

USDA Section 32 funds and appropriating an additional \$150 million to Section 32 will pave the way for the Secretary of Agriculture to provide much-needed relief to pork producers.

According to the University of Missouri, cash receipts for the U.S. pork industry are expected to average less than \$9 billion in 1998, a reduction of over \$4 billion from the 1997 level of \$13.2 billion. Although hog prices have recovered from the historic lows experienced over the October 1998–January 1999 period, they remain far below the average cost of production. Economists have now estimated the market failed to reflect normal supply and demand conditions last Fall when hog prices plummeted to 8 cents per pound. Studies indicate that under normal supply and demand conditions prices would have fallen to between \$25.87 a hundredweight and \$29.41 a hundredweight.

Funds that will be available for direct payments under Section 32 will not compensate pork producers for all the staggering losses experienced in recent months. However, these funds will enable producers to relieve some financial pressure making it easier to survive until profitability returns.

It is critical the Secretary of Agriculture understand the purpose of the pending amendment is to supplement existing Section 32 funds and provide emergency assistance to pork producers. We encourage the Secretary to work with Members of Congress and the agricultural community to develop the guidelines under which the funds will be administered. We do not support using the same parameters used for the recent Small Hog Operator Program.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

CHARLES E. KRUSE,  
*President.*

MARCH 18, 1999.

Hon. JOHN ASHCROFT,  
*U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.*

DEAR SENATOR ASHCROFT: The American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Pork Producers Council commend you for your efforts to help pork producers who have suffered due to the lowest prices since the Great Depression.

We support your amendment to the FY 1999 supplemental appropriations bill, which would provide \$150 million to USDA for additional aid to hog farmers. As you well know, U.S. pork producers lost over \$2.5 billion in equity in 1998 and are expected to lose another \$1 billion in equity in 1999. The nation's pork producers are facing another difficult year due to continued depressed prices and are looking to Congress for direction with regard to the recent economic disaster faced by the U.S. pork industry.

AFBF and NPPC appreciate your efforts on behalf of the nation's pork producers and look forward to working with you on behalf of agriculture.

Sincerely,

DEAN KLECKNER,  
*President, American  
Farm Bureau Fed-  
eration.*  
JOHN MCNUTT,  
*President, National  
Pork Producers  
Council.*●

#### EXTENDING THE PERIOD FOR WHICH CHAPTER 12 OF TITLE 11, UNITED STATES CODE, IS REENACTED

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 808, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 808) to extend for 6 additional months the period for which chapter 12 of title 11, United States Code, is reenacted.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill be printed at the appropriate place in the RECORD.

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

The bill (H.R. 808) was considered read the third time and passed.

#### AMENDING THE SMALL BUSINESS ACT

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 774, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 774) to amend the Small Business Act to change the conditions of participation and provide an authorization of appropriations for the women's business center program.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, today we in the United States Senate have an opportunity to take an important step in strengthening the Women's Business Center Program at the Small Business Administration. The "Women's Business Center Amendment Act of 1999" authorizes SBA to make grants totaling up to \$11 million annually to Women's Business Centers throughout the United States.

During the past decade, the number of women-owned small businesses has exploded. Women-owned small businesses are the fastest growing segment of our nation's business community. Years ago, there was an advertising campaign slogan proclaiming that women "had come a long way." I find that slogan very applicable to the plateau now reached by women entrepreneurs. During this time, women business owners have established them-

selves as a key component of our small business community, which has been the engine driving our economy during the 1990's.

The research foundation arm of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) has conducted studies which show that women no longer are having more trouble than men obtaining bank loans. However, obtaining a loan does not guarantee a business' success. In fact, many small businesses that start out well capitalized end up failing. Success of a small business is usually dependent on the owner's management capabilities. Women's Business Centers offer help to women entrepreneurs who are looking to start a business or who already have a business by providing them with business and education training, including marketing, finance, and management assistance.

For the past three years, I have worked with Senator DOMENICI Senator KERRY, and members of the Committee on Small Business first to save and later to expand the Women's Business Center Program. In 1996, when the Administration sought to zero-out the budget for the program, I helped lead the effort to earmark funds for the program within the SBA FY 1997 budget. Senator DOMENICI, Senator KERRY and I sponsored the "Women's Business Centers Act of 1997," which expanded the program from \$4 million to \$8 million per year. This bill was incorporated into the "Small Business Reauthorization Act of 1997" (Public Law 105-135).

Last year, I sponsored the "Year 2000 Readiness and Small Business Programs Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998," which included an increase from \$8 million to \$12 million and made other reforms in the Women's Business Center Program. This bill passed the Senate unanimously; unfortunately, the House of Representatives was not able to act on the bill before Congress adjourned. In light of the pressing demand to expand the authorization for the Women's Business Center Program, I applaud the Chairman of the House Committee on Small Business, JIM TALENT, and the Committee's ranking Democrat, NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ, for their efforts to push through House-passage of the bill so quickly this year.

The "Women's Business Center Amendments Act of 1999" brings us a giant step closer to achieving our goal of having at least one Women's Business Center up and running in each of the 50 states. Under this bill, SBA will be able to continue to fund the existing 35 eligible Centers and provide seed funding to new eligible applicant Centers in states not yet served by the program.

The bill authorizes \$11 million for Fiscal Year 2000 for the Women's Business Center Program; however, the Administration has requested \$9 million.