural Missouri, let me take this opportunity to share my support for the 2008 farm bill.

I commend Chairman PETERSON and Ranking Member GOODLATTE for producing a balanced and bipartisan bill that would bring a level of stability to commodity markets and ensure farmers throughout the United States can make long-term business decisions.

Important to farm families in the Show-Me State, the 2008 farm bill would extend the farm program safety net for producers while also reforming eligibility requirements and strengthening payment limitations for those who receive farm program payments. While I cannot overemphasize the importance of having a safety net in place to help farmers recoup some expenses associated with agricultural production and to ensure they are not put out of business if markets collapse, I am pleased that reforms were made to address some concerns of the administration and other farm program critics.

In addition to ensuring a strong safety net, the farm bill would make historic commitments to food security and nutrition, expand conservation, promote rural development, streamline agricultural research, and invest in renewable energy.

The farm bill would make essential commitments to the health of the American people and would help families in need by boosting nutrition funding by over $10 billion. In Missouri and elsewhere, food pantries are short of food and low-income Americans are having a difficult time affording groceries. The legislation would allocate resources to food banks, modernize the food stamp program, expand farmers' markets, extend food programs for low-income senior citizens and pregnant women, promote student health, and fight obesity.

The farm bill would expand popular conservation programs designed to preserve farmland, improve water quality, and enhance soil conservation, air quality, and wildlife habitat. In Missouri, the Conservation Reserve Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, and the Wetlands Reserve Program, among others, have allowed farmers to more easily address conservation problems and comply with expensive, but important, environmental regulations.

By expanding USDA rural development loans and grants, the farm bill would foster critical investments in small town America. The measure would improve rural Internet broadband access, expand first responder and emergency medical services in rural areas, and authorize grants for weather radio transmitters to alert rural citizens about coming storms. It would also provide grants for drinking water and wastewater improvements, foster rural small business development, and provide for greater value-added loans and grants for small farmers.

With respect to research and development, the farm bill would create a National Institute of Food and Agriculture within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA, to maximize coordination throughout USDA's research

agencies. The bill would also create the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative to stimulate business development and access to capital in rural America and create the Energy Research Program to improve research on the production and sustainability of biofuels, like ethanol and biodiesel. Additionally, the bill would address concerns raised by livestock producers and others regarding the high cost of corn by slightly reducing the corn ethanol producers' tax credit and creating a subsidy to accelerate commercialization of advanced biofuels, like cellulosic ethanol.

Also important to Missourians, the farm bill would continue price supports for dairy farmers and increase funding for fruit and vegetable producers. It also contains the first-ever Livestock Title, which would increase market access for small, state-inspected meat processing plants, better protect producers who have contracts with livestock firms, and better enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act. Additionally, the legislation would require that all meat sold to American consumers have a country-of-origin label. But, importantly, this labeling agreement represents a compromise that would simplify record keeping and other requirements associated with the law.

The farm bill would also prohibit the closure or relocation of county Farm Service Agency offices for 2 years, would encourage additional funding directed to Historically Black Colleges, like Lincoln University in Jefferson City, and would establish an Office of Homeland Security within USDA to better protect our Nation from terrorist attacks aimed at America's agricultural sector.

The people of Missouri and Americans from all walks of life do well by the 2008 farm bill. I am pleased to lend my support to it and hope it will pass the House with broad, bipartisan support. I further hope that the President of the United States will reconsider his threat to veto the farm bill, which would be a disservice to rural Americans and to low-income citizens of our Nation who would benefit from the bill's commitment to food security.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the nutrition title of the pending conference report. It includes many urgently needed improvements to our food assistance programs for low-income people.

As a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, I am particularly pleased to see this title includes language to correct a couple of problems that have arisen relating to the enforceability of the act and to ensure that no further problems exist.

The Food Stamp Act has long been recognized as fully enforceable on behalf of active and prospective participants. This history of enforceability is comparable to that of securities regulations, which the courts have long accepted. When, many years ago, a panel of the Fifth Circuit found no private right of action under the Food Stamp Act in a case brought by a pro se plaintiff, several other circuits, and ultimately the Fifth Circuit en banc, rejected that conclusion. Had they not done so, I have no doubt we would have intervened.

Recently, a couple of Federal courts cast doubt on this long-held principle, one by finding the Department's regulations on bilingual service unenforceable and another by forcing plaintiffs to meet the high standards for supervisory liability when suing a State to enforce the act and regulations against local agencies. I am pleased that this legislation overrules both of those decisions.

