

workforces and to require a priority for local workers for new hires. The bill contains modifications to the Workforce Investment Act to ensure the availability of skilled local workers for the construction.

REGARDING THE STATE OF
AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

HON. DAVID D. PHELPS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Mr. PHELPS. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking my colleague Mr. BERRY for gathering us here to talk about the state of agriculture and the dire need for quick action on the Supplemental Appropriations measure. There is perhaps no more timely or pressing issue facing our nation's farmers and the legislators who represent them in Washington, and I am grateful to have the opportunity to participate in this discussion.

The importance of agriculture to the families and economy of Illinois' 19th District cannot be overstated, and I am proud to serve on the Agriculture Committee, where I look forward to helping to shape our nation's agriculture policy. Every one of the communities I represent is deeply impacted when agriculture experiences tough times, and these are some of the toughest in recent memory.

The pork industry is still reeling from a crisis, and prices are low for other commodities that are critical to my district, such as corn and soybeans. The Natural Resource Conservation Service in Illinois and many other states is facing a major budget shortfall that will likely necessitate office closures or furloughs and has already resulted in the suspension of CRP technical assistance services that countless farmers depend upon. Farmers are experiencing undue delays in receiving disaster assistance and other USDA payments, and Farm Service Agency offices throughout the country are understaffed and overworked.

I urge my colleagues to recognize the urgency of this situation and hope we can work together to find both short- and long-term solutions to the problems that plague our agriculture community. It seems clear to me, in fact, that one short-term solution has already been found, in the form of a supplemental appropriations bill that includes \$152 million for USDA. This money will allow the Department to increase loan capacity by more than \$1 billion at a time when conditions in the agriculture economy have increased demand for USDA's farm loan programs by 400%. The funding will also provide desperately-needed temporary staffing assistance for FSA offices.

Unfortunately, it has been two months since the President submitted his supplemental spending request, and over a month since both houses passed their bills. Farmers are already in the fields planting crops and USDA is receiving 150 applications for loan assistance every day. Meanwhile, conferees have only this week been appointed to begin crafting a final supplemental measure, and there is no indication that this risk is being undertaken with the urgency it requires. We simply must pass this legislation now. America's farmers

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

are counting on their representatives in Congress. We cannot let them down during this time of crisis.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. BERRY for demonstrating his commitment to American agriculture and urging us to speak out on this important issue.

THE SMART IDEA ACT OF 1999

HON. ZOE LOFGREN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce legislation that makes the point that Congress doesn't need to pit the needs of disabled children against the needs of non-disabled children in meeting our commitments with IDEA—the individuals with Disabilities Education Act. There are other alternatives available. As is often the case, Mr. Speaker, this Republican-controlled House lacks imagination when confronting important issues.

It is ironic that on National Teacher's Day we are pitting disabled children against their non-disabled classmates. Instead of depriving our schools of important funds from other federal education programs, as the Republicans suggest, I propose that we use an existing federal program to meet the obligations of IDEA. I think the Medicaid program is ideal for this approach.

The concept of my legislation is simple: after any school district has spent \$3,500 on a student who is eligible for IDEA funds, the school district can receive full federal funding from the Medicaid program for additional required services mandated under IDEA.

The idea behind IDEA was that children who are disabled must receive the assistance they need to achieve their academic potential. That's the right thing for those children and their families. It's also the right thing for America—so that every individual has the maximum chance to be a contributor.

But who pays has been a problem for many years. Especially problematic for cash-strapped schools are situations where extraordinary expenses are required for a severely disabled child. These expenses can "bust the budget" and pit the parents of disabled children against the parents of non-disabled children. Because of the high costs of providing special assistance to the disabled, it is believed that some school districts tend to overlook findings that assistance is needed. That is counter-productive to the goal of helping disabled children succeed in school. But it's hard to blame the schools. The necessary funding has never been provided by the state or federal governments for this great IDEA.

The use of Medicaid to fund IDEA solves most of these problems. Since the Federal government funds 50% of Medicaid, shifting extraordinary expenses to the Medicaid program would ensure that the Federal government does its part. Because the rest of Medicaid funding comes from the states, the use of Medicaid also would ensure that states do their fair share and don't shirk their obligations to local schools. Adoption of this proposal would remove the disincentive now in place

May 4, 1999

for schools to avoid providing help to disabled children. Additionally, it would remove the animosity that can develop between the parents of disabled and non-disabled children for scarce resources.

I think this change makes a lot of sense and hope that a bipartisan majority can put solutions ahead of politics and pursue this plan. Let's not allow a lack of imagination and compassion to short-change all our kids and schools.

A TRIBUTE TO THE CITY OF
LATON

HON. CALVIN M. DOOLEY

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Mr. DOOLEY of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the community of Laton on celebrating their 100 year anniversary.

In 1902, Lewelyn A. Nares and Charles A. Laton acquired land near Kingsburg known as "The Laguna De Tache". Nares and Laton transferred title of their holdings to "Laguna Lands Limited" and Charles A. Laton soon disappeared from the local scene. Years later, a man named T.J. Saunders, an Iowa native, brought a group of businessmen to the area forming the nucleus for the city of Laton.

Laton has a rich history of community service. That tradition is exemplified by the strong ongoing commitment of the Volunteer Fire Department, the Lyon's Club, and other local organizations. In addition to providing a range of public services, each year the Laton community comes together for the Building Our Neighborhoods Drug Free (BOND) festival, which brings families together to celebrate Laton's drug-free environment. Community programs, including the BOND festival have made Laton one of the Central Valley's best places to raise a family.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the city of Laton in celebrating their 100th year as a successful and prosperous community.

HONORING THE JACK C. HAYS
HIGH SCHOOL REBEL BAND

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 4, 1999

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, the Jack C. Hays High School Rebel Band of Austin, Texas, recently earned the distinct honor of being selected for the 1999 Sudley "Flag of Honor" award from the John Philip Sousa Foundation. This award is the highest recognition of excellence in concert performance that a high school band can receive. During the 17 years the award has been in existence, only 39 bands from the entire United States and Canada have been selected for the Flag of Honor. Conductor Gerald Babbitt and his Rebel band deserve our praise and recognition on the occasion of receiving this prestigious award.