

H.R. 1249, PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS COPING WITH CROP DISEASES AND VIRUSES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I recently introduced H.R. 1249, to ensure that farmers who suffer crop losses due to plant viruses and plant diseases are eligible for crop insurance and noninsured crop assistance programs and that agricultural producers who suffer such losses are eligible for emergency loans.

Pandemics of plant viruses and diseases regularly destroy the crops of entire farms and often the crops of entire geographic areas. A single plant virus or disease outbreak can send farms into bankruptcy; often, farmers are left without any means of recovering. Agriculture producers can qualify for emergency loans when adverse weather conditions and other natural phenomena damage cause farm property damage or production losses, but, under current law, crop viruses and diseases are not considered "natural disasters" and thus are not eligible for these types of loans.

For example, in Hawaii in 1999, the State ordered the eradication of all banana plants on the entire island of Kauai and in a 10 square-mile area of the island of Hawaii in an effort to eradicate the banana "bunchy top" virus. A court order required compliance, and farmers were ordered to destroy their entire farms and livelihood without any compensation. These farmers did not qualify for emergency loans or disaster assistance, and many were left with no other option but to sell their farms.

Today, Hawaii's papaya industry is faced with another outbreak of the ringspot virus. The only way to get rid of this virus is to destroy diseased plants, but farmers are reluctant to do so because of the financial loss involved. As a result, the disease spreads, with disastrous consequences to neighboring farmers and the rural economy.

The survival of our nation's farmers is largely dependent upon the unpredictable whims of mother nature. We provide our farmers with assistance when adversely affected by severe weather, but that is not enough. Emergency loans and disaster assistance must be made available to farmers for crops suffering from calamitous plant viruses and diseases.

H.R. 1249 would enable farmers to qualify for crop insurance programs, noninsured assistance programs, and low-interest emergency loans when devastated by crop losses due to plant viruses and diseases.

I invite my colleagues to cosponsor this worthy legislation, and I urge immediate consideration of H.R. 1249 in the House.

BUDGET PASSED TODAY SUPPORTS OUR SOLDIERS AROUND THE WORLD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GANSKE. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately it sometimes takes a tragedy

such as the loss of our pilots in Europe this week, or the recent deaths of the National Guard members killed in Georgia to remind us of the risks associated with military service in our country. In time of war, we realize the individual sacrifices made for the common good. But we should also recognize the efforts made every day by our soldiers around the world.

I believe the budget for our military forces which was passed by the House today is focused on our soldiers. The legislation would increase military pay by 4.6 percent and increases pay and other compensation by \$1.4 billion in fiscal year 2002.

It provides \$3.9 billion for the first year of an expanded health care package for over-65 military retirees. It also allows for an additional \$400 million to improve the quality of housing for military personnel and their families by providing new construction, renovation of existing housing, and measures to reduce out-of-pocket housing expenses.

The budget also provides funds for research and development to help guarantee that U.S. forces will go into the field with the tools they need to ensure victory and minimize casualties. At the completion of the current review, which is occurring on the scope and role of the U.S. Armed Forces, we will have a better idea what our needs are for the next decade, and I look forward to the results of that review.

Mr. Speaker, I am from Iowa, and Iowans have a proud tradition of service in the Armed Forces. Back in the Civil War, Iowa had a population of 670,000, but we sent 78,000 soldiers to fight. Nearly 13,000 never returned home; 28 were honored with the Medal of Honor for their service. The Medal of Honor for gallant service in our country's wars since then has been awarded to another 50 Iowans and to 36 men and women who have grown up in Iowa. Exemplary of Iowa sacrifice in the armed services were the five Sullivan brothers from Waterloo, Iowa, who served on the USS Juneau. George, Francis, Joseph, Madison and Albert Sullivan had a motto. They said, "We stick together." And they all died together in the Battle of Guadalcanal.

Mr. Speaker, since the Civil War, more than 1.1 million American men and women have given their lives for our Nation. I think most Americans recognize the debt that we owe those men and women throughout history. I also believe it is important to think about the daily sacrifices made in smaller measure by our soldiers. Every day they risk their lives. Every day many of them miss loved ones who are thousands of miles away. In today's volunteer service, every man and woman does it by choice. We should be proud of the service that they give to America every day.

Mr. Speaker, we should think of our soldiers when we make decisions re-

garding our military and its force structure. They should be paid a fair wage. Benefits should be commensurate. They should be well equipped, well supplied, well trained and they should be deployed wisely.

Their services must be used wisely and not overused. Our military is currently stretched pretty thin. This causes problems with the quality and supply of our equipment and with our personnel retention. Today our military is deployed in 138 countries around the world. Since 1990, we have dramatically reduced our military spending while we have asked our forces to do much more. This leads to an unhappy equation. Inadequate funding for training and material plus increased deployments equals problems with morale, equipment readiness, retention and recruitment.

Mr. Speaker, the mission of the Reserves has changed over the years. During the Cold War, reservists and guardsmen were considered on call to respond to World War III or some catastrophic event. During the 1980s, they contributed less than 1 million manhours per year. Today reservists are called upon to perform day-to-day operations and to support various ongoing missions. For example, the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve combine to provide the U.S. Transportation Command with 52 percent of its total available aircraft, including 55 percent of the tankers and 64 percent of the tactical airlift. Air Force Reserve flight crews average 110 days of active duty a year.

Beginning last April 2000 and continuing for six rotations, the Army National Guard will be sent to Bosnia to provide combat troops and support division headquarters operations.

Why is there such an increased reliance upon our Reserves and the Guard? Well, because our Active Forces have been reduced by 35 percent since 1990, but overseas deployments have increased by 300 percent. A total of 265,000 reservists and National Guardsmen participated in Operation Desert Storm. And in other operations, since 1995, 19,000 reservists were called to duty in Bosnia, 5,600 were called to duty in Kosovo, and 8,000 were called to Haiti.

Mr. Speaker, in calendar year 1999, the Reserves and National Guard were called to fulfill nearly 750,000 manhours in foreign campaigns. If we break it down, we see reservists and guardsmen spent in Bosnia, 334,000 hours; in Kosovo, 313,000 hours; and Iraq, 145,000 hours.

The Reserves and Guard are accounting for more of our national defense needs than ever before. This comes with some positive and some negative consequences. On the positive side, it is a testament to their abilities. It means that the Reserve and the Guard are more respected and appreciated than ever before. An increased dependence