More broadly, the legislation recognizes that lawsuits by individual households or classes of household to enforce their rights under the act and regulations are an important part of the program. There now should be no doubt, if there ever was any, that all provisions of the act and regulations that help individuals get food assistance, or that protect them from burdens in their pursuit of food aid, are intended to create enforceable rights, with corrective injunctions or back benefits, the latter subject to the limitations in the act, as appropriate.

The act does not require States or the Department only to exercise reasonable efforts or to substantially comply with its requirements and those in the regulations: it gives each individual a right to be treated as the act and rules provide. The act and regulations have an unmistakable focus on the benefited class of participants and prospective participants, they are written in mandatory, not precatory terms, and they are concerned with the treatment of individuals as much as they are with aggregate or system-wide performance.

I cannot imagine how Congress could be any clearer in this regard. I anticipate that we will have no further confusion concerning the enforceability of the act and regulations.

Mr. BACHUS. Mr. Speaker, because I believe that this legislation represents a missed opportunity to modernize the regulation of our Nation's futures and securities markets, I am unable to sign this conference report.

Section 13106 of the conference report directs the members of the President's Working Group on Financial Markets, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, the Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, SEC, and the Chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, CFTC, to work to ensure that by September 30, 2009, the SEC and CFTC take action under their existing authorities to permit risk-based portfolio margining for security options and security futures products. Depending on when this bill is approved and signed into law, the agencies would have roughly 16 months to achieve this directive. Because the SEC and CFTC have a fundamental disagreement over how to proceed, there is no guarantee that a legislative directive to reconcile their differences will yield a breakthrough in what has become a longstanding turf battle between the two agencies over this issue.

Chairman FRANK, Mr. KANJORSKI and I proffered a solution to this regulatory impasse during conference that would create a clear pathway the agencies must follow in order to realize a state-of-the-art portfolio-based margining system for customers of broker-dealers. Our targeted amendment to the Securities Investor Protection Act, SIPA, would extend Securities Investor Protection Corporation, SIPC, insurance to futures positions held in a portfolio margining account under an SEC-approved program, thereby significantly advancing the goal of risk-based portfolio margining.

Our amendment is consistent with recent recommendations by the Treasury Department in its Blueprint for a Modernized Financial Regulatory Structure, which found that "the realities of the current marketplace have significantly diminished the original reason for the regulatory bifurcation between the futures and securities markets." As Treasury has recognized, there are many policy issues—portfolio margining included—where a lack of action has placed U.S. markets at a competitive disadvantage to other markets that do not draw the same artificial distinctions between securities and futures products.

Portfolio margining recognizes the risk-reducing effects of offsetting or hedged positions in calculating customer margin. Thus, a portfolio margin system should align a customer's total margin requirement, the amount of money they have to put up in order to fund their investment positions, with the actual risk the customer is taking.

Today, the portfolio margin rules already allow futures positions on broad-based securities indexes such as the S&P 500 to be used to hedge offsetting securities positions such as options and exchange traded funds on the same index. There is uncertainty about how these existing portfolio margin rules fit within the regime that protects investors in the event of the liquidation of their broker-dealer. SIPA governs such liquidations, which specifically excludes futures from the definition of a "security." Single stock securities futures are not excluded as they are both futures and securities.

Consequently, if a broker-dealer carrying portfolio margin accounts failed, its customers' net equity claims would not include the value of futures positions in a portfolio margin account. This could result in situations where gains in the futures positions are not allowed to offset losses in the securities positions, thereby reducing the protection the customer would be entitled to under SIPA. It also would create severe operational challenges as the customers' futures positions would need to be unwound separately from the offsetting securities positions.

Some have argued that the Financial Services Committee's approach to solving this problem would somehow prejudice the so-called "one-pot/two-pot" debate over whether futures should be allowed to be kept in a securities account. It does not. Allowing futures into a securities account would still require action by the CFTC. Our language would simply provide uniform investor protection in the event of a liquidation of a broker-dealer with portfolio margin accounts for whatever assets are in the securities account.

