the opportunity in a thoughtful, bipartisan way to do what is being done in communities all across the country.

Virtually everyone who buys in quantity says: Excuse me, wouldn't you be willing to give me a break given the fact I am making additional purchases? Medicare is not doing it. It defies common sense. We have a bipartisan opportunity to reign in these costs that continue to soar. I hope the Senate will do this as soon as possible.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VITTER). The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. AKAKA. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. AKAKA pertaining to the introduction of S. 324 are located in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

AGRICULTURE BUDGET PROPOSAL

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, today I rise to express my extreme disappointment in President Bush's agriculture budget proposal as well as his budget proposal for all of rural America. We worked very hard in this body, and in conjunction with the other body, to come up with a good farm bill.

Three years ago, President Bush signed that farm bill. It took us a while to get him there, but he finally signed it. As a member of the Agriculture Committee and a farmer's daughter, I was proud of the job we had done on behalf of the many hard-working farming interests in this great country.

I can remember growing up on our farm in Arkansas and how my father had great trepidation over whether he would be able to be successful with the kind of crop he had worked so hard to produce, because he knew so many variables were completely out of his control, whether it was drought, whether it was flooding, whether it was world market prices. Everything out of his control had such a great bearing on whether he could be successful.

I was especially proud of the agreement we made with the Arkansas farmers to support them because of those things they are faced with that are out of their control. It was an agreement we made with the farmers, their families, and their communities.

The 2002 farm bill was a great deal for farmers and consumers, for all of America. However, not everyone agrees. This past weekend, the New York Times ran an op-ed outlining proposals to undercut the 2002 farm bill by cutting aid to our farmers in this Nation. It seems that the President has been taking his agricultural advice from the New York Times because, lo and behold, on Monday morning he sent a budget over to Congress that mirrors the piece in the New York Times.

I would like to suggest first and foremost that he turn to a more reliable source to get his advice on agricultural policy. Because, for the life of me, I still cannot figure out what it is that they grow or oversee growing, looking down out of those skyscrapers in New York City, that would merit them providing that kind of advice to the President of the United States over the hard-working men and women who produce the food and fiber not just for this country but for the people of this globe.

If the President would like, I will be happy to offer him some advice on agricultural policy. I certainly hear from his administration officials and friends here in Congress who are not shy about sharing with me their opinions on issues such as tax reform and trade policy and Social Security. Well, agricultural policy is important to this Nation as well. If the President does not want my opinion, then I suggest he sit down with some real farmers from my home State of Arkansas or other farming States across the Nation and get their opinions.

When we were debating the 2002 farm bill, there was a lot of misinformation about farmers and farming that was floating around us all. I, for one, am determined to ensure that those perceptions are challenged. Most importantly, I want to ensure that the uninformed judgments about farmers are never used in setting our agricultural policy in this country.

Let's look at a few of the things that critics of farming said would happen if we were to enact the 2002 farm bill.

First, they said it would bust the budget. I heard my colleagues on the other side down here earlier this week describing how in the first 2 years the farm bill has come in more than $15 billion cheaper than was expected or projected.

Second, folks said it would lead to overproduction. They were wrong again. According to USDA, production remains steady.

Third, those naysayers said it would interfere with trade. Last year, our exports were at an all-time record high. In fact, the only people I know who believe our farm policy interferes with trade is our trade competition from other countries, the same people who sit across from us and from our negotiators during trade talks and ask us to take away our support for our farmers while they hang on to the very support they provide their agricultural producers. Does it sound like a good deal? You bet it does—to our competitors. We fight long and hard to make sure there is a fair playing field for our agricultural producers in this country, and they deserve it.

Finally, the critics made clear what they thought about farmers. They said that farming is no longer a matter of importance to the American economy. I say to the Presiding Officer, farming is important to the economy of your great State of Louisiana and many others. I want this body to think about that for a few minutes. I want those critics to take a trip to the South and to the Midwest. I want them to take a trip to my home State of Arkansas where one in every five jobs is tied to agriculture. Better yet, I want them to think about agriculture's contribution to our Nation's security and well-being.

So the critics are all wrong about farm policy, and they are certainly wrong about farmers, the hard-working families that produce food and fiber so each of us can lead that healthy life. They are also wrong to think that farm policy does not affect Main Street USA.

To doubters, I point out the 1980s and the farm financial crisis that existed then. During that time, we saw entire communities and towns dry up and blow away.

Now I would like to mention how our farm support compares to the rest of the world, how critical it is that we maintain those producers we have. We give our farmers $40 per acre in aid, while Europeans enjoy a $400 per-acre subsidy. Apparently, the President wants French farmers to have a competitive edge over our American producers. It seems to me we should be asking them to bring their support down before we unilaterally reduce ours.

At the end of the day, we need to take the recommendations of experts. We spend money, time and time again, to come up with these commissions, to come up with these reports. We need to take a look at them, the recommendations of experts we commission to look at the farm bill. This panel of experts made a clear recommendation that we should not change the 2002 farm bill until it is time to deal with that in 2007.

Time and again, we see the critics misuse facts and figures to make their case in an attempt to villainize farmers and drive public opinion against them. For the sake of time this morning, I will spare my colleagues from refuting point by point the numerous inaccuracies in the stories President Bush is reading about huge farms getting massive payments.

I tend to get a little passionate about this issue. Maybe it is because I am a farmer's daughter. Maybe it is because I believe in the farm families of this country. Maybe it is because I still go home and remember what it is like in those rural communities.

