of this Act (other than this section) that is not required to be appropriated or otherwise made available by a provision of law is reduced by the uniform percentage necessary to reduce the total amounts appropriated for such programs, projects, or activities by $20,000,000.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, let me thank my colleague, Senator FEINGOLD from Wisconsin, who was here before but graciously allowed me to go ahead to introduce this amendment.

Also, having come to the floor earlier today and not only commended Chairman BOND and ranking member MIKULSKI for their valiant efforts to reach priorities in very limited financial circumstances, I will announce up front I am going to propose this amendment which would increase lead funding as a means to talk about the issue, but I will withdraw the amendment in recognition of not only the serious efforts the chairman and ranking member have made, but also in recognition that last year when I came to the floor, both Senator BOND and Senator MIKULSKI were instrumental in increasing the appropriation by $20 million and, indeed, holding that appropriation at conference. So I am very confident, with their efforts, they will continue to work hard to make sure this remains a critical priority.

The problem of lead exposure to children in the United States is something that I believe is critical, one that we must address. I have been supported in that opinion by many of my colleagues.

Earlier this year, 14 of my colleagues joined me in a letter urging the chairman and the ranking member to do all they can to increase appropriations for lead abatement in this appropriations bill. Those colleagues include Senators JEFFORDS, SPECTER, LEAHY, LAUTENBERG, CHAFEE—my colleague from Rhode Island—SCHUMER, DODD, LIEBERMAN, KERRY, BOXER, KOHL, SNOWE, TORRICELLI, and DURBIN. All of them from across this country recognize the critical need to eliminate lead exposure, particularly with respect to children.

But there are two of my colleagues who deserve particular praise. Senator COLLINS and Senator TORRICELLI are cosponsors of this amendment. Senator COLLINS has been a strong and very effective advocate for this program of lead abatement.

I was pleased to join her in Providence, RI, several weeks ago for a hearing of the Public Health Subcommittee, where we looked at lead paint exposure to children in Rhode Island. It was a very good hearing. I am pleased to say I will be able to join Senator COLLINS in Maine in a few weeks to have a similar hearing.

Senator TORRICELLI and myself have been very active not only with respect to this issue but also with respect to the issue of appropriate screening and treatment for children who have elevated levels of lead in their blood systems.

I admit that over the last 20 years we have made significant progress in our society with respect to exposure to lead principally because we have banned lead paint, we have banned lead solder in food cans, and we have deleaded gasoline. This has resulted in significant reductions.

But, nevertheless, nearly a million children enter kindergarten each year with elevated levels of lead in their blood. This is a preventable problem. This is a problem, if it is not prevented, that causes serious cognitive development problems with children. This is also a problem that is not exclusive to one part of the country.

In fact, if you look at cities across the country, you will see there are elevated blood lead levels in children.

In Baltimore, for example, there is a lead poisoning rate of 27.9 percent. Almost 30 percent of the children who are tested have elevated lead levels. In Milwaukee, 22.5 percent; St. Louis, 23 percent; Chicago, 20.6 percent; Philadelphia, 38 percent; and Memphis, 12.1 percent. This is a nationwide problem. The major cause of this exposure is lead paint in the homes of these children.

Indeed, children who are in low-income circumstances, particularly children who are living in housing that was constructed before 1974, are significantly vulnerable to lead exposure and lead poisoning.

More than half the U.S. housing stock was built prior to 1978, so as a result we have thousands and thousands of units that still contain lead paint which is the source of contamination for these young children.

In fact, it has been estimated that 20 million housing units throughout the United States contain hazardous levels of lead paint.

In my home State of Rhode Island, it is estimated that about 90,000 units present moderate to high lead paint exposure risks to children who live there.

This is a very difficult and expensive problem to deal with. It has been estimated that to modify and to remediate all these homes in my own home State, it would cost about $300 million. To deal with every seriously contaminated residential unit in the United States would cost something on the order of $500 billion. But those costs also must be measured against the cost of doing nothing, the cost of allowing children to be exposed to lead paint, and those costs are dramatic and severe.

Many educators point to lead paint exposure as one of the reasons why special education costs are so high. In fact, it has been estimated that children with elevated levels of lead in their blood are seven times more likely to drop out of school before finishing high school. These costs are significant and severe. I think we have the obligation to try to remedy this problem before these children are exposed, before their academic, intellectual, and emotional development is impaired by exposure to lead.

Since 1992, the Office of Lead Hazard Control in HUD has been dealing with this issue, principally through their Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control Grant Program. They have been able, since 1993, to provide $435 million to the States—31 States and the District of Columbia—to deal with this issue.

These States have used the money for testing young people for exposure, inspecting and testing homes, modifying homes; in fact, to even relocate children who are exposed and the home cannot be modified.

I have seen the results in Rhode Island.

Since 1993, in Rhode Island, we have been able to perform lead abatement in more than 500 homes. But it costs money, the kind of resources that we need to incorporate in this bill, the kind of resources that are necessary to address a problem that spans this Nation.

My amendment would propose an increase of $20 million for the Office of Lead Hazard Control. It would be offset by an across-the-board cut in salaries, expenses, and other program management budget items in the HUD budget.

AMENDMENT NO. 1778, WITHDRAWN

Recognizing the severe constraints that the chairman and the ranking member are laboring under, recognizing the fact they are already demonstrating a commitment to provide for these resources, I withdraw this amendment in the hopes that as we go to conference, under the leadership of Senator BOND and Senator MIKULSKI, we can find additional resources to address this extremely important and critical issue that affects the health and welfare of our children.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment is withdrawn.

Mr. REED. I again thank the chairman and the ranking member and yield the floor.

Mr. FEINGOLD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

FEDERAL DAIRY POLICY

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss possible legislation that would devastate family dairy farmers throughout the Upper Midwest.

I understand that the Agriculture appropriations conference committee may report a bill that contains poison pill dairy amendment that threaten the livelihood of dairy farmers throughout the United States.

I call them poison pills because they threaten to scuttle the entire Agriculture appropriations bill.

It is my duty to my constituents as a Senator from the great dairy State of Wisconsin to make my colleagues aware of these possible actions, and

their insidious effects on America's dairy industry, and the effect they may have on our ability to move legislation in these waning days of the 104th Congress.

Our current system is hopelessly out-of-date, and completely out-of-touch with reality. Fortunately for our farmers—and I am grateful for this—the USDA has proposed a rule that would begin to modernize our antiquated system.

According to the Secretary of Agriculture, the new system ''more accurately reflects the current market condition, is fairer to farmers and consumers alike, modernizes and reforms an antiquated system sorely in need of streamlining and revision.''

In fact, according to the USDA, dairy farmers would have earned 87 cents per hundredweight more for Class I milk under USDA's reforms than under the current system.

For 60 years, America's dairy policy has both imposed higher costs on taxpayers and consumers, and at the same time destroyed tens of thousands of family farms.

This destructive policy has to go. We need to restore equality to milk pricing, stop regional bickering, and work to ensure that all of our Nation's dairy farmers get a fair price for their milk. My message is simple: our Federal dairy policy is hopelessly out of date, fundamentally unfair, and in dire need of reform.

Congress created the current Federal dairy policy 60 years ago when the upper Midwest was seen as the primary producer of fluid milk. During the Great Depression, many worried that consumers in other parts of the country, including young children, did not have access to fresh milk because of inadequate refrigeration and transportation technology.

To address these concerns, Congress at that time set up the so-called Eau Claire system, under which producers were reimbursed according to their distance from the small town—I shouldn't say small town; it is a pretty good-size town for Wisconsin—the great town of Eau Claire, WI, in my home State. It is a little unfair to call this the Eau Claire system because it is a lousy system and Eau Claire is a great town. I like calling it the anti-Eau Claire system. My daughter is happily ensconced at the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire, a huge fan of Eau Claire. But it is generally called the Eau Claire system. So be it.

This is how it works. The farther away a farmer lives from Eau Claire, WI, the more he receives for his fluid milk. Under this system, Eau Claire, WI, geographically, is ground zero when the fallout of artificially low prices lands most harshly on Wisconsin dairy farmers and their neighbors in the upper Midwest.

Back in the days of the Great Depression, apparently this system seemed to be a great idea. But like delivery in old metal milk cans, the current system is obsolete, failing to meet the needs of either producers or consumers. Six decades ago, the poor condition of America's infrastructure and the lack of portable refrigeration technology prevented upper Midwest producers from shipping their fresh milk to other parts of the country. In order to ensure an adequate milk supply in distant regions, Congress authorized higher fluid milk prices outside the upper Midwest. These higher prices are referred to as class I differentials. Let's take a look at how this system rewards producers in different parts of the country.

This chart illustrates the class I differential received by dairy farmers throughout the United States. In Eau Claire, WI, the class I differential is $1.20 per hundredweight. You will notice that it is $1.40 in Chicago. It is $1.92 in Kansas City, MO, and $3.08 in Charlotte, NC. Our friends in Florida receive $3.58 in Tallahassee and $4.18 per hundredweight in Miami for the exact same amount of milk that we produce in Wisconsin. So class I differentials are an arbitrary measure of the cost of milk production.

In fact, in recent years, when our dairy farmers have tried to sell their milk in Chicago—in Chicago, a very close distance to Eau Claire and the other Wisconsin communities compared to other places in the country—when they have tried to sell their milk in Chicago, they have been beaten out of that market by milk from the South and the Southwest. That is a sign of an archaic system. This archaic system was designed to make these regions produce milk for their own needs so children in Texas could have fresh milk, not so their producers could unfairly compete against Wisconsin dairy farmers in Chicago. Unfortunately, this system worked too well. The chief result of this system, the only real result of this system, as far as I am concerned, is that our Midwestern farmers are now subsidizing farmers in the Southeast and in the Northeast through these higher class I differentials.

Of course, a great deal has changed since the creation of the current system. We can now easily and safely transport perishable milk and cheese products between the States and throughout the country. The industry has perfected the system to such a degree that we can export cheese to countries all over the world. It seems almost comical that in an age when you can order milk through the Internet, our Federal milk pricing system continues to be based on an irrelevant factor. That factor, again, is a producer's distance from this wonderful Wisconsin community of Eau Claire, WI. That is what this whole thing is based on, how far the farmer is from Eau Claire, WI.

Unfortunately, the current system's effects on farming communities are anything but common. The current milk pricing system has been putting family dairy farms out of business at an alarming rate. Since 1980, my home State of Wisconsin has sadly lost nearly one-half of its dairy farms. This isn't starting with 2,000 or 3,000 dairy farmers. This is starting with 45,000-plus dairy farmers. We are below 25,000 now. That is since 1980 that we have experienced that kind of loss.

The trend is accelerating. Between 1990 and 1998, in those 8 to 9 years, Wisconsin lost 11,000 dairy farmers. So the overwhelming message I hear from family dairy farmers in Wisconsin and Minnesota and throughout the Midwest is that we need milk marketing order reforms. We desperately need a new dairy policy, one that does not arbitrarily penalize the Midwest and devastate the small farmer. We must replace this outdated Depression-era system with a new policy that ensures our Nation's dairy farmers get a fair price for their milk.

Ironically, one of the few changes, one of the only changes, we have had at all to Federal dairy policy over the last 60 years has accelerated the attack on small farmers. It has made it worse. Of course, I am referring to the now infamous Northeast Dairy Compact.

During the consideration of the 1996 farm bill, Congress sought to make changes in the unjust Federal pricing system by phasing out the milk price support program and reducing the inequities between the regions. Unfortunately, it didn't work. Unfortunately, because of backdoor politicking during the eleventh hour of the conference committee, America's dairy farmers were stuck with the devastatingly harmful Northeast Dairy Compact. It could happen again. The temporary fix of the compact may yet be extended again. We in the upper Midwest cannot stand for that or any change that further disadvantages our dairy farmers, the ones who are left, not the over 20,000 who are gone but the less than 25,000 who remain. We are determined to keep them in business.

The Northeast Dairy Compact accentuates the current system's inequities by authorizing six Northeastern States—Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut—to establish a minimum price for fluid milk, higher even than those established under the Federal milk marketing order. The compact not only allows these six States to set artificially high prices for their producers, it permits them to block entry of lower-priced milk from producers in competing States. Further distorting the markets are subsidies given to processors in these six States to export their higher-priced milk to noncompact States.