I am disappointed that the CFTC and the Agriculture Committee rejected the Financial Services Committee's proposal, the adoption of which would enhance the competitiveness of the U.S. markets and streamline financial services regulation. While I will not be able to sign a conference report that does not incorporate our language, I will continue to work with Mr. KANJORSKI and other members of the Financial Services Committee to eliminate inefficiencies and redundancies in our current financial regulatory regime that place U.S. firms at a competitive disadvantage internationally.

Mr. HALL of New York. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and congratulate him on successfully bringing this conference report to the floor after many months of hard work and committed effort. I also thank him for his prior support for inclusion of a muck soils conservation program to address serious challenges being faced by the farmers in my district and throughout the country. Although such language was included in the version of this bill passed by the House, it was unfortunately not able to survive the conference negotiations.

Currently available conservation programs have shown that they do not specifically address the needs of farmers who produce crops

on muck soil. The existing Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, CREP, seeks to prevent erosion and protect water quality through a voluntary retirement program. In areas like the Hudson Valley, this has created unintended consequences including the full retirement of productive soil and inflationary pressures on rental rates.

The program included in section 2303 of the House version of the bill, which would have sought to meet conservation goals with practices that would also keep these lands active and address local rent pressures, will not become law as part of this bill, but the needs it was meant to address remain. Similarly, efforts to make changes in future CREP contracts at the administrative level will not address the rent inflation that has been created in places like Orange County, NY, by contracts that are in place today and will have standing for several years.

The issues of unintended land retirement and rent inflation are ongoing challenges for farmers in my district, who as farmers in the Northeast, growers of specialty crops, and producers of muck land crops have been thrice underserved by previous farm bills.

The chairman has been extraordinarily understanding and supportive of efforts to address these challenges. Again, I thank him for his efforts and ask if he would be willing to continue our work on this issue and to work with USDA on solutions that will meet the conservation goals of farmers on muck soils and address the unintended economic consequences of existing programs.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to oppose H.R. 2419, a $289 billion bill which will subsidize wealthy farmers and agribusiness, increase welfare benefits, violate pay-go rules, and will not dent our current energy needs, all paid for by the American taxpayer.

Folks, this country is facing an impending entitlement crisis. In the next few years millions of baby boomers will begin to retire and begin collecting Social Security and Medicare benefits. However, the Congressional Budget Office projects that Social Security will begin to pay out more in benefits than it takes in payroll taxes by 2020, and Medicare spending, that is already 13 percent of our Nations budget, will double over the next 10 years. Yet, this Democrat lead Congress sees fit to grant farm subsidies to farmers who are making up to $2.5 million in income per year.

As crop prices soar, American farm incomes are achieving record highs. Since enactment of the last farm bill in 2002, key crop prices have grown as much as 281 percent, and total farm income has more than doubled. More and more farmers are now multimillionaires. With $20 billion in increased spending, this bill irresponsibly wastes taxpayer dollars by subsidizing an industry whose profits are soaring. The evidence is clear; the Department of Agriculture estimates that the 2007 farm income was $87.5 billion, which totals a 48 percent increase from the previous year's level of $59 billion.

The search for alternative energy sources is vital to our country's national and economic security. However, this farm bill will extend tax and tariff subsidies for ethanol, while keeping in place the Federal ethanol mandate. This has directly resulted in the price of a bushel of corn in this country to triple and has failed to ease our energy crisis. The ethanol mandate to produce alternative energy has pushed up the prices not only of corn, but also of crops such as soybeans that have been abandoned by many farmers during this current corn-planting bonanza. Despite these steep price increases, large subsidies for these crops will continue under this wasteful bill and rising food costs will continue to be thrown upon our citizens.

I support our country's farmers and agree that a Federal farm program should be in place to alleviate farming poverty. However, with crop prices rising to record-breaking levels, and farm incomes doubling over the past 7 years, I cannot support a bill that seeks to subsidize multimillionaire farmers on the backs of tax paying Americans.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, section 12017 of H.R. 2419, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, amends the Federal Crop Insurance Act. Among other things, the changes provide that, during periodic renegotiations with USDA's Federal Crop Insurance Corporation regarding the standard reinsurance agreement for the FCIC's crop insurance program, approved insurance companies may consult with each other, and collectively with the FCIC.

As chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I would like to provide a bit of background, and to sound a cautionary note.

For a number of years, insurance companies participating in providing reinsurance to the FCIC—that is, providing back-up insurance to the insurance being provided by the FCIC—did indeed consult with each other, and collectively with the FCIC. This occurred most recently in the 1997 renegotiation. In fact, the insurers apparently used a common agent to negotiate the terms of the agreement on their behalf.

