so I can hear all them people cheering my Tigers on Saturday and where I can smell that chewing tobacco in ever corner of the stadium. Then I won't have to go to heaven. I'll already be there.

I am pleased to note that as Frank desired, he will be buried on Cemetery Hill, where he will be able to watch over his beloved Tigers. While Frank is going to be buried in his version of heaven, I have no doubt that St. Peter ushered him past the Pearly Gates, and at this moment he is gathered around a chalkboard with the other greats of coaching, going over games and plays, and enjoying the praises of his peers for his career of accomplishments. Needless to say, Coach Frank Howard will be missed by his large circle of friends, tens of thousands of football fans, and a grateful State. We all send our heartfelt condolences to his widow, Ruth, and to the rest of Frank's family.

THE STATUS OF THE FARM BILL

Mrs. MURRAY. While the debate continues in Congress over the future of farm policy for our Nation, I wanted to outline some of my priorities for agriculture in 1996.

While Congressman ROBERTS continues to push for his proposal to decouple farm payments, I am committed to maintaining a safety net for our farmers. Coupling payments to both production and the marketplace is a good way to preserve the safety net. Farm payments should occur when prices are low so our farmers can sustain their capacity to produce. When prices are high, the market can and will sustain our farmers.

Payments should also be tied to production. Farm payments should be given to those working the land today, not simply to those who have received payments in the past. When Congress authorized the 1990 farm bill it was understood that the program was voluntary. That is to say, you only needed to be farming in order to be eligible to participate. Now the Republican proposal requires participation over the last 5 years in order to continue participating. The farm programs would not longer be open to anyone currently farming, but only to those who had participated between 1990 and 1995, regardless of whether or not they were still farming.

I also think we should preserve the permanent authority for farm programs embodied in the 1949 agriculture law. In my opinion, repeal of the 1949 law sends a clear message that our historic commitment to the farmers of our Nation is ending. We must preserve this law as a constant reminder of our ongoing commitment to maintaining a stable food supply for our Nation. Preserving permanent authority for farm programs also recognizes the vital role that agriculture plays, and will continue to play, in this Nation's economy.

I am frustrated that Congress has failed to recognize the vital importance of agriculture to our economy. We must maintain our commitment to farmers, and farm programs must be tied to production and marketplace. I am willing to work with my fellow Members to act quickly on a farm bill that provides certainty and security to our farmers, both now and in the future.

In addition, I feel the farm bill should not be broken up so that food stamps and conservation programs are not addressed in conjunction with the commodity programs. The simultaneous consideration of these areas of farm policy represent a balanced approach that recognizes the obligations of our Nation not only to our farmers, but also to our poor and our environment. While the farm bill is designed to enhance and ensure the bountiful production of food from our land, it must also address the distribution of that bounty to those of our Nation in need. With all the food we produce, we must make sure it gets to the millions of hungry mouths in our cities and towns. While we help farmers to cultivate their land, we must also encourage them to preserve it when and where appropriate. USDA's Conservation Reserve Program is twice the size of the USFWS National Wildlife Refuge Program. The contributions of this program to the preservation of wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife cannot be understated.

As the debate over the farm bill continues, I am committed to working for these principles and to look out for the best interests of the hard working families on the farms of my great State of Washington.

GREAT PLAINS SYNFUELS PLANT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I rise today to express my grave concerns about a matter that is currently under review before the Federal Energy and Regulatory Commission [FERC].

The future operation of the Great Plains Synfuels Plant, located in Beulah, ND, is being seriously threatened by a recent ruling in a case pending before FERC. This decision ignores not only the adverse economic consequences that the decision will have on the people of North Dakota and the region, but it fails to consider the strong public policy reasons supporting both the initial construction of the Great Plains alternative energy plant and its successful operation for years to come. I urge FERC to reconsider the ruling in this light.

The Great Plains plan now employs 640 people in North Dakota and represents 20 percent of the lignite coal produced and consumed in the State. In addition, there are more than 400 construction workers presently employed at the Great Plains site who are involved in two ongoing capital construction projects valued at hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Great Plains plant has an enormous impact on North Dakota's economy. Several independent economists have estimated that the direct and indirect economic impact of the Great Plains plant is about $500 million every year—a sizable impact given North Dakota's small population.

Great Plains was constructed with a loan guaranteed by the Department of Energy [DOE] pursuant to the Federal Nonnuclear Energy Research Act of 1974. Specifically, that act authorized DOE to provide loan guarantees to assist in the demonstration of alternative fuel technologies using coal, oil shale, biomass, and other sources. Great Plains is the only alternative energy project still operating today that was built because of the Federal Government's efforts in the late 1970's and early 1980's to achieve energy independence for this country.

DOE operated the Great Plains plant for several years after its original sponsors in 1985 abandoned the project. In 1988, DOE sold Great Plains to the Dakota Gasification Co.—a subsidiary of Basin Electric Power Cooperative—because Dakota was absolutely committed to the long-term operation of the plant. Dakota's commitment was made based upon the continued validity of FERC Opinion 119, which approved the gas purchase agreements between Great Plains and the four pipeline purchasers, and the reasonable assumption that FERC would stand behind its opinion.

Since purchasing the plant, Dakota has acted to promote, to develop and to demonstrate the very technological potential that first prompted the Federal Government to finance the plant's construction. For example, Dakota has produced an annual average of 157 million standard cubic feet of synthetic gas a day from a facility designed to produce a maximum of 137.5 million standard cubic feet a day with virtually no additional capital investment. Because of this increased production and its other efforts, Dakota has continued to decrease both the real and nominal cost of producing synthetic gas.

At the same time, Dakota has been developing new by-products from the coal gasification process, such as rare gases and other chemicals, for commercial sale in this country and abroad. Dakota is currently embarking on several extensive investment projects costing several hundred million dollars. These projects depend upon the long-term operation of the plant and the continued application of FERC's Opinion 119.

One important project involves developing one of the plant's by-products—carbon dioxide—as a method to enhance secondary oil recovery in the United States and Canada. The other project uses a significant portion of the plant's raw synthetic gas to produce on-site anhydrous ammonia for use in a commercial fertilizer that is currently imported into the United States and is in short supply. Another cutting edge technology being developed at the