Despite what some have argued, the Northeast Dairy Compact doesn't even help small Northeast farmers. Since

the Northeast first implemented its compact in 1997, small dairy farms in the Northeast, where this is supposed to help, have gone out of business at a rate of 41 percent higher than they had in the previous 2 years—41 percent higher. In fact, compacts often amount to a transfer of wealth to large farms by affording large farms a per-farm subsidy that is actually 20 times greater than the meager subsidy given to small farmers.

Fortunately for America's dairy farmers, the 1996 farm bill also included language requiring the U.S. Department of Agriculture to replace the current depression-era milk pricing system with a much simpler regulatory plan. After 3½ years of study and thousands of comments from America's dairy farmers, the USDA published a final rule that consolidates the complex web of Federal milk marketing orders and also reforms the price of class I milk.

Mr. President, 59,000 dairy farmers—59,000—participated in a recent referendum, and over 96 percent of them voted in favor of USDA's final ruling.

While the USDA's reforms are a welcome improvement, they are only a modest first step in improving the current system.

Let's take a look, then, at the final rule's effect on the different milk marketing orders. This chart illustrates the producer class I benefits under the current system, and the USDA's Federal milk marketing order rule. This benefit simply multiplies the class I differential with the utilization rate, or the percentage of class I milk produced in that region. As you can see, upper Midwest producers will continue to get the short end of the stick. They will receive a 38-cent-per-hundredweight benefit under the new rule. In contrast, Northeast producers will continue to receive a high per hundredweight benefit of $1.20, and producers in Florida will receive a whopping $3.95 per hundredweight class I benefit.

Unless we follow-up on these reforms and lower the class I differentials, we will continue to lose small dairy farms throughout the United States. Loss of these farms has already devastated rural America for far too long, especially in the upper Midwest.

Mr. President, unfortunately, our Nation's dairy farmers are not out of the woods yet. Some in Congress believe that they know better than America's dairy farmers and wish to prevent these moderate reforms, or to circumvent the entire rulemaking process altogether. Who in this Congress knows more about dairy farming than 96 percent of America's dairy farmers?

As Congress considers any future dairy reforms, I urge my colleagues to recognize the national nature of milk marketing, the corrosiveness of artificial regional pricing schemes, and the need for comprehensive reforms. We must recognize the inequalities inherent in our current system and work to ensure that our Nation's dairy farmers get a fair price for their milk.

If Congress does not act quickly, our Nation's family dairy farms will continue to suffer. Let me be clear. I will use every means available to a Senator to ensure that these necessary reforms go forward and that compacts do not. America's dairy farmers deserve nothing less.

After all, approving USDA's final rule is a moderate first step to arresting the devastating effects of the current Federal milk marketing order system.

Dairy compacts are simply no way to legislate a national dairy policy. I would like to make my colleagues aware of some of the effects the dairy compacts can have on consumers and taxpayers.

Let me begin by citing from an article called ''Dairy Compacts A Sour Deal For All U.S. Farmers.'' The subheadline is, ''The Agreements Threaten to Undermine Export Growth For The Rest Of American Agriculture,'' by Dennis T. Avery, of the Hudson Institute. It says:

Enthusiasm for ''dairy compacts'' is sweeping America. Nearly 30 states now seem likely to pass legislation for such compacts, which are designed to bar dairy products from outside a state or region.

The U.S. government has already authorized such a dairy compact for New England, and dairy farmers recently staged a Washington fly-in to rally congressional support for expanding the concept.

Supporters of these compacts are trying to recreate a dairy industry of price supports and supply management. Such a vision is incompatible with reducing tariffs on other farm commodities or ending Europe's price-depressing export subsidies.

Europe dumps huge amounts of dairy products, along with wheat, foodstuffs and meat, onto the world market at prices far below cost, depressing world markets.

U.S. dairy compacts threaten to undermine export growth for the rest of American agriculture and fly in the face of liberalizing farm trade.

Free farm trade can't be arranged one commodity at a time. What U.S. dairy farmers are considering could limit the potential for lowering trade barriers on beef, pork, corn, wheat, soybeans and poultry.

Although dairy farmers have never seen themselves as exporters, perhaps they should start. After all, this is an era of high-value cheese markets, chilled concentrated and ultra-heat-treated milk, and rising demand in industrializing countries like India.

Moreover, South Korea's bonds have regained investment status, after a year of being classified as lower-rated ''junk bonds.'' Over the next three years the South Koreans will lead a parade of Asian countries back into the realm of economic growth.

At the moment, however, dairy farmers are willing to write off export markets. Producers of other commodities can't do that—exports are their only path to prosperity.

Mr. President, I also want to make my colleagues aware of the effects on consumers and taxpayers. The Washington Post said it well in an April 6, 1999, editorial entitled ''The Price of Milk'':

The government sets the price of milk in this country. That's not all bad. Prices are somewhat higher than they would be if left to the market, and some inefficient dairy farmers are kept in business. But supplies of the perishable product are adequate, and small producers are protected against what otherwise might be the predatory and harmful tactics of large buyers.

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman has just completed a congressionally required review of the system whereby the government plays God in the market. He has proposed some changes that would rationalize it in certain respects. But he has found the basic balance between the interests of producers and consumers about right. There may be a lesson in that as Congress struggles with the question of how much to support the prices of other commodities or the incomes of their producers.

In the 1996 farm bill, a new Republican Congress acted according to conviction, and against political interest as conventionally defined, to put farm supports on a declining path. The theory was that if farmers grew for the market rather than for the government, they and the consuming public alike would be better off. The rollback worked well for a couple of years, while prices and supports were both still high. Now, both have fallen, and even some sponsors of the legislation, if not quite wondering whether they went too far, are busily seeking extra aid.

Compelling points can be made on both sides of this argument. The economists are right that artificial price supports are costly in that they shelter inefficient producers. But supports when not excessive also protect against swings in price and production that can harm consumers and producers alike. Costs are involved in going too far in either direction.

That's more or less where Mr. Glickman came out on milk. There was a fight about milk marketing orders in the context of the 1996 bill. Midwesterners thought—still think—that their region is disadvantaged by the system in that their efficient dairymen could undersell producers in competing regions were it not for the artificially high minimum prices that the marketing orders impose. They wanted to abolish the system unless it was radically reformed in their favor. Congressmen from less efficient areas were equally determined to preserve it, even members who in other contexts were devout free-marketeers. In the end the two sides compromised by booting the issue to the secretary.

Mr. Glickman has proposed modernizing the inherited system in a number of respects, particularly with regard to the price differentials between various regions. On average, he would lower the price of milk by a couple of cents a gallon. But in general he would support the system as fair to both buyers and sellers of milk. If supports should not be excessive, neither should they be so low as to leave both sides in the milk transaction total prey to the market. That may not be an intellectually elegant standard, but it's probably right.

The dairy industry is an integral part of our Nation's culture in history.

Let's take a look at that role, if we can.

Before I do that, let me quote briefly from the New York Times article from Sunday, April 11.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I will yield for a question without relinquishing my right to the floor.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, for those of us who are trying to bring up amendments on this bill, will the Senator, perhaps, give us an idea of how long he might proceed?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I am not certain how long I will be proceeding at this point. It will be for a while.

Mr. KERRY. I thank the Senator. I thank the Chair.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, the New York Times has written a piece about ''Bringing Markets To Milk,'' ''A Pricing Policy Was Confusing. It Still Is,'' by Mr. Weinstein. I would like to read some portions of that. He writes:

Ponder a perverse question: What public policies would pummel the poor? Here is one answer: Impose a levy that falls more heavily on them than on the rich, singling out a staple in the diet of poor families and driving up its price.

No one would seriously entertain such an idea—no one, that is, except members of Congress.

Federal milk-pricing rules dating from the 1930's drive up the price that consumers pay for milk, in effect taking money from urban parents, among others, and handing it over to rural dairy farmers.

Proponents say the rules stabilize milk prices, thereby assuring reliable supplies across the country. But opponents say the system is archaic, Byzantine and unnecessary—a giveaway to the dairy farm lobby. And it's regressive: poor families spend about twice as much of their income on milk as do other families, on average.

Consumer advocates took heart three years ago when Congress told the Agriculture Department to improve the program. But their hopes were dashed recently when the department released its proposals, scheduled to go into effect on Oct. 1.

The new rules, the department said, would be ''simpler, more market-oriented.'' But rather than taking a mallet to the program, the department wielded a toothpick. John M. Schnittker, an economist at Public Voice for Food and Health Policy, a nonprofit research group in Washington that plans to merge with the Consumer Federation of America, estimates that the current program raises the cost of milk an average of 18 cents a gallon. The department says its plan will cut prices by about 2 cents—a trim Mr. Schnittker calls ''almost an insult.''

The current rules impose a complex set of minimum prices that processors are requited to pay farmers in each of the 31 marketing regions.

The department starts by setting a base price for milk used in the manufacture of products like cheese from a survey of prices in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Then it tacks on additional charges, mostly reflecting location, to set the minimum price for so-called fluid milk.

Kenneth C. Clayton, deputy administrator of the agency that runs the system, says the controls stop milk prices from gyrating wildly and make sure that milk flows from areas where there are surplus supplies, like upstate New York and Wisconsin, to areas where there is scarcity, like Boston and Chicago.

But he concedes that those flows would occur without Government guidance. What the rules do, he says, is ''divide up the pie—insuring that dairy farmers capture more of the dollar that consumers pay to processors.'' Another set of complex rules dictates how the processors' payments are divided among farmers.

Many economists challenge Mr. Clayton's benign interpretation. Processors operate in reasonably competitive markets, the economists say, so if they are forced to pay more for milk, they have little choice but to pass on the added cost to customers. Mr. Schnittker points to studies that show consumer prices rising along with Government-imposed charges on processors.

He also challenges another rationale for the milk-pricing rules: Preservation of the family farmer. ''Two-thirds of milk production comes from only about a quarter of the nation's dairy farmers,'' he said. ''The milk-pricing rules overwhelmingly line the pockets of mega dairy farms.''

The government's overhaul would simplify things by collapsing the 31 regions into 11. But it would also make the system more complicated, by setting the base price for milk use in manufactured products according to surveys around the country, rather than just the Midwest, and by adjusting the price to take into account the milk's protein content and other qualities using complex mathematical formulas.

Add charges to take account of location and some transition rules, and out come 600-plus pages of regulations. Some economists suggest that the rule-making would fit comfortably in the playbook of the former Soviet Union.

And though the proposal would bring down average milk prices a small amount, it would leave most of the high prices intact. Indeed, the proposal would actually raise the minimum price in some places, like Chicago, a decision more political than economic.

Critics point out that this is not the first time the Agriculture Department has sided with dairy farmers over consumers. It also approved the creation of a dairy cartel among farmers in the Northeast that blocks low-price imports. Milk prices in New England rose about 20 cents a gallon after the compact went into effect in July 1997.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I will yield without relinquishing my right to the floor for a question.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, recognizing the right of the Senator to continue to hold the floor, we are trying to figure out how we are going to manage the VA–HUD bill, which was the pending business until we yielded for the Senator's unanimous consent. Would the Senator share with me approximately how long he will continue to speak so we can organize our other speakers and amendments?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, the answer to the question is, I intend to speak for a fair amount of time.

Ms. MIKULSKI. What is the operational definition of that?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, that may be determined more by factors that I can't control than my own intentions.

Ms. MIKULSKI. What is the Senator talking about—5 minutes or 5 hours?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Somewhere in between, probably.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Senator, I really do need senatorial courtesy because there are 99 other Senators trying to figure out what we are going to do with the rest of the evening. If the Senator would just share that with me, if the Senator wants to talk 5 hours, that is his business. If he wants to talk 10 hours, that is his business. But the pending VA–HUD bill is my business.

Mr. FEINGOLD. My pending business that I think needs to be addressed by the Senate and the Congress is the outrageous treatment of Wisconsin dairy farmers.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Is the Senator not going to answer my question?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, my answer to the Senator's question is that this needs to be addressed, and that is why I am here.