I understand that that experience may have led USDA's Risk Management Administration, which runs the FCIC, to begin reconsidering whether joint discussions were a good idea from a competitive standpoint, in achieving the best result with the taxpayers' dollars that the FCIC was spending in the reinsurance marketplace. In any event, the RMA evidently discussed the matter at some length with the Justice Department's Antitrust Division, and came away with the clear conviction that joint negotiations are anticompetitive—as experience under the antitrust laws confirms time and time again.

As a result of its new understanding, the RMA restricted the kinds of collaborative consultations it would permit during the 2004 renegotiation.

Some may believe that the RMA either went further than it needed to in 2004, or that it may go further in future renegotiations, prohibiting consultation even on aspects of the renegotiation that not only are not competitively sensitive, but where the antitrust laws recognize that cost-saving efficiencies can be gained without harm to competition. To the extent that that has been a concern, the new language being added to the Federal Crop Insurance Act may help clear the way for that kind of competitively benign consultation.

I wish to emphasize, however, that the new language does not create an antitrust exemption, or alter the antitrust laws in any way. The Supreme Court has aptly referred to the antitrust laws as the Magna Carta of our free enterprise system, and has said repeatedly that exceptions to those laws are not to be lightly inferred. Therefore, any insurer wishing to engage in consultations pursuant to this new authorization should be careful to do so in compliance with the antitrust laws.

Some observers have raised the question whether some of the conduct that could be at issue here might be covered under the McCarran-Ferguson Act's antitrust exemption for the business of insurance, to the extent that such business is regulated by State law. It is far from clear, however, that reinsurance being provided to the USDA's FCIC for its federally administered crop insurance program is in fact regulated by State law. And even if it were, the McCarran-Ferguson Act does not apply to the antitrust prohibitions against boycott, which can all-too-easily be implicated when competing firms start coordinating their negotiation-related activities and strategies. These are serious violations of the law, and those who would seek to avoid the pitfalls here would be well advised to seek appropriate antitrust guidance.

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I have sponsored legislation to allow farmers who grow fruit and vegetables for processing to opt out of farm programs on an acre for acre basis without limitation. That legislation would reduce farm program costs and improve the environment by allowing more extensive crop rotations. I am very pleased that the conference report takes a step toward that proposal by establishing a pilot project to allocate 75,000 acres of new authority for production of fruit and vegetables for processing in specified Midwestern states. USDA has broad discretion in administration of this pilot project to meet the objectives of the pilot project. The conference report does not specify a procedure for allocation of the pilot project acreage or other administrative matters, such as reallocation of unused acreage allocations among States. However, USDA is clearly required to establish rules to assure that this additional fruit and vegetable production authority will not be abused. Only fruit and vegetables under contract for processing are to be produced under this authority. USDA is to assure that all of the crop produced is delivered to a processor and that the quantity of crop delivered under the original contract, the contract in existence upon Farm Service Agency certification, does not exceed the quantity that is produced on the contracted acreage. Further, the effects of the pilot project and FAV restrictions on the specialty crop industry, both fresh and processed, are to be evaluated. These restrictions are intended to ensure protection of the objectives of the pilot project, not to compel food waste or excessive regulatory burden. Further, the conference report includes an important statement of policy indicating that in the next recalculation of base acreage, fruit and vegetable production will not cause a reduction in farmer's base acreage. While this is a timid step in reducing restrictions on production of fruits and vegetables, I commend this step in the right direction.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 2419, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.

Mr. Speaker I must state from the beginning—I have never been a strong supporter of the previous farm bills that we have considered.

I and many of my constituents have long believed that the Federal Government wastes far too much taxpayer money on subsidizing farmers and farm programs.

While it is true that many small scale farmers should be protected during cyclical downturns, far too much Federal funding is spent subsidizing large scale agribusiness and wealthy farmers who don't need our support.

That being said, I appreciate the efforts of the committee to address some of the unnecessary spending in this bill. However I had hoped they would have gone further to reform farm bill programs.

The reason I am able to support the conference report is because it does include a very robust nutrition title that provides $10.361 billion in funding which will support 38 million families to purchase healthy foods.

Among the key nutrition items included in the bill:

The food stamp program is modernized to help an additional 11 million people by 2012.

