When the great cities of our country were settled, they were developed near rich agricultural land to assure an adequate food supply. As urban areas continued to sprawl, many fertile acres were consumed and many more were placed at risk. Over the past 10 years, urban sprawl has eaten up over 26 million acres of productive farmland: an area the size of Kentucky has been displaced by urban development. Most of the farmland lost in the country has been located in urban influenced counties—where the density is at least 25 persons per square mile. A recent study by the American Farmland Trust estimated that the farmland in the urban influenced counties was 2.7 times more productive than the remaining U.S. counties. Eighty seven percent of our domestic fruit and nut production is also grown in these threatened counties.

Every citizen should be concerned with a secure U.S. food supply and preservation of productive lands because the loss of farmland affects more than family farmers. Others affected by the land loss include the large agriculture support sector that ranges from fertilizer and equipment suppliers to fruit and vegetable processors. The general public could also face grocery counters half-full of not so fresh, costly produce imported from around the world. Agriculture is a basic and fundamental part of life from the food we eat to the clothes we wear. It is important that during times of fast growth we take a closer look at how our land is being used and how we can protect those that are being displaced by the urban community.

Farming has been placed under new pressures that are coupled with the rising costs of this capital intensive business. For example, farmers putting in a wine grap vineyard will encounter 4 years development costs over $17,000 dollars per acre above the land acquisition costs. Pistachio farmers should expect at least $7,000 dollars in preproductive costs per acre and olive growers $5,000 dollars an acre. These costs could literally double or triple dependent on the value of the land.

Aside from the high start up costs of crops such as orchards and vineyards U.S. farm real estate values also continue to rise. According to statistics compiled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture the value of U.S. farm real estate has risen 6.4 percent over the past year to $832 per acre. This $832 figure may be rising, but it still does not nearly reflect the cost of acquiring a prime piece of farmland in highly productive, urban-influenced states like California and Florida. An average piece of farmland in California and Florida is worth over $2,000 and can be worth as much as $17,000.

Along with high costs farmers continue to be plagued with storms, disease, and pests that destroy many acres of orchards and vineyards annually. Some of this costly acreage has not even reached a productive state. Crops like tangerines and cherries can take 5 to 6 years to reach productivity. In a natural disaster a farmer with a crop in a preproductive state may have trouble sustaining large losses because he does not have a return on his investment. Most farmers do not realize an actual profit for many years after a productive state is achieved. Natural disasters particularly impact small family farms that already have a small profit margin.

As a witness to the rate of urbanization in my own district, I have developed two incentives that would amend the 1986 tax code and keep families in farming and land in rural uses. I recently introduced H.R. 3749 to amend the tax code to promote replacement of crops destroyed by casualty. This bill will provide an incentive to replant by allowing them to deduct the cost of replanting their destroyed crop in the event of freezing temperatures, disease, drought, or pests, all events that cannot be controlled. It allows farmers to deduct the costs of replacing key infrastructure.

I have also introduced H.R. 520 to make it easier to tranfer farms from generation to generation. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture the average size farm in the United States is 469 acres. The land alone of an average farm in California is worth over $1 million and can be worth as much as $8 million on prime farm land. These numbers are the primary reasons that I have introduced H.R. 520 to double the current maximum benefit under the estate tax special valuation deduction. A farmer can be worth millions in terms of acreage but that does not necessarily mean that there is cash to pay estate taxes, or—during his life—other unexpected costs. This results in many farmers splitting their land up into parcels and selling out to developers just in order to cover their costs.

Current tax law that allows for $750,000 in maximum benefits is outdated in accordance to the cost of farming today. After you figure in the value of crops, irrigation systems, improvements (buildings, etc.), and equipment, the value of today's farm may be worth almost twice as much. The bills proection of $1,500,000 would allow for more continuity in farm acreage when transferring land between generations, avoiding the need for families to split up their land to pay off the estate tax.

Prime agriculture land is being authorized as we speak. Providing these small incentives to America's farmer would encourage families to stay in farming and secure an abundant food supply for the 21st century.

TRIBUTE TO VFW POST 8162 OF NASSAU, NEW YORK

HON. GERALD B.H. SOLOMON

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 31, 1996

Mr. SOLOMON. Mr. Speaker, as you know, one group I have a particular admiration for is our veterans. It was one of the reasons I asked for a seat on the Veterans' affairs Committee in my first term, and it's one of the reasons I fought so hard to have the Veterans Administration elevated to a full, cabinet-level department.

And one group was always right beside me in such efforts, Veterans of Foreign Wars. I can think of no group that has done more to promote the interests of our Nation's veterans. Today, I'd like to single out one VFW post, a very special one which is typical of VFW posts across the country.

VFW Post 8162 of Nassau, NY is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Think of that, Mr. Speaker. It's first members were, of course, the boys just returning from Europe and the Pacific and every other theater of World War II. Then, in the early 1950's, they were joined by veterans from the Korean war. In another 15 years, the veterans of the Vietnam War arrived on the scene. And finally, in this decade, we've seen those who served in the Persian Gulf join their older comrades.

From its beginning, Post 8162 was made up of citizen heroes, who left their homes and loved ones to undergo incredible hardships and sacrifices, including the supreme sacrifice, in defense of our freedoms. But the majority survived to return home, complete their educations, find jobs, raise families, and become the most respected members of their communities.

I've met many of the members of Post 8162. I was thinking of them and of other veterans like them when Ronald Reagan signed into law my measure making the Veterans Administration a cabinet department in 1988. With that signature, we made sure the interests of veterans would always have the ear of the U.S. President.