Mr. President, I have the floor, I believe.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin has the floor.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, since the question has been raised, I think it is time to review what has happened on the floor of the Senate and in the Congress on this issue in the past.

What has happened on this issue is that we have fought this battle fair and square in the Senate, won the battle, and then every time we get to conference committee, somehow the will of this body is undone. In 1996, we had the only rollcall vote on the issue of the New England Dairy Compact, the Northeast Dairy Compact. I remember staying up until late at night lobbying Members, and we had a vote fair and square on whether or not we were going to set up this actually absurd notion of a New England Dairy Compact.

So what did we do? We won the vote fair and square. I think it was something like 50–46. I remember the wonderful help and support I received from the distinguished majority leader at the time, Senator Dole, in feeling it was a tough battle—one of these tough inter-regional battles—not a Republican or Democrat issue but that we had won fair and square. The House had not voted on the issue, but then they go over to the conference committee, and in the middle of the night, without any basis from the action of either House, they just stick in the conference committee the idea that the Secretary of Agriculture could create a region in New England that would establish an artificially high price for milk for only one part of the country to the disadvantage of farmers everywhere else.

That is how we got here. This was part of the so-called Freedom to Farm Act.

We had hopes that the Secretary of Agriculture, Dan Glickman, for whom I have great regard and have enjoyed working with, would understand what a mistake it would be to create this compact in the first place. We did everything we could to persuade him not to

go down this road—that it wouldn't make sense; that it wouldn't save northeastern dairy farmers; that it wouldn't help consumers, and, in fact, would hurt consumers; that it would drive up production artificially in a way that would reduce prices for dairy farmers. I believe that is exactly what happened.

Secretary Glickman is a bright guy, and he has an open mind. He watched this for a year and a half. He concluded that the New England Dairy Compact was not a good idea and proposed, along with his suggestions on changing the milk marketing order system, that we not have it anymore, that it expire.

We pointed out on the floor of the Senate on many occasions how this notion of a dairy compact, a regional economy for milk, could be applied in other situations. Perhaps we should say all the maple syrup in Vermont and States in that region should be sold, bought, and consumed in that one area and not exported to the rest of the country. Others have said we could do the same thing with blueberries. There would be a southern or Georgia peanut region, and all the peanuts grown there would have to be sold and consumed there. There would be an artificially high price for peanuts there but not anywhere else. Others carried it further. Since we associate the great city of Seattle, the State of Washington, with computers, why not have computers sold in the Northwest?

I found even more interesting the notion that country music should only be marketed in States such as Tennessee and Kentucky. I happen to be a fan of country music, so I find that troubling, although some of my younger staffers would be delighted if we had that kind of limitation on country music. I don't think they like it.

That is what this is, an artificial corruption of what should be a national dairy system. I don't mean corruption in the sense of impropriety; I mean in the sense of undercutting the notion of free enterprise in which the dairy industry should be able to participate. The Secretary reviewed it, and he concluded we shouldn't have this anymore.

There has been an effort on the Senate floor and throughout the summer on and off to attach the New England Dairy Compact to other bills, including the agricultural appropriations bill. It was a hard fought battle. I give credit to those who want to preserve the New England Dairy Compact for their willingness to continue and to fight for their cause. They thought they were going to have 60 votes. They thought they had the votes to force this on to the bill. They did not, frankly, come very close at all. As I recall, they came some seven votes short of the goal rather than one or two.

It was a decisive statement that made many in Wisconsin hope that finally, instead of just the politics of this, people would listen to the Secretary of Agriculture and realize this was not a good idea. We figured it was done. We knew we couldn't be sure because of what was done in 1996 in the conference committee. But we had hopes that this would not happen again. However, this is, unfortunately, now what is happening or what we fear could be happening.

In the conference committee, which I had a chance to observe last week for a while, there is a real possibility that the Secretary's reasonable recommendations to modify to some extent the milk marketing order systems and to discontinue the Northeastern Dairy Compact—those items may be reversed and placed in the agricultural appropriations bill even though there has been no vote in the Senate or in the House to continue the dairy compact.

Although I certainly regret having to come to the floor and proceed in this manner, I essentially have no choice. My farmers expect me to come to Washington and fight for their rights. It won fair and square on the floor. Yet somehow in conference committee these fair votes are taken away. Once again, as has been the case over and over again, dairy farmers in the upper Midwest are given the short end of the stick. It is only because these mistakes were made in terms of putting this compact together. Even the person who approved them, the Secretary of Agriculture, now sees it was not a very good idea and should be discontinued.

I say to the Senators whose bill is up—and it is an important piece of legislation—it is a matter of what is going on in the conference committee now that forces me to come to the floor and explain in more detail to my colleagues just what is at stake. I don't know how many times I will repeat this. I have already mentioned it. We had over 45,000 dairy farmers in Wisconsin around 1980. Only about 19 years later, we have fewer than 25,000. That is a huge loss not only of a way of life but of an economic base in our State. It is a tragedy for our State to have this trend continue.

Let me discuss a bit about the way the dairy industry is an integral part of our Nation's culture and history. We will look at that role.

Cheese, unlike its ancient cousin, yogurt, is not a novel food to Americans. It came over to America with the earliest settlers who made Cheddar cheese in their own homes.

Like yogurt, though, the popularity of cheese has been steadily growing. One of the most natural and oldest of food products, dating back to the domestication of animals, about 9000 B.C., cheese was once so highly esteemed it was even used as a medium of exchange. It traveled with Greeks, the Romans and with the armies of Genghis Khan. During the Middle Ages, monks in the French monasteries developed a soft-ripened cheese, starting a cheese renaissance. Centuries later, in 1851, Jesse Williams built the first commercial cheese factory in America. Herkimer, in upstate New York, grew into the cheese center of the United States until the westward expansion of the country resulted in Wisconsin gradually exceeding New York in total annual production. As pioneer wagons moved west, boats continued to carry others from across the ocean. The immigrants introduced their own favorite cheeses to America and contributed to the ''melting (cheese) pot.''

As the number of cheeses available in the United States has enlarged, so has the consumer demand. The consumption of cheese in 1975 was 14.2 pounds per person compared to 9.1 pounds in 1965.

Natural cheese is a product of milk that has been heated, pressed, and cured. In the United States, cheese is made from pasteurized cow's milk. While milk is generally used except for some varieties such as cottage cheese which uses skim milk. When milk is heated, usually with a starter of some kind, rennet or bacterial culture, it separates into soft curd and liquid whey.

After the milk has been heated, but before it has started to ripen, the soft curd may be separated from the whey and with some additional treatment made into a fresh natural unripened cheese.

Unripened cheeses contain relatively high moisture and do not undergo any curing or ripening. They are sold fresh and should be used within a few days after purchase. The gjetost and primost, however, because they contain very low moisture, may be kept refrigerated for several weeks or even months.

Cottage cheese, is low calorie cheese, is made in different sized curds. The small-curd type is usually used in salads because it holds its shape better than the larger curds which are suitable for all other purposes. To prepare creamed cottage cheese, fresh cream is mixed with the curd to give it additional moisture and flavor.

Cream cheese is of American origin and is one of our most popular soft cheeses. It is a mixture of milk and cream that is coagulated but unripened.

Unripened cheese may also be divided into soft or firm types.

Cream cheese and cottage cheese are examples of a soft unripened cheese. An example of firm unripened cheese is mozzarella.

To make natural ripened cheese, the soft curd is taken from the liquid whey and then cured by holding it at a certain temperature and humidity for a specified period of time.

Natural ripened cheeses may also be classified according to their degree of

hardness. Authorities generally group natural cheese into four distinct groups of hardness: soft, semi-soft, firm, and very hard. Hardness has to do with moisture. The older the cheese, the lower its moisture content.

Brie and Camembert, both of which originated in France, are ripened by mold. The curd is not cut nor is it pressed. Cheese lovers all over the world hold these two cheeses in the highest of esteem.

Brie is considered to be the Queen of Cheeses. There are probably more literary references to Brie than to any other cheese. Its descriptions are often accompanied by superlatives but it is a difficult cheese to buy satisfactorily because it goes from under ripened to over ripened in a matter of a few days.

It is at its peak when it has a consistency of a heavy slow-pouring liquid and a yellow sheen. Under ripe Brie is flaky and chalky. Overripe Brie is very soft and has an off-order like ammonia.

Camembert is a popular cheese in France and is widely known in the United States. It has as devoted a following as Brie and also the same ephemeral quality of being ripe for only a very short time.

Limburger and Liederkranz are examples of bacteria-ripened cheeses. The different bacteria used in the ripening process are responsible for their characteristic flavor and odor.

Included in this category are the blue-veined cheeses. There are now over fifty varieties of blue cheeses made all over the world. However, the best known and most highly prized are Roquefort, Stiliton, and Gorgonzola.

Blue cheeses are called the ''king of cheeses.'' They are made from cow's milk. Roquefort is the exception. It is made from sheep's milk and is cured in the cool damp caves of southwestern France.

Bel Paese is a popular, all purpose cheese made in Italy and under license in the United States—Wisconsin, of course. It is a table cheese as well as cooking cheese.

Brick is an original American Cheese whose name derives from either the shape of the cheese or, perhaps, from the brick originally used in pressing the curd. It is softer than Cheddar and less sharp. It is a strong cheese, but not as strong as Limburger.

Muenster, as made in France where it is very popular, is strong cheese. It is used as table cheese. However, the American kind is much more bland and is suitable for cooking as well as for a table cheese.

Port du Salut originated in a Trappist monastery in France. The French import is usually mellow with a slight edge.

The hard or firm cheese list includes the two most popular cheeses in the United States, Cheddar and Swiss.

Cheddar cheese accounts for almost half of all the cheese consumed in America. It ranges from a very mild cheese to a very sharp one depending upon how long it's been aged. A versatile cheese, suitable for most cheese dishes, it melts well.

Canadian Cheddar is imported into the United States, but English Cheddar, by law, is not. The English relative to Cheddar, the famous Cheshire is imported.

More American Cheddar cheese is made in Wisconsin than any other state. There are variations to different kinds of cheese. Colby is primarily made in the Midwest while Monterey (Jack) and Tillamook is processed on the West Coast. Colby is not as compressed as the other cheddars and it has a higher moisture content. Monterey is also a milder cheddar and has a higher moisture content. There is a more aged Monterey called ''dry Monterey'' that can be used for grating.

A large amount of Cheddar cheese sold in the United States is sold as processed American cheese.

Provolone and Cacciocavalle are spun cheeses. The curd is placed in either hot water or hot whey and then stretched into its desired shape or size. They are an important ingredient in Italian cooking. The Provolone is usually smoked.

The Edam and Gouda cheeses are the most popular cheeses imported from the Netherlands. Similar in flavor, the Edam is made from partly skim milk and the Gouda from whole milk.

In the category of very hard cheeses, Parmesan has a mild to sharp piquant flavor and is famous as a seasoning in cooking. It has the natural ability of enhancing the flavor of foods. The imported Italian Parmesan is a highly prized cheese and is used as a table cheese as well as for seasoning. The domestic varieties are primarily grated for seasoning and for cooking.

Romano is a sharper cheese than Parmesan. In Italy it is usually made from sheep's milk instead of from cow's milk. It is primarily a grating cheese but the less sharp cheese may be used as a table cheese. The domestic variety is primarily a grating cheese.

Sap Sago is a grating cheese from Switzerland to which has been added dried clover. It is made by mixing whey and skim cow's milk.

I would like to say a little more about the process of making cheeses, butter, cream, and yogurt at home.

Although animals have been milked by man almost from the dawn of civilization, there are Egyptian paintings showing cattle being milked around 2000 B.C., the use of liquid milk was almost unknown until comparatively recently.

Until the beginning of the 17th century, milk drinking was considered quite injurious to health and, in view of the low standards of dairy hygiene, the incidence of cattle plague, and the fact that milk contained dangerous pathogenic factors, especially the germs of tuberculosis and typhoid, this was probably right at the time.

