Mr. PEASE, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999, and for other purposes, had under consideration the bill (H.R. 150) to amend the Act of June 1, 1937, as amended (7 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), popularly known as the Recreation and Conservation Opportunities Act to authorize distributions of funds for recreation and conservation purposes in Wisconsin and other States.

At 4 p.m. the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. NOLAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. Sessions. Mr. Speaker, I come forward because this is an important issue. I want to speak tonight to you about tonight, and that is the issue of dairy pricing.

The dairy pricing issue has been on the floor of this House many times. But tonight, I want to talk about an important issue, and that is the issue that I want to talk about tonight, and that is the issue of dairy pricing.

For the last six decades, we have had a government-mandated system of dairy pricing. It began in the late 1930s because dairy producers had a difficult time getting their goods to consumers in a timely way. They had a difficult time because of technology in meeting consumption needs. We did not, quite frankly, have effective infrastructure or enough technology to transport our surplus to States that had deficit in production.

Those days are over. However, we have the refrigeration, we have the infrastructure to transport dairy products from States like Wisconsin anywhere in America overnight. As a result, the outdated dairy price system, the Federal order system, no longer makes sense.

Wisconsin dairy farmers and Wisconsin communities are being ravaged, they are being destroyed by the current Federal order system. In the last 8 years, Wisconsin has lost over 10,000 dairy farms. Wisconsin has lost 2,000 dairy farms in each of the last 2 years. We have lost more dairy farms in the last 8 years than most States ever have.

Now, I am here tonight to speak to my colleagues, quite frankly, not on behalf of dairy farmers. Dairy farmers are not looking for our sympathy. They are tough bunch. This is a tough life-style. They know that. They have been fighting uphill all of their lives. They are not looking for sympathy. They are looking for fairness.

More importantly, quite frankly, I would think to the Members of this body is the fact that this unfair system not only hurts our dairy farmers, my family farmers in Wisconsin, of which there are 22,000 remaining, but it is also unfair to consumers.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to realize, it is important to know that the outdated Federal order system artificially inflates the price of milk. And as more farmers go out of business, and as I just said, we are losing farmers each and every year, the more farmers who go out of business, the higher that price will be.

The Citizens Against Government Waste, Americans for Tax Reform, a number of taxpayer groups, groups that do not necessarily have a natural stake in the fight over a dairy policy, they have reached an interesting conclusion. After looking at the Federal order system, they have concluded that the Federal order system that we have had in this country for six decades is little more than a tax on milk. It is a milk tax to the consumers all across this land. It is a milk tax to the tune of about $1 billion each and every year.

Now, the reason I come forward today is because of a battle that I believe is going to be on this floor tomorrow, and quite frankly and unfortunately, probably on this floor for weeks and months to come.

Some weeks ago, Secretary Dan Glickman proposed a final order on the Federal order system for dairies. And in that Federal order, Secretary Glickman proposed a very minor change to the Federal order system, a very modest change. And it is true, it will benefit Wisconsin farmers, dairy farmers, but again in a very modest way.

Now, it may be ironic to some of you that I come here today to support a proposal from a Democrat administration. But I come forward because this

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