the entire population of patients. The Health Care Bill of Rights, for example, introduced by my Democratic colleagues, is one such plan. My legislation is consistent with this overall thrust to ensure that managed care continues to operate for the benefit of patients, that operates by allowing physicians to provide advice, and not accountants, to control the diagnosis and the application of health care.

With respect to children, again, the American people are strongly supportive of proposals to give better access through managed care for pediatric services. In a February 1998 poll by the firm of Lake, Sosin, Snell, Perry and Associates and the Tarrance Group—two pollsters, one Democrat and one Republican—it was found that 89 percent of adults surveyed favored having ''Congress require HMOs and other insurance companies to allow parents to choose a pediatrician as their child's primary care physician.'' And 90 percent favored having ''Congress require HMOs and other insurance companies to allow parents of children with special care needs, like cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, or severe asthma, to choose a pediatric specialist to be their child's primary care physician.''

There is overwhelming public support for these provisions that will allow parents to truly and wisely choose coverage for their children and have the ability to have pediatric specialists care for their children.

Again, this is consistent with a theme, a message, and a responsibility that we all have; that is, to move in this time decisively, with determination, to ensure that we reform the managed care system, that we provide the benefits of managed care in terms of preventive services; in terms of access to physicians, that we do it in a way that physicians know they are providing the best care for their patients and that the consumers of health care know that they can have access to good-quality care.

The time to act is now. I join many of my colleagues on an almost daily basis in urging that we take up this matter quickly and that we move forward decisively and pass comprehensive managed care for all of our citizens, but particularly for our children.

I thank you, Mr. President. I yield my time.

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE RESTRUCTURING AND REFORM ACT OF 1998

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 2347

(Purpose: To require 1 member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board to be a representative of small business)

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise for the purpose of offering an amendment on behalf of myself and Senator BOND.

Yesterday, I spoke at some length about the issue of small business and the Internal Revenue Service. In that statement I pointed out that small business is a peculiarly affected part of the American economy as it relates to the Internal Revenue Service.

Small business, as we know, is the fastest growing sector of our economy. Typically, management has multiple responsibilities and does not have the kind of access to a panoply of expertise in accounting and law as a larger business would have. Oftentimes the small businessperson and those associated with the small business are in their own learning curve as to what requirements of compliance might be.

Therefore, it is my feeling as we look at this reform of the IRS that we should pay some special attention to how this will evolve in terms of its application to small businesses. As we know, one of the principal elements of this reform is the establishment of an IRS Oversight Board. This oversight board has the responsibility of being both the window of the Government onto the taxpayer, and the taxpayer back to the Government. So it serves an especially important role of understanding and communication.

The legislation is written so that three of the members of the nine-member oversight board are ex officio—the Secretary of the Treasury, the IRS Commissioner, and a representative of IRS employees. The other six appointees are Presidential appointments, and according to the current draft of the legislation these six appointees must possess expertise in the following areas: management of large service organizations, customer service, Federal tax laws, information technology, organization development, and needs and concerns of taxpayers.

The amendment that I am offering will add an additional category of expertise to be represented among the six Presidential appointees and that is the needs and concerns of small business. It is the expectation that the President would appoint six individuals, and his responsibility would be to assure that those six had a sufficient range of backgrounds that they would be able to cover the six and, if this amendment is added, the seventh requirement.

I think it is extremely important that among the six people who are appointed as Presidential appointees to the oversight board for the Internal Revenue Service there be represented in that six one or more individuals who understand the needs and concerns of small businesses of America and can assure that those concerns are effectively communicated to the management and administration of the Internal Revenue Service and, if necessary, the Congress, for appropriate changes in law.

The distinguished chairman of the Small Business Committee, Senator BOND, joins me in this effort. I want to commend him for his thorough analysis of the IRS bill as it affects small business and for including this provision in his legislation.

So, Mr. President, I send to the desk an amendment which would add to the requirements for those persons who are serving on the IRS Oversight Board that there be included expertise in the needs and concerns of small business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Florida [Mr. GRAHAM] proposes an amendment numbered 2347:

On page 176, between lines 4 and 5, insert the following:

''(vii) The needs and concerns of small businesses.