It reminds me of a dairy farmer who came to see me after I was elected to the Senate. I met him in the reception area outside the Chamber. He told me he was going over to some of the former Soviet Republics to try to help farmers there learn some of the skills we have in dairy farming. He told me his goal was to make sure that the milk in one of these former Soviet Republics could not walk to the market by itself. I understood what he was saying. If you do not do this right, as we do in America, in Wisconsin, then we have to be concerned. That is one of the reasons milk might have gotten off to sort of a slow start in some of these countries, given the risks.

The fact is, many children died of tuberculosis of bovine origin up until the late 19th century. It was not until the 1930s, when pasteurization and refrigeration of milk became accepted, and when concentrated efforts were inaugurated to eradicate the disease of bovine tuberculosis, that milk became safe and acceptable. I can tell you, growing up in Janesville, WI, we were taught about pasteurization as one of the most important events in human history. When you are from Wisconsin, that is a big deal, as it is almost anywhere.

Mr. GRAMS. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Without yielding my right to the floor, I am happy to yield for a question.

Mr. GRAMS. I heard the Senator earlier talking about what is going on in the conference committee now, dealing with agricultural appropriations. The Senator talked about the Northeast Dairy Compact. As mentioned, we had a full and open debate, had a floor vote, and were able to defeat the compact—as we did 2 years ago, by the way. Also, we talked about farmers across the country, dairy farmers, recently voting for a compromise on milk marketing orders, the new orders that were put out by the USDA. It was not everything everybody wanted, but it was a compromise between the 1–B and the 1–A. But now we find out again, as happened in 1997, people are working actively inside the conference to try to insert language to basically overturn those issues that have had widespread solid support, both among the dairy farmers across the country and also Members on the floor of the Senate.

I was wondering why is this going on in the conference, in the Senator's opinion?

Mr. FEINGOLD. I thank the Senator from Minnesota for his question. I note the presence of the senior Senator from Minnesota. Minnesota has fewer dairy farmers than Wisconsin, but it has a whole lot. Together, our two States comprise a tremendous percentage of dairy production in the country. We

are adamant in this effort to try to stop what the Senator from Minnesota correctly points out is the same old trick. We won fair and square in 1997. There was not a vote in the House. They did not have a vote: should we have a New England Dairy Compact or not. We did. It was a tough vote.

I tell you, this is a tough issue, a hard issue. One thing I like about it is that it is not about Republicans versus Democrats. It is one of those rare times when everyone in the body is open to be for something not based on their party but based on what is best for their area and what is best for the country.

So we had quite a debate. We all worked together on it. As I pointed out earlier, it was a close vote, but we won—I hope I am not given the wrong number—I think with roughly a 50–46 bipartisan vote where we voted not to have the compact. It went to conference.

I was in the State legislature in Wisconsin for 10 years. We had conference committees. They were often not the most attractive moments, of course, as things that go on in conference committees get a little rough. But there was a basic understanding that unless there was some basis from one house or the other for the outcome, it could not be done.

That is not what was done in this conference committee in 1996. Without any justification, this compact, or the permission to allow the Secretary of Agriculture to put the compact into effect, was placed in. And yes, I fear—although I hope it does not happen—that is exactly what is happening again.

There was an attempt here to force the compact continuation or extension on to the Ag appropriations bill. All three of us and Senator KOHL and others worked together and many other Senators from across the country, and they did not even come close to getting the 60 votes.

So that is my concern. That is why I am out here.

Mr. GRAMS. I would like to follow up my question.

I know Senator WELLSTONE would like to be part of this debate and ask a question as well.

But I know we have some differences on the Freedom to Farm, but one thing Freedom to Farm did not do is pit one region of farmers against another, whether it was dealing with corn or soybeans or any of the other commodities. But somehow when it comes to dairy, an antiquated system, as you mentioned, needs to be changed.

We are looking at something that basically says we are going to have some winners in this country—when it comes to dairy—but we are going to have some losers. In other words, the dairy farmers in Wisconsin and Minnesota have the Government with an antiquated dairy program standing on their necks and saying: You are not going to be able to succeed because we are going to put limits on you. Yet we are going to give tremendous advantages to others.

All we are asking for is fairness, a level playing field. We are not asking for farmers in the Northeast or the Southwest to be disadvantaged. But we sure cannot support a program that says: You are going to have some farmers who are winners and some who are losers.

So how do we work this into a new dairy bill coming out of this session that is going to give our farmers just an opportunity to compete, which is all they ask for?

Mr. FEINGOLD. To answer the excellent question of the Senator from Minnesota, this makes no sense. You and I have views on the Freedom to Farm Act. I strongly oppose it. I thought it was a bad idea. In fact, the results of it are shocking.

No one has been more eloquent about this than the senior Senator from Minnesota, who has pointed out the enormous tragedy that has occurred with many farmers around the country because of that law.

But what is bizarre about it, as you point out, is that in one area, instead of going the Freedom to Farm route, they voted to keep not just Government regulation but to put in place a system of regulation and marketing that only dealt with one small region of the country where there are only a few thousand dairy farmers, when there are some 25,000 in Wisconsin and a substantial number in Minnesota. It is a complete opposite of the notion of a free market national system.

Even for those of us who oppose the Freedom to Farm Act, those of us who oppose the Freedom to Farm Act are not proposing for wheat or corn or pork or beef or anything else that there be regional markets. Whatever philosophy you have, whether it be Government supports to guarantee our farmers do not fall below a certain level, or whether you believe in a complete freedom to farm or freedom to fail, some would say—either way—this idea of a regional market for a particular commodity is an example of ridiculous Federal interference.

We need a national dairy market. Upper Midwestern farmers will do fine in a national dairy market. But one that is unfairly skewed for one region, when the underlying system is already terribly unfair, is a double whammy that has cost us far too many lives and far too many livelihoods of farmers in Wisconsin and Minnesota and throughout the upper Midwest.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. FEINGOLD. I am happy to yield to the Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank my colleague from Minnesota, Senator GRAMS, for his questions and his work on this issue. He has really been tireless in his advocacy for dairy farmers in Minnesota.

I actually have two questions for the Senator from Wisconsin to which I would like him to respond.

The first question is whether or not the Senator, since he is out here on the floor right now, could translate this debate about the dairy compact in personal terms. In other words, there is a reason why you must be out here. If you could give other Senators a feel for what it has been like to be out at dairy farms, meet with dairy farmers, and what is happening to the families in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

My second question would be, since the Senator is out here—and I don't know what is the period of time; I know the Senator from Maryland wants to get some clarity on that, and I imagine the Senator will do what he needs to do and then move on with this bill, with the VA–HUD bill—I want to ask the Senator the other question, which is, again, the particular concern that he has about the nature of this process in the conference committee.

You are out here to basically sound an alarm. You are out here to say: Listen, I want to make it clear that in no way, shape, or form should you be able in conference committee—which is almost behind the scenes basically—to negate a vote we had already.

So I wonder whether you could deal with those: In personal terms, what this is about for dairy farmers in our States; and second, the particular point you intend to make right here on the floor of the Senate about what is happening right now in conference.

You said it before, but I think it needs to be repeated.

Mr. FEINGOLD. I thank the Senator from Minnesota.

I say no one has made it more his business to articulate what has happened to American farmers in general, particularly in the last few years. He was an inspiration to me in that regard before I got to this body. We are proud in Wisconsin, but not too proud to look west to Minnesota for that kind of inspiration at times.

Let me start with the second question. The first one involves, as you know, a lot of memories: 17 years of working with farmers.

But the second question really is always a hard one. People say to me: How can it be that you have a vote, fair and square, in the body in which you have been elected to serve, and there was no vote in the other House, and somehow this committee that is appointed to get together to resolve the differences between the Houses ends up coming up with the exact opposite of what the Senate had resolved?

You can say: Well, that's the way things always are. But that does not satisfy people. There are supposed to be

some rules, both formal and informal, about the way business is done. It has always been my understanding, unless there is some basis in one House or the other for putting something into the conference committee, it should not be put in there.

It sounds like, as they say, inside baseball. But what it really is is a cynicism that what we do out here is irrelevant to what happens in the conference committee.

So I am sounding the alarm, as you suggested. I know people hate to lose. I hate to lose. I hated to lose when we won fair and square 2 years ago. I hated to lose when we begged the Secretary of Agriculture to not do this because we thought it was a lousy idea. He did not agree. Now he admits it is not a very good idea.

I think it is time for those on the other side to understand that sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. There are rules, there is fairness, and there is no fairness to this process when we win this vote time and again on the floor of the Senate, and somehow we are still stuck with this thing because of a few people in the conference committee.

I hope it does not happen, I say to the Senator from Minnesota, but I am worried about it. I certainly feel bad that I am compelled to do this in light of the wishes of the Senator from Maryland and people who are bringing this bill forward. It is a terribly important piece of legislation. We have to act on behalf of our dairy farmers and because of what has happened in the past. Because of the fact that fairness is not applied to our issue, we have no choice but to speak. The reason I feel so strongly is that I have watched the decimation of Wisconsin's dairy farmers. I became a State senator in 1982, just 2 years after the year I like to mention as sort of the benchmark, when we had over 45,000 dairy farmers in Wisconsin. I grew up in a family and am old enough to remember, we didn't get our milk and our eggs at the store. The milk was delivered every morning by the milkman, and we got the eggs once a week by going out to farms in the area. That, to me, was the way it was done. We knew personally many of the family farmers in our area, and they were good friends of our family. It was part of our community.

There was no question in my mind, when I was elected to the Wisconsin State Senate, representing a largely rural area, that at the very top of my list had to be making sure these folks who had been providing food for us forever could continue to live. I would have been stunned and horrified to know that 17 years later I would be out here with about half of Wisconsin dairy farmers being lost.

I can trace it for the Senator from Minnesota, if he would like, through the hundreds of conversations I have had. I had them as a State senator, and I have had them as a U.S. Senator. I go to every 1 of Wisconsin's 72 counties every year and hold a town meeting. We open the door, and whoever wants to come to the town hall can come in. And in every 1 of Wisconsin's 72 counties, except for possibly Milwaukee, a farmer has come in or many farmers have come in and told me about the pressure on them because of this pricing system and, in the last couple of years, because of the overproduction that this New England Dairy Compact has caused. It varies. Sometimes they are just concerned.

But I say to the Senator from Minnesota, in the last 2 years I have had farmers I have known for 17 years, proud men and women, come to my town meetings and begin their presentation clearly, concisely, politely, but near the end of their presentation they have started to cry because they are sick and tired of not being able to pass on that farm to their kids.

That is not a very fun thing to watch—to watch a 70-year-old man who is still working his farm take the time to come to my town meeting and to try to say how he felt and to be unable to complete the presentation and to probably feel embarrassed, but it is that bad.

The hardest thing for me to hear is the farmer who says: I wanted my kids to go into farming, to go into dairy, but I cannot tell them it is a good idea. That is usually the point at which one of the farmers just can't go on. His dream, a lot of times the dream of his son or daughter, is actually to continue the family tradition, and they can't because the Federal Government is meddling in having a fair and open dairy market, the kind in which they would have done very well.

That is a brief answer, and I could go on and on.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Will the Senator yield for one final question?

Mr. FEINGOLD. I am happy to yield.

Mr. WELLSTONE. The Senator has talked about his indignation about what might happen in conference committee, and we are on the floor trying to make it clear that it will be unacceptable and we will fight it all the way, if there should be an effort to undo the vote of the Senate.

The Senator has talked in personal terms. I want to say to him as a friend—I am not trying to get psychological here—but he spoke differently than I have ever heard him speak on the floor of the Senate when he talked about some of the farmers and conversations and how people start out very eloquent and rational and then just break down crying. I have had the same thing going on right now with many of our producers, dairy and crop and livestock, across the board. That is the convulsion in agriculture right now. It is awful. We have to change it.

Could the Senator explain for people the connection between this fight, the plight of dairy farmers, and the national interests. Could he make a linkage as to why he thinks it is in the interest of our country not to have these compacts and to make sure that dairy farmers in Wisconsin and Minnesota have a fair shake and have the opportunity to be able to earn a decent living.

