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

Mr. SHELDY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of the quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

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

BROADBAND TAX INCENTIVE BILL

Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I rise to today in support of a bill I introduced last week along with my friend Senator MOYNIHAN and 26 other members on both sides of the aisle. The bill, S. 2840, the Broadband Internet Access Act of 2000, creates tax incentives for the deployment of broadband (high-speed) Internet services to rural, low-income, and residential areas.

This bill will ensure that all Americans have timely and equitable access to the Internet over current and future generations of broadband capability.

The legislation provides graduated tax credits to companies that bring qualified telecommunication capabilities to targeted areas. It grants a 16-percent credit for expenditures on equipment that provide a bandwidth of 1.5 million bits per second (mbps) to subscribers in rural and low-income areas, and a 20-percent credit for delivery of 22 mbps to these customers and other residential subscribers.

This bill has been endorsed by a number of organizations, including Bell Atlantic, MCIWorldcom, Corning Incorporated, the National Telephone Cooperative Association, the Association for Local Telecommunications Services, the United States Distance Learning Association, and the Imaging Science and Information Systems Center at Georgetown University Medical Center.

Mr. President, in a few short years, the Internet has grown exponentially to become a mass medium used daily by over 100 million people worldwide. The explosion of information technology has created opportunities unimagined by previous generations. In my home state of Montana, companies such as Healthdirectory.com and Vanns.com are taking advantage of the global markets made possible by the stunning reach of the Internet.

The pace of broadband deployment to rural America must be accelerated for electronic commerce to meet its full potential, however. Broadband access is an important to our small businesses in Montana as water is to agriculture. I am aware of all of the recent discussions regarding the "digital divide" and I am very concerned that the pace of broadband deployment is greater in urban than rural areas. However, there is some positive and exciting news on this front as well. The reality on the ground shows that some of the "glow and doom" scenarios are far from the case. By pooling their limited resources, Montana's independent and cooperative telephone companies are doing great things. I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

AGRICULTURAL RISK PROTECTION ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, recently Congress passed the Agricultural Risk Protection Act. This legislation provides reform for the Federal Crop Insurance Program, economic assistance to farmers, and the establishment of new, innovative programs to assist the agricultural community. One of the innovative programs established in the bill is what I have termed the Agriculture Marketing Equity Capital Fund.

The Agriculture Marketing Equity Capital Fund will assist independent grain and livestock producers nationwide develop new value-added agricultural opportunities. Independent producers will use these funds to develop business plans, feasibility studies, and business ventures with packers and processors.

While I was able to garner the support of many of the nation's largest commodity organizations, I met fierce opposition from the American Meat Institute's Washington lobbyists. My floor statement during the debate over the crop insurance conference report was highly critical of their efforts. It is not my intent to attack the individual members of AMI, but I believe it is important that they understand my position.

AMI's Washington lobbyists misrepresented the provision. A story written within "Inside AMI" recently explained:

"As I promised in my crop insurance story last week along with my friend Senator Chuck Grassley pushed conferees to provide for a $35 million Agriculture Marketing Equity Capital Fund. The proposal was yet another attempt to fund an NPPC (National Pork Producers Council) proposal that seeks to secure government funding to establish a national pork cooperative and use government funds to buy, build or purchase equity in a pork plant. These funds are intended to be used by independent and livestock producers to develop business plans, feasibility studies, and business ventures with packers and processors. While some may believe the truth is no longer relevant in Washington, D.C., that attitude will be given no quarter in dealings with me.

My staff reached out to your's to make certain they understood the error in their representations of my proposal, as well as to request alternative suggestions. No response ever came. Unfortunately, many of my colleagues were misled by your staff, and my proposal was gutted."

I wanted you to hear directly from me because I have had a long and positive working relationship with many AMI members over the years and I hope that this can be the case in the future. I believe that it would be appropriate to investigate for yourself the concerns I have raised about your Washington representatives.

Sincerely,

CHARLES E. GRASSLEY,
U.S. Senator.