Mr. GRAHAM. I thank the Chair.

I ask for immediate consideration of this amendment.

Mr. KERREY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. KERREY. Mr. President, we would be prepared on this side to accept what I consider to be a very, very good amendment. The idea of this board is to give the President authority to select from a wide range of experiences that will assist the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service in managing the agency, and the Commissioner has already indicated—indeed, we are going to help him follow through—his preference to manage the IRS much differently than it currently is.

The IRS is currently managed using a three-tiered system that we adopted in 1952. There are regional and district offices, multiple offices, and you have all different kinds of taxpayer needs taken care of in each one of these district offices.

What the Commissioner has indicated he wants to do is reorganize along functional lines. Function No. 1 is large business of which I believe there are 7- or 800,000, individual taxpayers would be function No. 2, small business No. 3, and nonprofits No. 4.

So what the Commissioner is already attempting to do, and this law would direct him, is to entirely or completely eliminate the three tiers in favor of this kind of functional organization. But what he is already recognizing is that taxpayer needs vary not according to their geography but according to the category of the taxpayer. One of the largest and most important categories of radically different needs than the other three is small business.

So what the Senator from Florida is doing is adding to the list of requirements the President would have to consider when making a selection, and that would be some small business experience which reinforces very much

the other section of this bill, which directs the Commissioner to eliminate, as much as possible, the three-tier system in favor of this functional system of organization.

So I think it is a very good amendment. It is one of these amendments that just has a few words in it. There is a lot more to this amendment than meets the eye. I think with the addition of a small business experience, this board is much more likely to be able to carry out its function, and that is to provide the kind of consistent oversight and advice the Commissioner needs to manage this very important agency.

Mr. ROTH. Mr. President, I think we are all in agreement as to the importance of small business. Certainly, the current success of our economy has depended in large part on the contribution of small business. For that reason, from this side I agree that we should accept the amendment, and so do.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there be no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2347) was agreed to.

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. KERREY. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SESSIONS). The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, during the last couple of months, in every household across the country, Americans went through an annual rite. They sat down at the kitchen table, pulled all their financial records together, and figured out what they owed the Government in taxes.

Nobody likes doing their taxes. And people dislike paying them even more. Yet the vast majority of our citizens do pay their taxes. And they pay them honestly.

In short, Americans expect their money to be used to pay for all of the things that help make this nation great. In return, though, the American people want their Government to do two things.

First, the American people want their Government to treat them with respect and dignity as the revenue is being collected. They expect to have their privacy respected, and to be treated fairly.

Second, Americans expect that everyone else who enjoys the benefits taxes pay for will shoulder their share of the burden. That their neighbor down the street isn't hiding part of his income, and thus avoiding paying his fair share of the tax. That everyone is filing returns, and that the amounts claimed on those returns are accurate and true.

Mr. President, I truly believe the American people have the right to have both of these expectations met. And I believe we here in the Senate shoulder a great deal of the responsibility for making sure of it.

Chief Justice John Marshall said: ''The power to tax involves the power to destroy.'' It is our duty as Senators to make sure this country does not use its power in that fashion.

Running the IRS is a study in careful balances. And I believe that the IRS has somehow lost its ability to maintain one side of the equation over the years.

Many tax collectors, in their zeal to catch those among us who don't pay their taxes, seem to have lost sight of the most important truth about our tax system—that citizens have rights that must be protected.

Anything less undermines our ability to make a system of voluntary taxation work.

Here's a graphic example of how the system has gotten out of whack. It's contained in a recent letter from one of my constituents. It's a plea for help:

> The problem with the IRS started in 1997. John [not his real name] and I had just bought a house. I was a semester away from graduating from college, and we thought the [failed] business was behind us. The last week in July 1997, I returned home after a day of working at my part-time job to find a nasty note on my front door from [an IRS agent] stating that he had 'tracked' us down and expected a phone call or action would be taken. I promptly called him to find out the reasoning behind the note. He was very rude and reluctant to give me any information, because I [was not my husband]. I explained that I was his wife and he began talking to me in a degrading manner. He said, ''Your husband owes tax, and I expect to collect it in full.'' When I asked him to explain, he very quickly said it was for [my husband's failed business] and began treating me as a criminal who was running from the IRS.
>
> We feel we have not been treated fairly in this situation. We have attempted to make good on all other situations regarding this [failed] business and have not been hiding from the IRS. [The IRS agent] has been extremely rude and unsympathetic toward us. He has put a tax lien on everything we own. He has also made comments to our accountant indicating that he has been tracking our personal lives and mentioning purchases and other personal matters. In [the IRS agent's] eyes we are criminals cheating the government. In our eyes the government is cheating us by never giving us a fair chance to make good. This whole situation has cost us over $700 in accounting fees and is still unresolved. We are turning to you as a final attempt to resolve this problem. We hope you can help us in making the government work for the people not against them.

That letter sums up this issue in a nutshell: Make the Government work for the people, not against them. Make Government responsive to taxpayers' needs. Make service the priority of the Internal Revenue Service. Make the IRS treat taxpayers fairly—and with respect. That's what my constituent wants. And that's what I want.

We certainly don't want to tie IRS's hands so much that tax cheats are encouraged. The rest of us end up picking up the tab when someone cheats. At the same time, we also can't have IRS harassing innocent citizens, assuming everyone is guilty the minute they walk in the door.

I believe this legislation will help IRS find its way back to the reasonable balance that our tax system requires.

The IRS has suffered from years of neglect and lack of focus. The spotlight that has been turned on the Service, by the IRS Restructuring Commission and by the series of hearings we have held in the Senate Finance Committee, has already had a positive effect on the IRS.

The Service is expanding hours and people for its telephone answering service. Taxpayers got 13 million fewer busy signals this year when they called IRS to ask questions about their taxes. Toll-free calls are being answered 91% of the time—a huge improvement. Last year callers only got through 66% of the time, and only 39% of the time the year before. This year, phone lines are being answered 18 hours a day. And for the first time, the IRS is open on Saturdays.

People answering the phones are also getting better. One group of Baltimore IRS workers gave correct advice to 100% of recent random test calls. Nationally, accuracy scores are up to 93% this year, from only 63% as recently as 1989.

So more taxpayers are able to get through to the IRS when they have a question, and more of the answers they will get will be the right ones.

IRS has a webpage where taxpayers can download documents and forms. Now taxpayers don't have to run all over town just to find the right paperwork.

And the Service has had a series of ''Problemsolving Days'' around the country, where taxpayers can come in and get their problems taken care of. The last ''Problemsolving Day'' in my home state of Montana was in Billings in January. More than half of all the taxpayers who participated walked out with their problems taken care of on the spot. Many of the rest have been resolved in the succeeding weeks.

But there are still problems at the IRS, as our hearings—and my constituent's letter and plea for help—have clearly identified. And many of the improvements planned by our new IRS Commissioner, Charles Rossotti, require legislative action in order to go forward.

The bill before us is a very good beginning. It addresses the first expectation the American people share—making sure the Government treats them with respect and dignity as the revenue is being collected. It does this through a series of provisions.

First, the bill creates a board, made up chiefly of private citizens, to oversee the direction the IRS is going. The Board will keep an eye on the Service's budget, to make sure enough resources are being dedicated to customer service. It will help define long-term goals, and make sure the Service stays on track to meet those goals. The Board will ferret out problems at the IRS, and help craft solutions to those problems.

The bill creates significant new personnel flexibilities to make it easier for Commissioner Rossotti to get his

own team on board and reward employees who are doing well. It requires the IRS to submit an employee training plan to Congress, to help employees improve the quality of their work. The bill requires IRS to tell Congress about taxpayer complaints of misconduct by employees, and to take disciplinary action against ''bad apples''. The bill also makes it easier for IRS employees to provide confidential information to the Finance and Ways and Means Committees to report allegations of employee misconduct or taxpayer abuse.

The bill will reorganize the IRS, much as IBM was reorganized when they realized they couldn't compete against newcomers like Microsoft. Right now, IRS is organized horizontally, by function. This means every time a taxpayer has a question or a problem that crosses the Services' functional lines, they are handed off to a different person in an entirely different department. No one has final responsibility to getting the taxpayer's problem solved.

There is no accountability.