The Emergency Food Assistance program is expanded and indexed for inflation to help support food banks, soup kitchens and homeless shelters.

The bill also provides $1 billion to help schools provide free fruits and vegetables to schoolchildren.

These and other improvements to nutrition programs in the farm bill will provide much needed funding to groups like the Alameda County Community Food Bank and the Berkeley Food and Housing Project in my district.

The conference report is also supported by a number of organizations, including the California Association of Food Banks, California Food Policy Advocates, California School Employees Association, National Council of Jewish Women, Congressional Hunger Center, AARP, ACORN, Families USA, National Association of Social Workers, National Association of Counties, and the Center for Law and Social Policy.

Mr. Speaker, despite my concerns about continuing unnecessary subsidies, I believe the robust nutrition title in the conference report deserves our support.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1189, the previous question is ordered on the conference report.

MOTION TO RECOMMIT OFFERED BY MR. CANTOR

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to recommit at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is the gentleman opposed to the conference report?

Mr. CANTOR. I am in its current form.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the motion to recommit.

The Clerk read as follows:

Mr. Cantor moves to recommit the conference report to accompany the bill H.R. 2419, to provide for the continuation of agricultural programs through fiscal year 2012, and for other purposes, to the committee on conference of the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the Senate amendment to strike (1) section 8303, relating to the sale and exchange of National Forest System land, Vermont, (2) section 12034, relating to fisheries disaster assistance, and (3) section 15316, relating to qualified forestry conservation bonds.

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, I think Congress should act to reform the earmark process.

That's why I have introduced H.R. 595, the Stimulating Leadership in Limiting Expenditures (or 'SLICE') Act, which would provide the president with a constitutionally-sound version of a line-item veto that could be used to force Congress to vote separately on any specific spending earmark.

That's why I am a cosponsor of legislation (H. Res. 727) to put a moratorium on considering any bill with any congressional earmarks until a bipartisan panel has been set up and made recommendations for that reform.

And that's why I am also cosponsoring the Earmark Transparency and Accountability Act (H.R. 631) which would require any earmark, to be effective, to be included in a bill's text—not just in a committee report—so it would be subject to amendment.

But I cannot support this motion to recommit.

If we were considering this legislation for the first time, it might make sense to consider sending it back to the Agriculture Committee for revisions.

But we first considered this bill a year ago. Since then, the Senate has also acted and the differences between their version and the one we passed last year have been resolved by a committee of conferees appointed for that sole purpose.

That purpose was fulfilled when the conferees filed their report, and at that point the conference committee ceased to exist.

So, this motion would not really send the conference report back for more work—it would send it into oblivion.

And while I know the conference report has flaws, I think they are not so great as to require us to in effect tear it up completely.

So I urge rejection of this motion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to recommit.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to recommit.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 and clause 9 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on the motion to recommit will be followed by 5-minute votes on adoption of the conference report, and motion to suspend the rules on House Resolution 1133.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 193, nays 230, not voting 11, as follows:

[Roll No. 314]

YEAS—193

Aderholt
Akin
Alexander
Bachmann
Bachus
Barrett (SC)
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Bean
Biggert
Bilbray
Bilirakis
Bishop (UT)
Blackburn
Blunt
Boehner
Bonner
Boozman
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Broun (GA)
Brown (SC)
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Buyer
Calvert
Camp (MI)
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capito
Carter
Castle
Chabot
Coble
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Cooper
Cubin
Culberson
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Doggett
Drake
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Emerson
English (PA)
Everett
Fallin
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Forbes
Fortenberry
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Gallegly
Garrett (NJ)
Gingrey
Gohmert
Goode
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves
Hall (TX)
Hastings (WA)
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Herger
Hobson
Hoekstra
Hulshof
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Issa
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, Sam
Jones (NC)
Jordan
Keller
Kind
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kirk
Kline (MN)
Knollenberg
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lamborn
Lampson
Latham
LaTourette
Latta
Lewis (CA)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lucas
Lungren, Daniel E.
Manzullo
Marchant
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul (TX)
McCotter
McCrery
McHenry
McHugh
McKeon
McMorris Rodgers
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller (MI)
Miller, Gary
Mitchell
Moran (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy, Tim
Musgrave
Neugebauer
Nunes
Paul
Pearce
Pence
Peterson (PA)
Petri
Pitts
Platts
Poe
Porter
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Putnam
Radanovich
Ramstad
Regula
Reichert
Renzi
Reynolds
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rohrabacher
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Sali
Saxton
Scalise
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Souder
Stark
Stearns
Sullivan
Tancredo
Thornberry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Turner
Upton
Walberg
Walsh (NY)
Wamp
Weldon (FL)
Westmoreland
Whitfield (KY)
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wittman (VA)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NAYS—230