In other words, I can see how some would say, he is out here doing it for Wisconsin—we are doing it for our States—but what is the connection to the rest of us?

Mr. FEINGOLD. I say to the Senator from Minnesota, that really is the fundamental question. It relates closely to what he has done such an excellent job of talking about. This isn't just about whether or not we are going to have a higher price for dairy farmers in New England or somewhat lower price in Wisconsin and the age-old regional battles. Something happens that is very dangerous to our democracy when we lose these small farms. We lose the ability to have people who own their own property produce our food. I think that is dangerous.

What is happening in every sector of the economy, especially in agriculture, is the consolidation of the control of the food supply into a few hands. I think the Senator from Minnesota knows the statistics better than I do, but I think in grain, I was told that one company is going to control something like 95 percent of the grain.

The Senator from Missouri, who was on the floor before, has made the point in meetings that we have a problem in this country when we go to the store and we buy some ham and we pay more for it than the farmer was getting for the whole pig for awhile. Somebody is making the money. It is not the small farmer. Dairy is only one example of this trend.

What happens is, when you lose these small farms in places like Minnesota and Wisconsin, of course, milk is still being produced, but it tends to be produced in these very large corporate operations, whether they are in Wisconsin, but more likely in other places. I remember flying into a western State that I won't name and flying into an airport saying: What is that down there? It looked similar to the General Motors plant in Janesville. Somebody told me it was a dairy farm.

This isn't the dairy farming that I grew up to believe not only was basic to our economy but basic to our culture, basic to our democracy, and, yes, control of our own food supply. If big corporations and multinational corporations own our land and our food supply, isn't this even a question of national security? I think it is an element of national security if we own our own food product. The best way to keep owning it is to have small, individual

producers all over this country continue to survive.

To me, I don't know if that is exactly what the Senator from Minnesota was getting at, but it is a fair point that this isn't just about the upper Midwest versus New England and so on. What it is really about is, can these small operators who live in Wisconsin and Minnesota continue to exist?

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, if the Senator is going to continue to speak, then that is one thing. I don't want to hold up deliberations. I think the Senator from Maryland has a question to ask. I will just simply defer.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I was prepared to go on to discuss the VA–HUD bill, and I am prepared to continue to discuss the VA–HUD bill.

Mr. President, who has the floor?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SMITH of Oregon). The Senator from Wisconsin has the floor.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, let me say, because the Senator from Maryland has been very patient, I am sorry I had to delay this important legislation to this point. I am going to conclude for now. Again, I regret that this is necessary. However, as a Senator from the great State of Wisconsin, I will continue to fight for a fair national dairy policy as we await the outcome of the conference and in the days to follow.

Obviously, in taking this unusual step, I am merely signaling to the Senate that there certainly will be more discussions of the same kind if this goes forward.

Before I yield the floor, I see the Senator from Minnesota. I wonder if he wanted to ask me one more question.

Mr. GRAMS. I wanted to ask a quick question if I could. What we are asking for doesn't cost money. This is not a request to give farmers in Minnesota or Wisconsin more money but to allow them the ability to compete on a level playing field. That is all we are asking for, as far as this dairy policy goes.

As you mentioned, and very well have laid out the problem, this is a program set up in 1930, completely outdated. If we were going to begin a new milk marketing program today, it would not look like anything debated in the committees at all. This is an unfair system, outdated. It has no rhyme or reason to markets or regions or producers or our dairy farmers. So we have a system now, and all we are asking for is legislation or a program that would allow our farmers to compete. We are willing to compete with anybody in any part of the country and let the chips fall where they may.

At the same time, this program will cost consumers additional money, whether it is low-income, whether it is school lunch programs, or whatever it is. So this program has a lot of negatives to it, and all we are asking for is a level playing field and competition. Is that what the Senator says?

Mr. FEINGOLD. Yes. I thank both Senators from Minnesota for joining me. Of course, the Senator is absolutely right. This is not about a guaranteed price for the farmers. It is not about any kind of legislation, some of which I might support. This is an attempt to prevent the continuation of an absurd distortion of our dairy market in the New England Dairy Compact. We are looking for fairness both in terms of the policy and the procedure of this institution. I thank the Senator from Minnesota. Again, I thank the Senator from Maryland for, I hope, understanding.

I yield the floor.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator CARL LEVIN and Senator JOHN KERRY be added as cosponsors to the Bond-Byrd-Mikulski-Stevens VA health care amendment, No. 1744.

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

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, as you know, we intended to have an extended conversation about the VA–HUD bill. Obviously, I appreciate the Senators' needs to defend their constituents' interests, and the plight of people losing businesses, of course, is significant to us all. I wish I would have known the time so we could have been better able to organize and plan our amendments.

I know the leadership of both parties is now consulting on what is the best way to proceed for the rest of the evening in terms of amendments to be offered. I know there are amendments that are being drafted, and I also know the two leaders are discussing what is the best way to come to closure on the number of amendments to be offered. So right this minute, because we missed a certain window to offer two important amendments, we are now involved in a process. But I am reluctant to yield the floor except to Senator BOND because I am going to stick on VA–HUD, and with all of the compelling issues in that bill.

Mr. BOND addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my very able ranking member for her efforts to move the bill forward. We certainly intend to do so. I have a clarifying amendment, a technical correction amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 1779

(Purpose: To clarify the prohibition on using Federal funds for lobbying or litigating. This is a technical correction)

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND] proposes an amendment numbered 1779.

On page 111, beginning on line 4, strike out ''or be used'' and all that follows through ''litigation activity'' on line 5.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, this is simply a technical correction the experts have told us is necessary to assure that the provisions in the law at that point are properly phrased. I know of no controversy on it. It is technical in nature. I believe it has been cleared on both sides.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I think we are in agreement on this amendment. I am prepared to accept it.

Mr. BOND. I ask for its adoption.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 1779) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank the Chair and all our colleagues. We have been making great progress. We are ready to move forward on several matters relating to the housing section of the bill.

I am sorry that it appears we are not ready to do so.

I renew my request to all Members who have amendments. We welcome the opportunity to look at them. On some of these amendments, we find we can work them out in a way that is very easy to accommodate the reasonable requests of our colleagues. We want to do so in every possible way. But as I believe we have said many other times, we are facing a real time deadline.

We need to get this measure passed out of the Senate, I hope, no later than tomorrow. Then we can go to conference committee and get it back and send the conference report to the President prior to September 30 so this measure will not have to be included in the continuing resolution. To do so would relieve a tremendous amount of burdens from the agencies that are covered and would certainly move forward the work of this body. We have had good discussions, and we have had very helpful discussions from a number of Members who have not offered amendments. We are not looking for more amendments, but if there are Senators who have either colloquies they wish us to include or amendments they wish to offer, we would be happy to consider them at this time.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I wish to convey to the Senator from Missouri that we are trying to reach the Senator from Massachusetts about his amendment. As you know, he was prepared to offer them and then he moved on to other constituent meetings because we didn't know if we were in a filibuster or not. I didn't even know, and we are sorry that we could not pinpoint the time.

I say to the Senator from Missouri, just another few moments of patience. We are contacting Senator KERRY to see if he can break free from the meetings and come to the floor to offer his amendment within the next 20 minutes or so, or shorter. In the meantime, we also know the Senator is anxious, as I am, for a unanimous consent to be hotlined with a deadline for amendments to be filed.

As I understand it, we are waiting for the majority leader to see if he is in agreement with the UC as proposed by the Democratic leader. We are waiting, one, for Senator LOTT on the UC, and Senator JOHN KERRY, the Senator from Massachusetts, to come this evening. If he can, we will keep on going. If not, I am not quite sure what the other amendments are. I know the Senator from Missouri has a whole group of constituents who are a special affinity group for him that he is anxious to get to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Maryland for her help.

AMENDMENT NO. 1780

(Purpose: To require a report on the effect of the allocation of funds under Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) formula on the rural subregions of the health care system administered by the Veterans Health Administration)

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND], for Ms. SNOWE, proposes an amendment numbered 1780:

On page 17, between lines 14 and 15, insert the following:

SEC. 108. (a) SENSE OF SENATE.—It is the sense of the Senate that it should be the goal of the Department of Veterans Affairs to serve all veterans equitably at health care facilities in urban and rural areas.

(b) REPORT REQUIRED.—(1) Not later than six months after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the House of Representatives a report on the impact of the allocation of funds under the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) funding formula on the rural subregions of the health care system administered by the Veterans Health Administration.

(2) The report shall include the following:

(A) An assessment of impact of the allocation of funds under the VERA formula on—

(i) travel times to veterans health care in rural areas;

(ii) waiting periods for appointments for veterans health care in rural areas;

(iii) the cost associated with additional community-based outpatient clinics;

(iv) transportation costs; and

(v) the unique challenges that Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers in rural, low-population subregions face in attempting to increase efficiency without large economies of scale.

(B) The recommendations of the Secretary, if any, on how rural veterans' access to health care services might be enhanced.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I have let the clerk read the entire sense-of-the-Senate resolution because I think it makes the point. I believe there is nothing further I can add to the terms of that Senate resolution. It simply requires VA to undertake a study of rural subregions. I urge its adoption.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I concur with its adoption and want to congratulate the Senator from Maine, Ms. SNOWE, for this amendment. Her criteria on Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation—nicknamed VERA—is absolutely right. I hope the VA uses it as a model for looking at the delivery generally: Travel time to veterans' health care, waiting time for appointments, costs associated with additional community-based outpatients, and also not only the waiting period but what we heard in other debate is, sometimes they wait and then they are sent home, sending them back another 150 miles and coming back another 150 miles. I believe our veterans have marched long enough and they shouldn't have to march to get their health care.

This side of the aisle accepts this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 1780) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, thank you very much. I thank my colleague from Maryland. I believe it is a very good amendment.

We are at this moment waiting to find out from others what the schedule will be for this evening and whether there are additional amendments to be offered.

At this point, we intend to stay on the bill. I see the Senator from Nevada is ready to speak on the bill. I withhold my suggestion on the quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative assistant proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I rise today to talk about two important components of the legislation before us today that would severely impact the state of public housing both in my home state of Nevada and throughout our nation.

The distinguished chairman and ranking member of the subcommittee have undoubtedly worked hard to provide the needed funding for a number of critical programs in the VA–HUD appropriations bill. I commend them for their efforts. Nevertheless, I am forced to say that I am disappointed that this bill falls far short in continuing our commitment to provide affordable, quality housing to low and moderate income families.

Of particular concern, Mr. President, is the lack of funding for any new section 8 housing vouchers despite the considerable demand and need for such assistance in communities throughout the nation.

The section 8 program provides vital assistance to American families.

In 1998, 1.4 million Americans were receiving assistance under this program and countless more have been on waiting lists for months and sometimes years for this needed assistance.

Who receives assistance under the Section 8 program? According to CRS, recipients of section 8 vouchers are typically single-parent households with children under the age of 18. Most participants have income well below the poverty level, and the average household income of a recipient is well below $10,000.

Mr. President, we are all aware that the American economy has been roaring for the last few years, and we are all delighted that inflation and unemployment numbers are at record lows and job growth and housing starts are at record highs. But lost in this economic expansion and prosperity are millions of Americans who continue to struggle to make ends meet and adequately provide for their families.

The section 8 program has historically served as a lifeline to low income households, providing needed assistance to those American families seeking to raise their children in quality, affordable homes in safe, livable communities.

Last year we were successful in providing almost 100,000 new section 8 vouchers to address the substantial shortage in affordable housing, the first new vouchers in five years.

As my colleagues will recall, the authorizing legislation passed by the Senate last year authorized 100,000 new section 8 housing vouchers for the upcoming fiscal year.

And yet the legislation before us provides no new vouchers despite the growing gap between the public housing assistance needed and assistance available.

As an example of how disconcerting this issue has become in my own state of Nevada, low and moderate income families in Las Vegas, Reno and numerous other communities currently have to wait for a period of over 8 months for public housing—8 months, Mr. President.

The wait for section 8 vouchers in Nevada is even worse. That delay is

over 50 months, Mr. President. Over four years for a section 8 voucher. And yet the legislation before inexplicably does not provide any additional funding for section 8 housing vouchers despite this substantial increase in demand.