But if you listened to the critics, you would believe that Long Farms—which is a great example—in Blytheville, AR, was about to be publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange. Clark Long and his two sons are probably wondering how they missed out on all the benefits of these huge agribusinesses that are talked about in these stories.

The fact is, we have payment limitations in our farm policy already. We accepted them as a part of the compromise we struck in the 2002 farm bill, a bill that was debated for 2 years and should be viewed as a contract between the Federal Government and the hard-working farm families of this country, their lenders, and others they do business with all the way up and down Main Street, the entire communities that depend on these hard-working farm families that produce the food and fiber for this world.

The bottom line is, changing payment limitations midway through the deal has the real potential to put Arkansas farm families and other farm families across the South and in other places in a terrible spot.

In closing, despite the President's willingness to listen to the critics on the New York Times editorial board and break his contract with America's farmers, I still believe in farmers and farming communities. I still believe in those people who get up at 4:30 every morning to go out and work that farm, to make sure I and the rest of America can enjoy the safest, most abundant and affordable food supply in the world.

Per capita, we pay less for our food than anybody else out there. Is that not worth something to us in this Nation, to recognize the diversity across our great land, and understand that those who farm in different regions of the country and farm different crops have to use different economies of scale in order to compete in a global marketplace?

I want the farming communities in Arkansas to know exactly where my loyalty lies. It lies with them. I will stick with the rock-solid values and hard work of those farm families across Arkansas and other areas of our Nation. And I will never forget it, even after I am reelected. I encourage the President to relook at what he has done to the viability of many of these farm families across the Nation.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I understand now we are on the Republican time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to talk about Social Security and the challenges that face this Congress in order to save Social Security for future generations.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law, the United States of America was a very different place than it is now. By looking at this chart, which shows an example of a family in 1935 and an example of a family in the year 2005, you can see that a lot has changed.

Now, I ask my colleagues to keep this picture in mind, taken 70 years ago, as we go through the debate on how to save Social Security.

A lot has changed since 1935. Social Security was a great deal for the Government in 1935. Workers would pay the Government a portion of every paycheck. The Government would keep these funds and could use them to pay other Government liabilities. It was unlikely that many of the beneficiaries would reach retirement age.

From the employees' standpoint, in 1935, Social Security was a big gamble. Employees would be required to participate in the program, contributing a percentage of their income for their entire adult working life. This program would be a retirement safety net, but would only yield a small percentage rate of return.

The employee could not access it or use it for any other reason. If they happened to die prior to receiving the benefits, their family could not inherit the account. And even if they were diagnosed with an expensive terminal illness, they could not draw on the Social Security account to cover the costs.

Times have changed in ways far beyond the hair style, the fashion, and the entertainment that is reflected on this chart. Demographics have radically shifted, necessitating that we update and modernize the system to save Social Security for the 21st century.

Life expectancy has changed dramatically over the past 70 years. In 1935 the average person lived to be 63 versus 77 years of age in 2004. This difference becomes even more dramatic when we look at the differences between men as compared to women. Looking through the Social Security lens in 1935, this was excellent for the system's financial stability. Men paid into the system but because of life expectancy generally did not live long enough to receive benefits. While women generally lived longer than men, in 1935 the few women who did participate in the workforce still did not generally receive many benefits based on life expectancy.

As this next chart shows, an American who turns 65 can expect to live longer now than they did in the past.

Instead of living an additional decade, seniors can now expect to live about 17 more years. In 2040, when Social Security is nearly bankrupt, senior citizens can expect to live even more additional years. For example, a woman who turns 65 in that year is expected to live another 21 years. Without permanent reform, this woman will not be able to depend on Social Security for her retirement. We need to update and modernize the system to save Social Security so she can have that security for the remaining years of her life.

This chart further shows how elderly Americans are rapidly becoming a larger percentage of the country. As Americans are living longer, they are increasing in number and rapidly becoming a larger percentage of the population. For example, in 1950, less than 10 percent of Americans were age 65 and older. Within a decade, seniors will make up 15 percent of the population, and in 25 years, seniors will comprise more than 20 percent of the population. We can expect that percentage to continue to grow.

In 1935, when the Social Security system was created, the Government did not need to prepare for the possibility of a depleted system. Seniors made up a very small percentage of the population because most people who were owed benefits simply never reached retirement age. As seniors become a larger portion of our population, we need to update and modernize the system to save Social Security for the 21st century.

Workforce distribution, as you can imagine, has also changed dramatically over the past 70 years. One of the more remarkable characteristics in the past century was the increase of women in the workplace. In 1935, approximately 24 percent of women worked outside the home and generally in a very limited number of professions, such as nursing and teaching or domestic service. Today, slightly less than 60 percent of women work outside the home in a variety of professions. Women make up 46.5 percent of the workforce today versus approximately 23 percent in 1935.

In 1935, when women did not usually work outside the home, they also did not pay into the Social Security system as men did. Even though there are now more people paying into the system as they retire, there will be a greater number of people drawing on the system a longer period of time.

As it was structured in 1935, the Social Security system was not designed to support elderly people for a long retirement such as we enjoy today. As female workforce participants continue to retire and draw benefits, we need to update and modernize the system in order to save Social Security for the 21st century.

As we all know, Social Security is a pay-as-you-go system, meaning current retiree benefits are paid with existing employee payroll taxes. As times change, the payroll tax rate has been increased a number of times in an effort to keep up with the demographic changes. Referring to this next chart, you can see that payroll taxes have increased dramatically over the past 70 years. They were a lot less when the Social Security system was enacted. Workers were taxed only 2 percent, and that was only on the first $3,000 of their income; whereas today workers are taxed 12.4 percent, and on the first