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Blumenauer
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Braley (IA)
Brown, Corrine
Butterfield
Capps
Capuano
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Castor
Cazayoux
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Cohen
Conyers
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Crowley
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Dicks
Dingell
Donnelly
Doolittle
Doyle
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Engel
Eshoo
Etheridge
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Foster
Frank (MA)
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gonzalez
Gordon
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hare
Harman
Hastings (FL)
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Inslee
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
Klein (FL)
Kucinich
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Markey
Marshall
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCollum (MN)
McDermott
McGovern
McIntyre
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moore (WI)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murtha
Nadler

Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Pomeroy
Price (NC)
Rahall
Rangel
Rehberg
Reyes
Richardson
Rodriguez
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shuler
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Snyder
Solis
Space
Speier
Spratt
Stupak
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Tierney
Towns
Tsongas
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walden (OR)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Waxman
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Wilson (OH)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (AK)

NOT VOTING—11

Bono Mack
Cramer
Crenshaw
Gerlach
Lewis (KY)
Mack
Myrick
Pickering
Rush
Schmidt
Weller

□ 1601

Messrs. PALLONE, HOYER, BERRY, FARR, FOSTER, HODES and LARSON of Connecticut changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Messrs. WELDON of Florida, BACHUS, MORAN of Virginia, BURGESS and TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania changed their vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the motion to recommit was rejected.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the conference report.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

RECORDED VOTE

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I demand a recorded vote.

A recorded vote was ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Thisa will be a 5-minute vote.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—ayes 318, noes 106, not voting 10, as follows:

[Roll No. 315]

AYES—318

Abercrombie
Ackerman
Aderholt
Alexander
Allen
Altmire
Andrews
Arcuri
Baca
Bachus
Baird
Baldwin
Barrow
Bartlett (MD)
Barton (TX)
Becerra
Berkley
Berman
Berry
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Blunt
Bonner
Boozman
Boren
Boswell
Boucher
Boustany
Boyd (FL)
Boyda (KS)
Brady (PA)
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Brown (SC)
Brown, Corrine
Brown-Waite, Ginny
Buchanan
Butterfield
Buyer
Camp (MI)
Capito
Capps
Cardoza
Carnahan
Carney
Carson
Carter
Castor
Cazayoux
Chandler
Clarke
Clay
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cohen
Cole (OK)
Conaway
Conyers
Costa
Costello
Courtney
Crowley
Cubin
Cuellar
Cummings
Davis (AL)
Davis (CA)
Davis (IL)
Davis (KY)
Davis, David
Davis, Lincoln
DeFazio
DeGette
Delahunt
DeLauro
Diaz-Balart, L.
Diaz-Balart, M.
Dicks
Dingell
Doggett
Donnelly
Doolittle
Doyle
Drake
Edwards
Ellison
Ellsworth
Emanuel
Emerson
Engel
English (PA)
Eshoo
Etheridge
Everett
Fallin
Farr
Fattah
Filner
Forbes
Fortenberry
Foster
Frank (MA)
Gallegly
Giffords
Gilchrest
Gillibrand
Gingrey
Gohmert
Gonzalez
Goodlatte
Gordon
Graves
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutierrez
Hall (NY)
Hall (TX)
Hare
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Herger
Herseth Sandlin
Higgins
Hill
Hinchey
Hinojosa
Hirono
Hodes
Hoekstra
Holden
Holt
Honda
Hooley
Hoyer
Hulshof
Israel
Jackson (IL)
Jackson-Lee (TX)
Jefferson
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (IL)
Johnson, E. B.
Jones (NC)
Jones (OH)
Kagen
Kanjorski
Kaptur
Kennedy
Kildee
Kilpatrick
King (IA)
Kingston
Klein (FL)
Kline (MN)
Kuhl (NY)
LaHood
Lampson
Langevin
Larsen (WA)
Larson (CT)
Latham
LaTourette
Latta
Lee
Levin
Lewis (GA)
Lipinski
Loebsack
Lofgren, Zoe
Lowey
Lucas
Lynch
Mahoney (FL)
Maloney (NY)
Manzullo
Marchant
Markey
Marshall
Matsui
McCarthy (NY)
McCaul (TX)
McCollum (MN)
McCotter
McGovern
McHugh
McIntyre
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
McNulty
Meek (FL)
Meeks (NY)
Melancon
Michaud
Miller (MI)
Miller (NC)
Miller, George
Mollohan
Moore (KS)
Moran (VA)
Murphy (CT)
Murphy, Patrick
Murphy, Tim
Murtha
Musgrave
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal (MA)
Neugebauer
Oberstar
Obey
Olver
Ortiz
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor
Payne
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peterson (MN)
Peterson (PA)
Pickering
Platts
Poe
Pomeroy
Porter
Price (NC)
Putnam
Radanovich
Rahall
Rangel
Regula
Rehberg
Renzi
Reyes
Reynolds
Richardson
Rodriguez
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Ros-Lehtinen
Ross
Rothman
Roybal-Allard
Ruppersberger
Ryan (OH)
Salazar
Sali
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sarbanes
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schwartz
Scott (GA)
Scott (VA)
Serrano
Sestak
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuler
Shuster
Simpson
Sires
Skelton
Slaughter
Smith (NE)
Smith (TX)
Snyder
Solis
Souder
Space
Speier
Spratt
Stupak
Sullivan
Sutton
Tanner
Tauscher
Taylor
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thornberry
Tierney
Towns
Tsongas
Turner
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Upton
Van Hollen
Velázquez
Visclosky
Walberg
Walden (OR)
Walsh (NY)
Walz (MN)
Wasserman Schultz
Waters
Watson
Watt
Weiner
Welch (VT)
Wexler
Whitfield (KY)
Wilson (OH)
Wittman (VA)
Woolsey
Wu
Wynn
Yarmuth
Young (AK)