It is my understanding that there will be an amendment to this bill to provide additional vouchers along the lines of the administration's request and I look forward to supporting that effort.

Let me address another issue that I believe was inadequately addressed in the bill and that I regret to say in my view is a setback.

I was also disappointed to learn that the underlying legislation before us today seeks to zero-out HUD's highly effective Community Builders Program.

Let me say parenthetically that during the recently concluded August recess my staff and I had the chance to visit with some of the community builders to learn about their effectiveness, and in the very short time that this program has been in existence I have heard considerable feedback from local officials, community leaders, and others throughout our State in praise of the Community Builders Program.

By way of example, the eight community builders working in HUD's Las Vegas regional office have been able to bring HUD officials and community leaders together to solve local problems by developing strategies that draw resources from a multitude of Federal programs. All who are familiar with the Federal bureaucracy know it can be very difficult to bring together all the various programs with all of their intricacies and requirements and to meld those together to develop an effective program for the housing needs of our communities.

During the brief existence of this program, we have witnessed a number of success stories in both the southern and northern parts of Nevada. Let me share some recent accomplishments of the program in the Las Vegas area. Community builders in Las Vegas have partnered with southern Nevada's local office of the Bureau of Land Management to facilitate the conveyance of a large tract of vacant BLM land to the city of Las Vegas for the development of affordable housing for low-income and moderate-income residents.

Community builders are working with several housing partners to develop two to four units of single-family detached housing using technologically advanced materials and building processes to show how technology can reduce the cost and improve the quality of single-family housing.

Community builders are undertaking the first phase of development of a new 400-unit mobile home park in Pahrump, NV. Pahrump, NV, is located in my county and one of the 10 fastest growing counties in the entire country. This is being done at the same time by streamlining housing code compliance to ensure safety and yet also to reduce the cost.

Community builders in Las Vegas are working to develop a lender certification program designed to assist in the extension of mortgage programs and products to an increased number of low- and moderate-income families and individuals. These success stories in the southern part of our State have also been mirrored in northern Nevada.

For example, when BHP Copper Mine in Ely shut down mining operations, more than 400 individuals representing 12 percent of the area's workforce were laid off, dealing a devastating blow to a struggling community. The community builders in Reno immediately went to work, joining with local officials in organizing a community partnership forum with community leaders and representatives from many Federal, State, and nonprofit agencies. This effort resulted in the development of an action plan that identified solutions and opportunities for mitigating the adverse economic and housing effects caused by these massive layoffs. This initiative is being held up as a model throughout rural Nevada for rural communities to develop comprehensive local strategies responsive to economic downturns in the mining industry and the longer-term need for greater economic diversification.

I might add as an aside, we learned from two of our counties, Humboldt and Lander Counties, two counties I visited and spent time in with their county commissioner and citizens in August, those counties have also been affected as a result of a series of layoffs in the mining industry. They, too, are buffeted by worsening economic conditions.

Once again, the community builders are being called into action to assist community leaders in finding ways to stabilize rural economies and housing markets in the face of falling gold prices in the global market.

In sum, the Community Builders Program strikes me as a smart and cost-effective way to do business. By breaking down the old bureaucratic hurdles that often hinder customer service and working at the grassroot levels with communities ranging from the sprawl of Las Vegas to a rather small community such as Ely, NV, the Community Builders Program has proven highly effective in finding solutions to critical challenges facing our urban and rural communities.

It is my hope that before this legislation is passed by the Senate, these two critically important and highly successful programs are addressed in a way that will allow the Federal Government to continue its commitment to providing affordable housing to the millions of Americans who depend upon such assistance and to allow the Community Builders Program to continue its work in building successful partnerships within our communities to solve local problems.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I appreciate the kind words the Senator from Nevada shared. We did appreciate working with the Senator on these very important bills. I thank him for his interest.

With respect to the new vouchers, I believe I have already addressed at some length why we have not recommended any new vouchers. We do not have the resources identified to maintain the ones we have. In fact, there are $40 million worth of additional vouchers for the disabled. We put in $100 million for the Opt Out Program to protect the residents in section 8 housing where the landlords are choosing to get out of the program. We are also working through HOME and CDBG to provide additional housing facilities. I have stated those points before. I will not reiterate them at any length.

With respect to community builders, we will address this in conference. The bill would terminate HUD's Community Builders Program for all external community builders. We were originally told there were supposed to be about 200 staff. It is now up to 800. The program represents about 9 percent of the HUD staff. In fiscal year 1999, HUD is expecting to spend as much in funds for staff and support costs for this program as they will spend for the HUD's community planning and development staff, which is responsible for administering programs such as CDBG and the homeless.

I believe investing in 2-year terms for employees hired out of the normal practices of HUD is a questionable use of scarce resources. What does it say about the capabilities of existing HUD staff when the Secretary says we have to bring in people who are hired for a 2-year term outside of the normal hiring practices to explain HUD programs? It says something is going on.

Before the community builders' staff was hired, the roles were not adequately defined by HUD. It is still in the process of developing and defining the role, even though most of the positions have been filled for several months. According to the information we have from the IG, 76 percent of the external community builders' initial hiring was not in accordance with Federal selection rules. The hiring appeared to be political despite the assurances to the contrary.

The FHA Commissioner in charge of the multifamily housing has written:

> Community Builders in certain areas have misinterpreted or overstepped their role in dealing with HUD's identified multifamily projects.

In his letter, the Commissioner states:

It cannot be stressed too strongly that the Community Builders must communicate with the appropriate HUD staff.

In my view, community builders are not acting as HUD staff. They are acting in the capacity of lobbyists or public affairs representatives for HUD. HUD already has a public affairs office. The public affairs office is providing the direction to these people. The Department recently directed the community builders to reach out to the media to voice strong opposition to the House of Representatives appropriations fiscal year 2000 budget. I can state that they are also reaching out to lobby Congress to keep the community builders. I don't need to fund a group of people whose job it is, in addition to all the other normal functions of HUD, to lobby me and tell the news media how valuable they are when they are only on for 2 years and, according to the information we have, have not even in some instances been able to define the job of HUD and the roles and the programs of HUD adequately.

I don't believe there is an amendment pending. We will have more to say about that at length if it is brought up in the form of the amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 1785

(Purpose: To provide a period of time for consultation and evaluation of any realignment plan for the VISN 12 health care delivery system)

Mr. BOND. On behalf of Senators FITZGERALD and DURBIN, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND], for Mr. FITZGERALD, for himself, and Mr. DURBIN, proposes an amendment numbered 1785.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. . Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, none of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this Act for the Medical Care appropriation of the Department of Veterans Affairs may be obligated for the realignment of the health care delivery system in VISN 12 until 60 days after the Secretary of Veterans Affairs certifies that the Department has (a) consulted with veterans organizations, medical school affiliates, employee representatives, State veterans and health associations, and other interested parties with respect to the realignment plan to be implemented, and (b) made available to the Congress and the public information from the consultations regarding possible impacts on the accessibility of veterans health care services to affected veterans.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, this amendment has been cleared on both sides. There had been great concern in the Chicago area about the realignment of the VA facilities. This measure simply assures appropriate procedures are followed so all parties involved have an opportunity to express themselves.

This has been a longstanding concern with the VA. We do believe they should continue to move forward, as we said before, in closing unneeded facilities. But in doing so, it is vitally important they go through the proper processes which allow those affected to have a say and a stake in the process.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, first of all, I thank Senator BOND for working with the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN. I know Senator FITZGERALD also had a keen interest in this particular issue. I am ready to also accept this amendment and wish to note, though, this seems to be a pattern with VA, where our colleagues in the Congress have to keep giving them commonsense criteria on how to decide what is the best way to serve veterans.

We know we are in the veterans' health care business. We know we are not in the veterans' real estate business. But surely, clear criteria and talking with the people most affected would go a long way.

There was a saying in the early Polish Parliament that said:

Nothing about us without us.

I think that is the way the veterans feel. That is the way the Members of the Senate feel: Hello, Veterans Administration. Please, get to work on these criteria and follow what the Senate is telling you.

I am happy to accept this amendment and urge its adoption.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. If there be no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 1785) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, we thank the Senators from Illinois for working with us on what we think is a very positive step forward that will allow the VA to perhaps shift resources to serve veterans better. We are very pleased we could fashion an appropriate format for developing criteria to make sure the process is done in a fair and equitable manner.

I see the Senator from Ohio. I believe he has two amendments to offer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

AMENDMENT NO. 1782

(Purpose: To prohibit the use of funds by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for the establishment at any field center of a research capability that would duplicate a research capability that exists at another field center)

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I send amendment No. 1782 to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

The Senator from Ohio [Mr. DEWINE] proposes an amendment numbered 1782.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

On page 113, between lines 16 and 17, insert the following:

SEC. 431. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, none of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration by this Act may be obligated or expended for purposes of establishing at a field center of the Administration any research capability that would duplicate a research capability that currently exists at another field center of the Administration.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, let me first thank my friend from Missouri, Senator BOND, and my colleague from Maryland, Senator MIKULSKI. They have produced, I believe, under some very tough, difficult circumstances, a very excellent, very fair, and very balanced bill. Members of the Senate are certainly indebted to them for the tremendous work they have put in and the product they have produced.

The amendment I have just sent to the desk is a very commonsense amendment. In fact, I believe it really builds upon the very commonsense language included in the VA–HUD appropriation bill committee report. That part of the committee report states the committee is concerned about the duplication of work being performed throughout the NASA field centers. It instructs NASA, by April 15 of the year 2000, to produce a preliminary action plan to map out what each of the field center's future roles and responsibilities will be.

The most important part of this report language states:

NASA should identify where a center has or is expected to develop the same or similar expertise and capacity as another center, including justification for this need.

I do not believe, at a time when NASA's overall funding is increasing, NASA should be duplicating any capabilities that already exist at one center at a different center. It just makes no sense. This really defies logic. My amendment would simply prevent NASA from spending any money to duplicate capabilities that already exist.

Let me say in conclusion, I appreciate that the authors of this bill are

willing to accept this amendment. Let me pledge to the authors of the bill, I will continue to work with them and continue to work with NASA to resolve this issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I commend the Senator from Ohio on his staunch support and advocacy of the programs at the Glenn Space Center. Because of his very strong advocacy, we included funds for the future launch program and other things that we think are vital to the long-term interests of NASA. We expect those programs will go forward. My view is, I am willing to accept this amendment and the additional amendment he proposes to ensure that NASA preserves the integrity of the mission of the Glenn Space Center.

Having said that, I have some problems. The amendment, if finally adopted into law, would be too constraining and might result in unintended consequences. We need to call NASA's attention to these problems but also give them needed flexibility that might not be there.

That said, I expect NASA to operate in good faith in maintaining the programs at the Glenn Space Center. This is critical. I expect NASA can resolve the concerns of Senator DEWINE so these provisions can be dropped in conference. I might note for my colleagues, the Senate report for NASA already states that ''each NASA center be vested with specific responsibilities and activities.''

I think we are all moving in the same direction. I believe the Senator's admonitions included in this amendment that will be accepted here should suffice.

So I urge we accept the amendment. I will urge we accept the second amendment as well.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I concur with the analysis offered by Senator BOND. Rather than simply repeat, I concur in his comments. I say that to the Senator from Ohio.

You have the Ames Research Center in Ohio. It has served the Nation well. It needs to be respected for what it has given to the Nation. As we look to the future of NASA, there needs to be the kind of analysis we talked about. So I concur with both the comments and the strategy offered by the Senator from Missouri.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent Senator VOINOVICH be added to this amendment and the subsequent amendment I will offer in a moment.

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

Mr. BOND. I think we are ready to vote on the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 1782) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 1781

(Purpose: To prohibit the use of funds by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration for the transfer of research aircraft from Glenn Research Center, Ohio, to any other field center)

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

The Senator from Ohio [Mr. DEWINE] proposes an amendment numbered 1781.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

On page 113, between lines 16 and 17, insert the following:

SEC. 431, None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration by this Act may be obligated or expended for purposes of transferring any research aircraft from Glen Research Center, Ohio, to another field center of the Administration.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, again the chairman and ranking member have indicated they accept this amendment. I appreciate their consideration very much.

