

of the United States to mark this observance by honoring the service of merchant mariners and by displaying the flag of the United States at their homes and in their communities. I also request that all ships sailing under the American flag dress ship on that day.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., May 23, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on May 27.

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the “Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008”

May 21, 2008

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 2419, the “Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008.”

For a year and a half, I have consistently asked that the Congress pass a good farm bill that I can sign. Regrettably, the Congress has failed to do so. At a time of high food prices and record farm income, this bill lacks program reform and fiscal discipline. It continues subsidies for the wealthy and increases farm bill spending by more than \$20 billion, while using budget gimmicks to hide much of the increase. It is inconsistent with our objectives in international trade negotiations, which include securing greater market access for American farmers and ranchers. It would needlessly expand the size and scope of government. Americans sent us to Washington to achieve results and be good stewards of their hard-earned taxpayer dollars. This bill violates that fundamental commitment.

In January 2007, my Administration put forward a fiscally responsible farm bill proposal that would improve the safety net for farmers and move current programs toward more market-oriented policies. The bill be-

fore me today fails to achieve these important goals.

At a time when net farm income is projected to increase by more than \$28 billion in 1 year, the American taxpayer should not be forced to subsidize that group of farmers who have adjusted gross incomes of up to \$1.5 million. When commodity prices are at record highs, it is irresponsible to increase government subsidy rates for 15 crops, subsidize additional crops, and provide payments that further distort markets. Instead of better targeting farm programs, this bill eliminates the existing payment limit on marketing loan subsidies.

Now is also not the time to create a new uncapped revenue guarantee that could cost billions of dollars more than advertised. This is on top of a farm bill that is anticipated to cost more than \$600 billion over 10 years. In addition, this bill would force many businesses to prepay their taxes in order to finance the additional spending.

This legislation is also filled with earmarks and other ill-considered provisions. Most notably, H.R. 2419 provides: \$175 million to address water issues for desert lakes; \$250 million for a 400,000-acre land purchase from a private owner; funding and authority for the noncompetitive sale of National Forest land to a ski resort; and \$382 million earmarked for a specific watershed. These earmarks, and the expansion of Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wage requirements, have no place in the farm bill. Rural and urban Americans alike are frustrated with excessive government spending and the funneling of taxpayer funds for pet projects. This bill will only add to that frustration.

The bill also contains a wide range of other objectionable provisions, including one that restricts our ability to redirect food aid dollars for emergency use at a time of great need globally. The bill does not include the requested authority to buy food in the developing world to save lives. Additionally, provisions in the bill raise serious constitutional concerns. For all the reasons outlined above, I must veto H.R. 2419, and I urge the Congress to extend current law for a year or more.

I veto this bill fully aware that it is rare for a stand-alone farm bill not to receive the

President's signature, but my action today is not without precedent. In 1956, President Eisenhower stood firmly on principle, citing high crop subsidies and too much government control of farm programs among the reasons for his veto. President Eisenhower wrote in his veto message, "Bad as some provisions of this bill are, I would have signed it if in total it could be interpreted as sound and good for farmers and the nation." For similar reasons, I am vetoing the bill before me today.

George W. Bush

The White House,
May 21, 2008.

**Remarks at a Division Review
Ceremony at Fort Bragg, North
Carolina**

May 22, 2008

The President. I want to thank you for the warm welcome to Fort Bragg. It is good to be at the home of the Airborne and Special Operation Forces. This is my fourth visit to Fort Bragg since I have been honored to be the President. Somehow I always find my way back to the "center of the universe." And every time I come, I look forward to saying, "Hooah!"

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. I'm pleased to be with the paratroopers of the all-American 82d Airborne Division. You know, you and my dad have something in common: You both enjoy jumping out of airplanes. [Laughter] He's jumped with the Golden Knights at Fort Bragg six times. Dad is America's only sky-diving President, and that's a distinction he's going to keep as far as I'm concerned. [Laughter] Speaking of which, he has a message for all of you—of those of you jumping tomorrow: "Airborne, all the way!"

This is the first time since 2006 that five brigades from your division have assembled together. Most of you recently returned from extended 15-month deployments to the frontlines in Afghanistan and Iraq. We've asked a lot of you. You've achieved difficult objectives in a new kind of war. You've per-

formed with skill and valor. And on behalf of a grateful nation, welcome home.

I thank General Dave Rodriguez for his service to our country. I thank Pete Geren, Secretary of the Army, for joining us today. I appreciate Brigadier General Art Bartell, Colonel Victor Petrenko. I want to thank Sergeant Major Tom Capel.

I'm honored to be here with the military families. I particularly want to say hello to Maureen McNeill, wife of General Dan McNeill. I know he'll be pleased that I recognized you here at this event when I see him. [Laughter]

I want to thank all the families of the paratroopers from the 82d Airborne Division who are here today. I welcome the families of the fallen heroes here today. It's such an honor to see the veterans of the 82d Airborne Division and other veterans who have joined us today.

I want them—to pay a special tribute to the wounded warriors from the 82d Airborne. Thank you for your courage.

I welcome the State and local elected officials and members of the Fort Bragg community. Thank you for supporting these troops.

Looking out on the units this morning, I see why the 82d Airborne is known as America's Guard of Honor. In your ranks, I see the strength of the greatest military the world has ever known. And in the families of Fort Bragg, I see the love and support that makes your service possible. The United States of America owes our troops in uniform a debt of gratitude, and we owe our military families the strong support necessary to make sure that they understand that we appreciate their sacrifices.

Every trooper in the 82d is a triple volunteer. You volunteered to join the Army; you volunteered to attend jump school; and you volunteered to undertake some of our military's most difficult missions by joining this elite division. Each of you is proud to wear the all-American patch of the 82d. And I am incredibly proud to be the Commander in Chief of such noble, courageous men and women.

As members of the 82d Airborne Division, you belong to a storied military tradition. When Allied forces landed in Normandy, their—paratroopers of the 82d were among