NOES—106

Akin
Bachmann
Barrett (SC)
Bean
Biggert
Bilbray
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Boehner
Broun (GA)
Burgess
Burton (IN)
Calvert
Campbell (CA)
Cannon
Cantor
Capuano
Castle
Chabot
Cooper
Culberson
Davis, Tom
Deal (GA)
Dent
Dreier
Duncan
Ehlers
Feeney
Ferguson
Flake
Fossella
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Garrett (NJ)
Goode
Granger
Harman
Hayes
Heller
Hensarling
Hobson
Hunter
Inglis (SC)
Inslee
Issa
Johnson, Sam
Jordan
Keller
Kind
King (NY)
Kirk
Knollenberg
Kucinich
Lamborn
Lewis (CA)
Linder
LoBiondo
Lungren, Daniel E.
Matheson
McCarthy (CA)
McCrery
McDermott
McHenry
McKeon
Mica
Miller (FL)
Miller, Gary
Mitchell
Moore (WI)
Moran (KS)
Nunes
Paul
Pence
Petri
Pitts
Price (GA)
Pryce (OH)
Ramstad
Reichert
Rohrabacher
Roskam
Royce
Ryan (WI)
Saxton
Scalise
Sensenbrenner
Sessions
Shadegg
Shays
Smith (NJ)
Smith (WA)
Stark
Stearns
Tancredo
Terry
Tiahrt
Tiberi
Wamp
Waxman
Weldon (FL)
Westmoreland
Wilson (NM)
Wilson (SC)
Wolf
Young (FL)

NOT VOTING—10

Bono Mack
Cramer
Crenshaw
Gerlach
Lewis (KY)
Mack
Myrick
Rush
Schmidt
Weller

□ 1607

So the conference report was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PETERSON of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2419.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Minnesota?

There was no objection.

CONGRESSIONAL SHOOTOUT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. RYAN) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the event conducted by the bipartisan Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, last year the Democrats won the Congressional Shootout, the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus trophy, between sporting clays, trap and skeet, and the Democrats thought that there was a realignment occurring in Congress, in America. They thought they were on a good run for a long time.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to say this year that the Republicans reclaimed the trophy and won the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus Shootout this year. The realignment was very short-lived.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, I would like to, on behalf of my co-chairman Mr. KIND from Wisconsin; the vice chairmen, Mr. PEARCE from New Mexico and Mr. BOREN from Oklahoma, I would like to give particular note to the people who really shot straight yesterday.