I want to say in regard to the previous amendment, I appreciate the comments. I am sure this is a matter that can be resolved in consultation with NASA. We are all trying to achieve the same thing. I fully expect this will be done.

Mr. BOND. With the same caveat added on the first amendment, this side is willing to accept the amendment. I commend the Senator for dealing with this very real concern, and I trust this will send the appropriate message to NASA.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. If there be no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 1781) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. SCHUMER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. As though in morning business?

Mr. SCHUMER. It is on this bill. I don't need to ask unanimous consent, do I?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. What a great body.

Mr. President, I rise today to share my concerns about the VA–HUD appropriations bill. I first thank the chairman and the ranking member for their efforts on the bill. This is a bill with many important programs that are very popular which has a limit to funding. I know how hard it is to please everybody on this bill. Under the budget caps, it is next to impossible to find the money to do what is necessary. So I appreciate that.

But I do rise to voice my concerns. I will support the amendment to be offered by the Senator from Massachusetts, Senator KERRY, if he should offer it, to add an additional 50,000 section 8 affordable housing vouchers, because this amendment is a step in the right direction. I hope the Senate will adopt the amendment and work with the House to ensure that it is part of any package sent to the President.

New York City and New York State have a severe housing shortage. It is not just in New York City. In New York City, there are over 400,000 people who need homes. In Rochester, there are nearly 20,000 families with severe housing needs. In New York City, there are over 150,000 families on public housing waiting lists alone; and 220,000 families waiting for section 8 help. The waiting list is as long as 8 years in each case.

In Syracuse, families must wait 2 and a half years before they get section 8 help. In Rochester, there are 1,700 families waiting for public housing, and 4,500 are waiting for section 8. The bill will make these families wait even longer.

The bill adds no new section 8 vouchers, and the public housing is dramatically underfunded.

New York State Comptroller Carl McCall—our excellent comptroller—issued a report in July highlighting that New York City's public housing needs over $7 billion in major repairs.

Under this bill, I fear these properties will further deteriorate, threatening the health and safety of children and seniors, the disabled and veterans who live in these communities who depend on this Congress to meet our obligations.

Our Nation has invested over $90 billion to house the poorest Americans. This bill, I believe, uses these investments as spare parts for other parts of the budget. Let's put a face on the budget.

Many of those who are helped by the housing programs that are underfunded by this budget are the most vulnerable in our society. About half of section 8 beneficiaries are children. Over 40 percent of those in public housing are children.

Last year, Congress did take a step forward. We authorized 100,000 additional section 8 vouchers in the public housing reform bill. We made progress by adding 50,000. This year, however, the Senate and the House decided the Nation does not need any more.

The hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, and many more other Americans, waiting for safe and affordable housing need more than the bill offers.

About 5 and a half million families spend more than half their income on housing. Many of those are in New York State. Recent studies have indicated that for many of these families the situation is getting worse. The Kerry amendment will help them.

The section 8 vouchers that this amendment funds will help Congress fulfill its promise to working families, particularly families leaving welfare. If we are committed to strong communities and want to shrink the welfare rolls, new section 8 authority can only help.

If the bill was absolutely perfect for veterans, but shortchanged housing, I would be a little happier. Although I feel strongly about section 8 public housing, the bill also achieves only a bear minimum for veterans.

As other Senators have pointed out, 99 of us are on record that a full $3 billion over the President's request is needed. I agree with this and I am disappointed that the Wellstone amendment failed.

Veterans hospitals across my State have laid off hundreds of staff this year alone. Despite promises from the Department of Veterans Affairs, I believe that even more staff will have to go if this bill goes through.

So, in conclusion, I appreciate the job, the difficult job that the chairman and the ranking member face. It is not easy when there are so many important needs and so few funds. I just wish either we could find the extra money or at the very least the priorities were a little different because of housing and veterans needs that are so pressing in my State.

I thank the chairman and ranking member for their courtesy.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from New York for his very moving comments. I agree with him that we need more housing. I stated earlier my concerns that section 8 is not providing more housing. This is a long-term problem on which we must work. There are many challenges in the section 8 program, not the least of which is, as I said earlier, being able to continue the section 8 assistance for those who have it. So I will not pursue this discussion any longer. We will have an opportunity to do so tomorrow.

I believe we are winding up.

Mr. President, I do have one other amendment I would like to offer which simply calls on the GAO to conduct a study of possible revisions to the capital structure of the Federal Home Loan Bank System and report to the Congress not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this act.

I am sure everybody is looking forward to having another study from GAO.

AMENDMENT NO. 1786

I send this amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative assistant read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND] proposes an amendment numbered 1786.

Mr. BOND. I ask unanimous consent reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. . GAO STUDY ON FEDERAL HOME LOAN BANK CAPITAL.

(a) STUDY.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct a study of—

(1) possible revisions to the capital structure of the Federal Home Loan Bank System, including the need for—

(A) more permanent capital;

(B) a statutory leverage ratio; and

(C) a risk-based capital structure; and

(2) what impact such revisions might have on the operations of the Federal Home Loan Bank System, including the obligation of the Federal Home Loan Bank System under section 21B(f)(2)(C) of the Federal Home Loan Bank Act.

(b) REPORT TO CONGRESS—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States shall submit a report to the Congress on the results of the study conducted under subsection (a).

Mr. BOND. It is a simple amendment. I urge the adoption of the amendment.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, this side has reviewed the amendment. We think a GAO study on this topic will definitely be in the national interest. I am willing to accept the amendment.

Mr. BOND. I thank the Senator.

I ask unanimous consent the amendment be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, without objection, the amendment is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 1786) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. I move to reconsider the vote.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I wish to convey to the chairman of the subcommittee that the Senator from Massachusetts said he would be ready to go first thing in the morning. So I know of no other amendments this evening where the Senators are ready to offer them. My suggestion would be that we close out this evening and begin bright and early with the Kerry of Massachusetts amendments on section 8 and also the issue of housing for AIDS patients.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I share the Senator's hope. It does appear there will not be any further business on this bill tonight. We are awaiting the final OK from the leadership.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all remaining first-degree amendments, other than one for each leader and a manager's package and a measure relating to Y2K by Senators DODD and BENNETT, to the HUD-VA appropriations bill be relevant or sense-of-the-Senate language. I further ask unanimous consent that all second-degree amendments be relevant to the first-degree amendment they propose to amend.

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

Mr. AKAKA addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I take the floor to commend my friends, the chairman and the ranking member, for their efforts in coming forward with a bill that provides valuable funding for veterans and key housing programs.

However, I urge my colleagues to provide additional funding for section 8 vouchers. We have talked a lot about this. In my State of Hawaii, there is a 20-month wait for public housing and a 44-month wait for section 8 vouchers. Without additional funding for these programs, Hawaii's residents will only see an increase in the waiting period for public housing and section 8 vouchers. We must ensure that adequate funding is provided for these important programs which benefit so many people.

Lastly, I wish to also urge my colleagues to revisit the Community Builders Program and provide HUD with the ability to continue this valuable program. In my State, this program has provided a valuable service for Hawaii's low-income families.

Once again, I commend the chairman and ranking member for making very tough decisions in crafting this legislation. I know it was not easy, and I am pleased the committee sought additional funding for our Nation's veterans' health care system. But I hope we also understand the need for affordable housing, and I urge the committee to revisit this issue in conference.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my good friend from Hawaii for his perceptive comments. We will be happy to discuss those issues. We appreciate the insights and look forward to working with him to attempt to deal with the specific problems he finds in his beautiful State. I do appreciate his coming to share with us his views.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity first to applaud Senator BOND and Senator MIKULSKI for the tremendous job they have done balancing the demands of some of our most important programs with a very limited budget. The Fiscal Year 2000 VA–HUD and Independent Agencies appropriations bill which they have crafted is a good bill and stands in stark contrast to the House passed bill which included some devastating cuts to a number of very important housing and community development programs. The Chairman and Ranking Member were very responsive to my requests and concerns with the bill as were their staffs.

I do remain concerned about funding for several HUD programs and I hope that there will be an opportunity in conference to revisit these accounts and provide some additional funding. In particular, the failure to fund incremental section 8 vouchers will cause a real hardship for the thousands of families across the country on wait lists for rental assistance. In Vermont alone the wait for Section 8 rental assistance can stretch for years and some lists have been closed completely because of the extensive wait. The booming economy is great for business but not so good for low-income families who are finding themselves priced out of the housing market. More and more people in Vermont and throughout the country are paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing. Last year Congress authorized 100,000 vouchers for FY 2000. The Administration has included those vouchers in their budget request. We should include funding for those vouchers in the FY 2000 VA–HUD Appropriations bill.

I would also like to voice my concern for the funding provided for the Youthbuild program and for the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation. Youthbuild is a wonderful example of a program that is helping develop leadership skills in at-risk youth while providing much needed affordable housing. The program has been an unqualified success in Vermont where Youthbuild participants have constructed and rehabilitated affordable housing in Burlington's Enterprise Community. From weatherizing homes to building single and multi-family housing, Youthbuild Burlington has proven the value of this program in investing at-risk youth in their communities while building skills for the future, and meeting the critical need for quality affordable housing in Burlington. Earlier this year I joined 49 of my colleagues in a letter to Senator BOND and Senator MIKULSKI supporting a $75 million appropriation for the Youthbuild program. Unfortunately the bill we are considering includes only $42.5 million for this valuable program. The Department's ability to offer grants to new Youthbuild programs or provide additional support for existing programs would be greatly reduced by this funding level. I hope that we will be able to increase funding for Youthbuild in Conference.

The Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation (NRC) is another important HUD program which received a significant funding cut. This bill reduces funding for the NRC by a third. The NRC has been an invaluable partner in the drive to increase home ownership in Vermont and throughout the nation. Four homeownership centers in Vermont are currently implementing the Neighborworks model of ''full cycle lending'' which has made such a difference in bringing the opportunity of homeownership to lower income families in my state. Time after time, these homeownership centers have allowed families who would not otherwise have been considered by commercial lenders, to secure mortgages for affordable homes, and helped families who would otherwise have suffered foreclosure remain in their homes. The level of funding proposed in the Senate bill would prevent 12,000 families currently in the pipeline from receiving further assistance, and would result in 8,700 fewer families realizing the dream of homeownership and 80,000 families not receiving homebuyer or foreclosure prevention counseling. I hope that we can prevent those results by providing additional funding for this valuable program in conference.

Finally, I would like to once again express my support for the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) program. The Senate bill provides $80 million for this important program, $15 million below last year's level and $45 million below the President's request. The CDFI Fund is an economic development initiative that was adopted with overwhelming bi-partisan support several years ago. The program is an important investment tool for economically distressed communities. CDFI leverages private investment to stretch every Federal dollar. This program is working effectively in communities across the country, and I believe additional resources are needed to maximize the value of this important federal investment.

I look forward to working with Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BOND during conference to secure additional funding for these programs.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise to draw attention to FEMA's proposed Public Assistance Insurance Rule that is currently pending at the Office of Management and Budget. The rule is referenced in the report language of both the House and Senate VA–HUD Appropriations bills.

I support FEMA's efforts to reduce the costs of federal disasters. However, the proposed rule, in its current form, would require public institutions to purchase ''all hazard'' insurance for public buildings. This includes local school districts, cities, non-profit hospitals, universities and other non-profits.

California risk managers and insurance brokers have told me there currently is no insurance available to public institutions. They would be unable to obtain, at any price, the coverage required by the FEMA rule.

Even if insurance were to be available, it is highly unlikely that the individual insurers would be able to pay out in the event of a catastrophic earthquake. The financial implications for California are enormous and should be considered before implementing the proposed FEMA rule.

During Committee markup, I was told by Senator BOND that cities and counties that could not obtain hazard insurance would be exempt from the FEMA rule. FEMA says this is not the case. I believe the FEMA proposal is ambiguous in many areas and it needs to be more thoroughly examined. I am concerned that FEMA may be rushing to implement this regulation without a thorough understanding of its true impact.