It is to those same interests that Post 8162 has so faithfully applied itself for 50 years, since that first beginning on August 12, 1946.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and all members to join me in a special salute to VFW Post 8162 of Nassau, NY, as it celebrates its 50th year.

OUTSTANDING HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

HON. STEVEN SCHIFF

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 31, 1996

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the following graduating high school students from the First Congressional District of New Mexico who have been awarded to the Congressional Certificate of Merit.

CERTIFICATE OF MERIT AWARD WINNERS 1996

Albuquerque Evening High School, Vera Lujan; Albuquerque High School, Monica Becerra; Bernalillo High School, Lance Darnell; Cibola High School, Jessica Shaw; Del Norte High School, Kathryn Gruchalla; Eldorado High School, Karli Massey, Matt Kaiser; Estancia High School, Wayne Davidson; Evangel Christian Academy, Jonathon E. Rael; Highland High School, Kelly Shannon McCormick; La Cueva High School, Tracy Carpenter; Los Lunas High School, Nicole J. Nagy; Menaul High School, Adam Cherry; Mountainair High School, Jessica Quintana; Rio Grande High School, Robert G. Coleman; Sandia High School, Krista Madril; Sandia Preparatory School, Anne Elizabeth Mannal; High School, St. Pius X High School, Autumn Nicole Grady, Laura C. Miner; Valley High School, Matthew Tennison; and West Mesa, Shane Gutiererz.

It is my pleasure to recognize these outstanding students for their academic and leadership accomplishments as well as for their participation in school, community service, and civil activities.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM ACT OF 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. JIM KOLBE

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 1996

Mr. KOLBE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 3820, the Campaign Finance

Reform Act. This bill fixes most of the commonly mentioned problems we see in funding campaign activities.

Mr. Speaker, I am especially pleased that this bill would require that at least half of our campaign funds would have to come from within our own district. This change alone makes the bill worth voting for. How often do we hear about special interests inside the beltway buying elections for an incumbent? This reform means that if your own constituents do not like you well enough to contribute, you will not have resources to get your message out.

And along that line, the bill cuts the influence of PAC's dramatically. Not only is their maximum contribution cut in half, but the candidate cannot even take the reduced amount if it would put him or her over the 50 percent threshold. This changes the balance of power between PAC's and individuals.

On the other hand, the bill strengthens political parties, including the local parties. And we all know that real reform begins at the local level. By increasing the amounts that local parties can contribute to the candidate, the candidate will be listening more closely to the folks at home, not to the big national PAC's.

Finally, this bill makes it possible for a candidate of modest means to run even if he or she is facing a very wealthy opponent or an incumbent with an intimidating war chest. The parties and PAC's are allowed, under these circumstances, to increase their contributions to level the playing field.

I am at a loss to understand why Common Cause would say that anyone who votes for this bill is a ''Protector of Corruption.'' If I remember correctly, they want taxpayers to fund campaigns, a situation that would require an individual to subsidize a candidate for whom he or she would not vote. I think that is corrupt.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting a true reform bill.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Title IV of Senate Resolution 4, agreed to by the Senate on February 4, 1977, calls for establishment of a system for a computerized schedule of all meetings and hearings of Senate committees, subcommittees, joint committees, and committees of conference. This title requires all such committees to notify the Office of the Senate Daily Digest—designated by the Rules Committee—of the time, place, and purpose of the meetings, when scheduled, and any cancellations or changes in the meetings as they occur.

As an additional procedure along with the computerization of this information, the Office of the Senate Daily Digest will prepare this information for printing in the Extensions of Remarks section of the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD on Monday and Wednesday of each week.

Meetings scheduled for Thursday, August 1, 1996, may be found in the Daily Digest of today's RECORD.

MEETINGS SCHEDULED

AUGUST 2

9:30 a.m.
Joint Economic
To hold hearings to examine the employment-unemployment situation for July.
SD–106

10:00 a.m.
Finance
Social Security and Family Policy Subcommittee
To hold hearings to examine how to educate the public about the 1996 report of the Social Security Board of Trustees.
SD–215

SEPTEMBER 4

9:30 a.m.
Energy and Natural Resources
To hold hearings on S. 1678, to abolish the Department of Energy.
SD–366

SEPTEMBER 5

2:00 p.m.
Energy and Natural Resources
Forests and Public Land Management Subcommittee
To hold hearings on S. 931, to authorize the construction of the Lewis and Clark Rural Water System and to authorize assistance to the Lewis and Clark Rural Water System, Inc., a nonprofit corporation, for the planning and construction of the water supply system, S. 1564, to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to provide loan guarantees for water supply, conservation, quality and transmission projects, S. 1565, to supplement the Small Reclamation Projects Act of 1956 and to supplement the Federal Reclamation laws by providing for Federal cooperation in non-Federal projects and for participation by non-Federal agencies in Federal projects, S. 1649, to extend contracts between the Bureau of Reclamation and irrigation districts in Kansas and Nebraska, S. 1719, Texas Reclamation Projects Indebtedness Purchase Act, and S. 1921, to transfer certain facilities at the Minidoka project to Burley Irrigation District.
SD–366

SEPTEMBER 11

10:00 a.m.
Judiciary
To hold hearings to examine competition in the telecommunications industry.
SD–226

SEPTEMBER 17

9:30 a.m.
Veterans' Affairs
To hold joint hearings with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to review the legislative recommendations of the American Legion.
334 Cannon Building

POSTPONEMENTS

AUGUST 2

10:00 a.m.
Judiciary
To resume hearings to examine the dissemination of Federal Bureau of Investigation background investigation reports and other information to the White House.
SD–226