

SENATE—Wednesday, October 13, 1999

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Today our prayer is taken from the Jewish Book of Service, Daily Prayers. Let us pray.

We gratefully acknowledge that You are the eternal one, our God, and the God of our fathers evermore; the Rock of our life and the Shield of our salvation. You are He who exists to all ages. We will therefore render thanks unto You and declare Your praise for our lives, which are delivered into Your hands, and for our souls, which are confided in Your care; for Your goodness, which is displayed to us daily; for Your wonders and Your bounty, which are at all times given unto us. You are the most gracious, for Your mercies never fail. Evermore do we hope in You, O Lord our God. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable WAYNE ALLARD, a Senator from the State of Colorado, led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALLARD). The Senator from Mississippi.

SCHEDULE

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, for the information of Senators, yesterday the Senate reached an agreement for 6 hours of debate on the Agriculture conference report. That time will expire today at 3:30 p.m. Senators may expect a vote on the conference report to occur then unless time is yielded back. The time will be controlled 2½ hours on each side, with 1 hour under the control of the Senator from Minnesota, Mr. WELLSTONE.

During the rest of the session today, the Senate will go back into executive session to complete consideration of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. There are approximately 3 hours remaining for debate, so a vote is expected to occur prior to adjournment today. The Senate is also expected to begin consideration of the campaign finance reform legislation or any conference reports that may be available for action by the Senate.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2000—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of the conference report accompanying H.R. 1906, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

Conference report to accompanying H.R. 1906, making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, under the agreement, I yield myself such time as I may consume on the Agriculture conference report.

As Senators will remember, we invoked cloture on this conference report yesterday. I think the vote was 79–20. So by a very decisive vote, the Senate has expressed its will that we should complete action on this conference report. So debate has been limited, by agreement, to 6 hours, as described in the announcement to the Senate.

I am very pleased we have reached this point. This has been a very difficult and hard to resolve conference agreement. There have been a lot of issues extraneous to the appropriations process this year that had to be considered because they were raised either in the Senate or during consideration of the conference report.

We have reached the point, though, that it is time to complete action on this conference report. We are appropriating funds for the fiscal year that began on October 1. So we have already begun the fiscal year during which the funds we will approve today will be needed. These funds are going to be allocated for administration by the Department of Agriculture among a wide range of programs. Sixty billion dollars are made available under the terms of this bill for programs of the Department of Agriculture including agricultural research, food and nutrition service, conservation programs, agricultural support programs, and rural development. We also have the responsibility of funding the Food and Drug Administration and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission activities under this bill. So funds are provided for those agencies as well.

I am very pleased that the conference agreement reflects a very strong commitment to the food safety initiatives. The President has been very active in his effort to increase funding for a number of those programs. Funds are provided for that—not all that the President wanted for every aspect of the program, but it is a well-balanced program.

We also fund the Food Safety Inspection Service of the Department of Agriculture. Under that program, we have inspection that is conducted at food processing plants throughout the country, trying to make sure the food that is made available in the marketplace in our country is safe and wholesome, trying to alleviate concerns and the risks of foodborne illnesses.

I daresay we have the best record of any country in the world in protecting our citizens from foodborne illnesses, and this is due in large part to those industries and those people who are involved every day in preparing and marketing the foods that make up the U.S. food supply. So they are the ones who really deserve the credit, in my opinion, and we very often do not recognize that. Government officials like to take the credit for just about everything, and I think that is wrong. In our society, we have a lot of people who work very hard and in a very conscientious way with the latest technologies to try to help make this country the best in the world, and they have done it.

We try to support the activities of food processors and producers, but we sometimes fall short. This year, for example, we have had a very serious problem in production agriculture because of low commodity prices. There is an oversupply of some commodities in the world market that has depressed prices a great deal. We have seen a lot of weather-related disasters strike production agriculture this year. So in this bill there is a response to that problem. A generous disaster assistance program totaling \$8.7 billion is included in this conference report, providing emergency assistance for production agriculture.

The head of the Mississippi Farm Bureau was interviewed after the House approved this conference report to get his reaction to the need in agriculture for the funds that were provided in this bill. Here is what David Waide of the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation said about this emergency assistance: It “could well mean the difference in massive foreclosures and the ability to continue farming” in Mississippi. “It’s that serious,” he said, “because of the market situation and the extremely