The House VA–HUD bill requests a GAO study of this issue before moving forward with the proposed rule. The Senate bill makes no mention of a GAO study, and supports the proposed rule change. It is my sincere hope that we can work together to develop an approach similar to that of the House. I believe that we must have an independent analysis of this important and potentially costly issue before it is finalized.

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, pages 78 and 79 of the fiscal year 2000 VA, HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriations bill and page 83 of the accompanying Committee Report contain language regarding implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. During the debate on this appropriation last year, we agreed that EPA should not use appropriated funds for the purpose of issuing regulations to implement the Kyoto Protocol, unless and until such treaty is ratified by the United States. We also agreed that our intent was not to interfere with important and on-going voluntary energy conservation and climate change related programs and initiatives—such as the Climate Challenge program, Green Lights, Energy Star, the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles. These programs have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by increasing energy efficiency across a broad range of domestic industrial

sectors. These programs make sense for other reasons as well, including saving consumers and businesses money, creating export opportunities, reducing our dependence on foreign oil, and addressing local air pollution problems.

I ask the distinguished manager of the bill, Senator BOND, whether the language in the bill and the report this year maintain the agreement that we reached last year on this issue?

Mr. BOND. The Senator is correct. The language cited by the Senator reflects the agreement reached on this issue during the conference last year. Previously funded, ongoing projects and voluntary initiatives can go forward. We expect the agency to spend the money in an effective and appropriate manner.

Mr. CHAFEE. I thank the Senator.

BETHUNE-COOKMAN

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I rise today with my friend from Florida, Senator GRAHAM, to engage the distinguished Chairman, Senator BOND, in a colloquy. Specifically, I wish to make the Chairman aware of an important priority for the State of Florida which was not funded in this bill. Last year, the public housing reform act passed by Congress contained authorization for the construction of a community services student union building at Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida. Accordingly, we included this project as one of our important priorities for the legislation before us today.

Mr. GRAHAM. I join my friend from Florida in support of this project. The building will serve as a full-service facility not only for the college's 2,300 students, but also the 28,000 citizens of West Daytona Beach. The facility would allow the college to expand its long record of exemplary service to low-income and disadvantaged residents in the community. I would appreciate the Chairman working with his colleagues on the conference to find funding for this important project in FY 2000.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my friends from Florida for their comments and I appreciate their support for the facility. Should this matter come before the conference, you can be assured I will give it due consideration. I thank my friends for bringing this matter to my attention.

Mr. MACK. I thank the Chairman for his assurances.

REUSABLE AND ALTERNATIVE WATER PROJECTS

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I rise today with my friend from Florida, Senator GRAHAM, to engage the distinguished Chairman, Senator BOND, in a colloquy. Specifically, I wish to make the Chairman aware of two critical projects in Florida that did not receive funding in this bill. The first is the City of West Palm Beach's water reuse project. This wetlands-based potable water reuse program is critical not only to the water supply of the City of West Palm Beach but also to the Everglades restoration effort.

During dry season, the City takes water from Lake Okeechobee which is a critical primary source of water for the Everglades. West Palm Beach is attempting to eliminate this water use through their innovative water reuse project. The City has received federal support in each of the past three fiscal years. Work is progressing on schedule, but a final installment of federal funding is needed to complete the work and bring the project on line.

I would point out to the Chairman that this project is funded in the House VA–HUD and Independent Agencies appropriations bill. I would urge the Chairman to work with our House colleagues during the upcoming conference to ensure that funding for this critical project is completed in this fiscal year.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I appreciate the comments of my friend from Florida and understand the importance of this project to his State. I will do all I can with my colleagues in the House to secure funding for this project during the conference.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, if I could have the attention of the Chairman for a moment to address another important project to the State of Florida, the Alternative Water Source Projects. These central Florida water projects are providing valuable assistance to local governments in devising alternative and expanded water supplies for the region. To date, the federal government has provided $46.6 million toward this important effort. This project was also funded in the House of Representatives but did not receive funding in this bill. I would also appreciate the Chairman's consideration of Florida's ongoing water-related needs as this bill goes to conference with the House.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Florida for his comments and understand the merits of this project. I would like to assure both my colleagues that I will do my best to work with the other members of the conference to provide funding for this project.

Mr. MACK. I thank the Chairman for his assurances.

WATER TREATMENT

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I rise today with my friend from Florida, Senator GRAHAM, to engage the distinguished Chairman, Senator BOND, in a colloquy. Specifically, I wish to make the Chairman aware of an important priority for the State of Florida which was not funded in this bill. The city of Sarasota, Florida has long been working with the federal government to address its water treatment system problems. Many of the city's residents are still on septic tanks and the federal government has been interested in addressing this problem because of polluted runoff into the Sarasota Bay National Estuary.

Mr. GRAHAM. I would agree with the comments of my Florida colleague and add that the federal government has been working through the National Estuary Program to help it address this problem in previous years. During this year's appropriations process, we requested a grant out of the State and tribal assistance grant portion of this bill to continue this process. It would be my hope that the Chairman would work with us and with the other members of the upcoming conference committee to find funding for this project. It has the full support of Florida's House delegation and I would appreciate the Chairman's support as we move toward the next stage of the process.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I thank my friends from Florida for their comments and I am familiar with this project from previous years. If an opportunity arises in the conference to fund it, I will work with my colleagues from the House to do so. I thank my friends for bringing this matter to my attention.

Mr. MACK. I thank the Chairman for his assurances.

NORTHEAST STATES FOR COORDINATED AIR USE MANAGEMENT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to engage the Chairman in a colloquy. First, let me thank the Senator from Missouri for his diligence in balancing funding for the wide variety of programs within the VA–HUD Appropriations bill under very difficult budget constraints. Under these constraints, you were able to increase funding for the Environmental Programs and Management over Fiscal Year 1999. However, one very important organization in the Northeast was not funded this year. For more than a decade, this body has supported an organization called the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management or (NESCAUM) with a modest $300,000 line item. NESCAUM is a non-profit organization that provides technical assistance to the Northeast states and the nation on a host of important air quality issues. By providing recommendations for consistent regional action, NESCAUM helps both states and regulated industry avoid a costly patchwork of differing regulatory requirements. While I know that this is a very difficult year, I believe that NESCAUM provides a valuable service and is strongly supported by the Senators from our region. At a minimum, I believe the Environmental Protection Agency should be encouraged to allocate $300,000 from the Environmental Programs and Management account to NESCAUM.

Mr. BOND. I recognize that we have provided NESCAUM this support for many years. The same can be said for

several entities that do not receive line-item funding in this year's legislation. However, recognizing the broad support for NESCAUM's activities from a number of states, I concur in supporting encouraging EPA that it seek to provide NESCAUM with $300,000 of general support consistent with previous years.

Mr. LEAHY. I thank the Chairman and look forward to working with him and the Environmental Protection Agency to continue the good work of this organization. It has been a model of state collaboration. Most recently, its efforts to develop market-based approaches to air quality improvement have helped move our region toward specific steps to reduce emissions within our states.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I opposed the District of Columbia appropriations conference report for a number of reasons but the reason I speak out today is my grave concern with provisions in the report that continue to prohibit the government of the District of Columbia from engaging in needle exchange programs. These valuable programs curb the spread of HIV/AIDS by allowing injecting drug users to exchange their used, potentially contaminated needles for sterile ones. Yet, the District of Columbia appropriations conference report not only banned the use of Federal funds but prohibited the District from using its own monies to support this valuable program.

We in the Senate wisely did not include such a provision in the DC appropriations bill that passed this body, and it should not have been in the conference report.

Therefore, I opposed the conference report because it was an attack on this city's public health. AIDS is the leading cause of death for D.C. residents ages 30 to 44, an AIDS death rate seven times the national average. What this conference report did to needle exchange programs was both unnecessary and unjustifiable. Indeed, including a needle exchange prohibition in this conference report is a hazard to the public health.

The prohibition in this report is unnecessary because there was already a ban on Federal funding for needle exchange programs. This ban dates to 1989, when Congress declared that no Federal funds could be spent to support needle exchange programs until there was scientific evidence that the programs, first, could reduce the spread of HIV and, second, did not encourage drug use. There are thus two main questions facing us as we decide the fate of federal needle exchange program funding: Do these programs achieve their public health purpose of slowing the spread of a deadly, infectious disease? And do these programs compromise our drug abuse prevention efforts by encouraging illicit drug use? Science has provided answers to these questions.

A preponderance of evidence shows that needle exchange programs cause a decrease in HIV infection rates. The National Institutes of Health found that needle exchange programs reduce risk behaviors by as much as 80 percent in injecting drug users while reducing HIV infection rates by an estimated 30 percent. In addition, a 1997 study published in Lancet, the respected British medical journal, compared HIV seroprevalence over time among injecting drug users in 29 cities with needle exchange programs and 52 cities without needle exchange programs. While seroprevalence increased by 5.9 percent per year in the 52 cities without needle exchange programs, it decreased by 5.8 percent per year in the 29 cities with programs.

Similarly, in the city of Baltimore, HIV infections among IV drug users have declined 30 percent since the start of its needle exchange in 1993 while the infection rate has increased 5 percent in Baltimore County, which has no exchange program. Numerous studies also show that needle exchange programs decrease needle sharing; decrease unsafe disposal of syringes; decrease re-use and passing of syringes; and increase needle disinfection.

Needle exchanges also do not encourage drug use—they compliment our efforts to stop drug use. Needle exchange programs can be linked with greater entry of addicts into drug treatment. After using a needle exchange program for more than 6 months, 58 percent of participants report having enrolled in detox or drug treatment. In New Haven, Connecticut, drug treatment entries doubled in the three years following the opening to its needle exchange. In Tacoma, Washington, needle exchange programs constitute the largest referral source for drug treatment, accounting for 43 percent of treatment participants.

In addition, injection drug users referred by needle exchange programs are more likely to enter drug treatment and to be retained, even in the face of the greater severity of drug use and psychosocial problems common among this population. Needle exchanges therefore supply a valuable opportunity to provide additional preventive services to difficult-to-reach individuals. Furthermore, studies show that needle exchange programs decrease the frequency of injection among participants and do not tempt individuals to begin using drugs.

These overwhelmingly conclusive results have fostered wide support for improving access to sterile needles. Groups supporting needle exchange programs include: the American Medical Association, the National Institutes of Health, the National Academy of Sciences, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Foundation for AIDS Research, the American Public Health Association, the National Association of County & City Health Officials, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors. As a National Institutes of Health Consensus Statement concludes ''There is no longer any doubt that these programs work, yet there is a striking disjunction between what science dictates and what policy delivers. . . . Can the opposition to needle exchange in the United States be justified on scientific grounds? Our answer is simple and emphatic—no.''

Because of this evidence I believe policies that inhibit the creation and expansion of needle exchange programs are unjustifiable. I am baffled and outraged by such policies. We all come to Washington to make laws that help the American people, that combat social ills and that raise the quality of life in our country. We all want to win the war on drugs. We all want to stop the spread of HIV. So then why, when we have evidence that needle exchange programs work, do we continue to put millions of citizens at unnecessary risk? Cutting funding to these programs is a death sentence to thousands of men, women, and children.

I want you all to think for a moment about those children. It is imperative to realize that needle exchange programs go far beyond aiding addicts; they protects the partners and children of addicts. 70 percent of cases of women of childbearing age with HIV are directly or indirectly linked to IV drug use, causing 75 percent of the cases of babies born HIV positive to be the result of the use of dirty needles. For this reason, the American Academy of Pediatrics supports needle exchange programs as a means of reducing the spread of HIV to infants, children and adolescents. These programs are pro-family and pro-child.

We should not be undermining the District of Columbia's local control of pubic health decisions and to setting a dangerous precedent for the many states and localities that fund needle exchange programs through a combination of local, state, and private funds. Right now more than 110 communities in 30 states use needle exchange programs to slow the spread of HIV. Despite continued lack of federal funding, needle exchange programs have expanded in terms of the number of syringes exchanged, the geographic distribution of programs, and the range of services offered. Needle exchange programs were able to do this because