

issue. We have taken the lead to give relief to the hard-working taxpayers of our country. We do not think people should have to choose between having the money they earn to spend for their families or sending it to Washington, when it is already in excess because we have income tax withholding surpluses.

I appreciate the leadership of Senators ASHCROFT and BROWBACK on this issue. We will not give up. We will not walk away from this issue. Before we leave the Senate, the married people of this country will be treated equally by the IRS Code across the board. It is our responsibility, and we will not walk away from it.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GREGG). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BUNNING). Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. HARKIN. I understand, Mr. President, we are in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, are there time limits on how long we may talk in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Ten minutes.

Mr. HARKIN. Ten minutes.

Mr. President, I see my colleague from Minnesota has arrived on the floor. I want to take this time today to talk a little bit about—

Mr. WELLSTONE. Could I ask my colleague to yield for one second?

Mr. HARKIN. I am delighted to yield.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Senator.

I have a group of students outside. I would like to follow the Senator. I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to follow Senator HARKIN in morning business.

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

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair. We are each allowed 10 minutes; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I have never heard Senator HARKIN speak for only 10 minutes. I ask Senator HARKIN, can you make your statement in 10 minutes?

Mr. HARKIN. I am sorry.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I said, I have never heard you be able to make an argument in 10 minutes.

Mr. HARKIN. I may ask unanimous consent to extend my morning business remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S FARM SAFETY NET PROPOSAL

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I want to talk on the issue of agriculture and rural America, and the administration's proposal announced by Secretary Glickman yesterday for improving the farm safety net.

At the outset, I am pleased that the administration has recognized that the Freedom to Farm bill has failed. The proposal the administration came up with is an impetus for change, and I think it will do a good deal to remedy the shortcomings of the Freedom to Farm bill.

I think the administration proposals of yesterday are a good step forward. I will go through a number of those. However, I want to forewarn my colleagues, while I think there is a lot in the administration's proposal that is good and positive and moves us ahead, I believe there are some shortcomings in it also.

First, on the conservation end, I believe the administration's proposal is a good step forward. It has some very positive features. The administration is proposing, for example, that we extend the conservation reserve program by 3.6 million acres up to 40 million acres. I believe that is a good proposal. That will do a lot to help conserve land and water and take some land out of production. It will help our wildlife. I think this is a good step.

There is a proposal for \$600 million for the conservation security program. This is a program that is designed after a bill I authored to set up a conservation security program whereby farmers and ranchers could, on a voluntary basis, carry out certain conservation measures on their land, and then they would receive payments for doing so. This program would be administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Again, this is fully voluntary, but it is another means whereby farmers could, by engaging in certain conservation practices, shore up their income.

The wetland reserve program has a cap right now of 975,000 acres. The administration would enroll an additional 210,000 acres in 2001 and another 250,000 acres in each subsequent year—again, a very positive step forward, to enroll land in the wetland reserve program.

There are several other conservation proposals: new funding for the farmland protection program, the wildlife habitat incentives program, and the environmental quality incentives program. All of these are extremely good measures that will both help conservation but also improve farm income.

The risk management provisions are positive. The administration is proposing about \$640 million for a premium discount program for farmers and ranchers who take buy-up levels of crop insurance. That would help them

reduce the cost and get better coverage. The administration also is proposing \$100 million annually to develop a policy that covers multiyear losses. In places such as North Dakota, South Dakota, some parts of Minnesota, and others, we have had areas where they have had 3, 4, 5 years of drought, floods, crop disease or other damaging conditions. We need a risk management program that covers those multiyear losses. I am glad to see the administration taking a step to address this problem in the budget.

The administration is also proposing to establish a pilot program for insuring livestock. Currently there is no such insurance program. I hear a lot from livestock producers in Iowa that there should be some form of a risk management program, an insurance program for livestock production. Half of all our farm receipts come from livestock or livestock products. The administration is proposing a pilot program of \$100 million annually to provide livestock producers with some form of price protection. I believe that is another good provision in the administration's proposal.

There is another area I am very pleased to see the administration addressing. That is using \$130 million in the next couple of years to establish new cooperative development programs to provide equity capital for new livestock and other processing cooperatives. This proposal would address concerns about market concentration by encouraging new entrants into the livestock processing market. It would also provide an additional source of income for farmers through the ownership of value-added processing. This is key. We have to help farmers to form more cooperatives, both for the marketing of their grains and livestock and also to develop value-added processing plants and enterprises that would help farmers obtain more of the value added to the livestock and crops they produce. Again, this is a good proposal.

The administration is proposing to develop a new bioenergy program to encourage greater use of farm products for production of biofuels. Again, by supporting ethanol and other bioenergy feedstocks, we can use some of our land, perhaps even some of our conservation land, to produce energy sources such as switch grass, which can then be used to generate energy. We have a project ongoing in Iowa right now that will do that so we can use land set aside in the conservation reserve program. We can grow products such as switch grass. We can cut that switch grass and burn it for energy. So we get conservation, plus the farmer will get some additional income, plus it will cut down on our need for imported energy into this country. I am delighted the administration is moving ahead on that.