This bill reorganizes the agency by type of taxpayer. There will be a separate division for individuals, one for small businesses, one for large corporations, and one for tax exempt organizations. Employees within these divisions will be responsible for just about every type of problem their assigned group of taxpayers could have. They will stick with the taxpayer until his problem is solved.

No more passing the buck.

The bill also adds important new taxpayer protections to the law, to help protect citizens against arbitrary actions of IRS agents.

The bill will allow taxpayers to sue for negligent actions by IRS agents. Today they must meet a very high treshold by proving any abuse was intentional.

The bill expands the offers-in-compromise program. It makes it harder for IRS to turn down legitimate offers. The bill also requires IRS to leave taxpayers with more money to live on when they enter into repayment agreements.

In our hearings, taxpayers complained about the difficulty of using innocent spouse protections. The House and Senate bills take different approaches to solving this problem. Both make it easier for truly innocent spouses to be protected from the tax debts their guilty spouses have accumulated.

These are only a few examples of the taxpayer protections built into the legislation.

Finally, the bill before us today takes a first step toward addressing what may be the biggest contributor to taxpayer problems with our Tax Code—Congress itself. Witness after witness at our hearings complained about the complexity of the Code. Witness after witness complained about how hard it is to keep up with frequent changes we make in the law. And they are right.

This bill requires that every tax bill in the future be accompanied by an analysis of whether it will further complicate the Code. How hard it will be for taxpayers to comply with the new law. As we strive to achieve fairness in our Tax Code, we sacrifice simplicity. With this bill, we will be able to clearly understand the extent of that sacrifice.

I believe that one of the hardest things to do when restructuring any agency, and particularly one as sensitive as this one, is to find that delicate balance between giving the Government too much power and giving it too little.

Give it too much power, and innocent citizens will be abused. This is, obviously, unacceptable in a civilized society. Even one single instance of taxpayer abuse is one too many.

Law abiding taxpayers should not fear the taxman.

But clipping the Government's wings too closely presents its own dangers. Americans expect us to make sure everyone is sharing the burden of paying for the services our Government provides. And it is clear some of us are not. IRS estimates the ''tax gap'', which is the measure of tax avoidance, now is almost $200 billion a year. This amounts to more than $1,600 per year for every tax return filed by the rest of us.

This, too, must stop. Our entire system of collecting revenue would unravel if taxpayers stop paying their fair share because they believe everyone else is cheating.

The bill before us today is not perfect.

It does not address the problem of tax non-compliance. We have left that challenge for another day.

There are provisions in it that may seem good at first blush, but may cause more harm than good. We should try to fix these as the bill goes through the legislative process.

But I firmly believe we must not let the perfect be the enemy of the good. We must not let yet another tax season go by without the taxpayer protections this bill provides.

Passing a solid restructuring bill will do more to get the IRS on track than a hundred hearings where we sit, posture, pontificate and play politics.

It is our responsibility to the American people to get this job done quickly, and to get it done right. I want to be able to go back to the constituent who wrote me that letter and say, Yes, we fixed your problem. And, Yes, the Government works for you, not against you.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. GRAMS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I rise today to speak briefly about IRS reform and overall reform of the tax system.

Paramilitary-style raids, attempted frame-ups, retaliation against whistle blowers, harassment of innocent individuals, all carried out by a Government agency oftentimes operating outside the bounds of the law and with seemingly limitless authority. A premise played out within the pages of the latest popular novel? Not exactly. These examples, unearthed during recent hearings here in the Senate, are taken directly from the playbook of the Internal Revenue Service.

The hearings, and the abuses they highlighted, have focused the nation's attention on the ''IRS Restructuring and Reform Act'' that is now before the Senate. Included within the legislation are many good provisions that would protect taxpayer rights and restrict the power of the agency. Key provisions would limit interest and penalties on delinquent taxes and shift the burden of proof from the taxpayer to the IRS in tax disputes.

Before I continue, Mr. President, I would like to take this opportunity to commend Senator ROTH, the Chairman of the Finance Committee, for his tremendous efforts to reform the IRS and his leadership on tax relief.

I also commend the Chairman for holding the series of oversight hearings that exposed the abuses upon taxpayers carried out by the IRS. All of us are greatly indebted to Senator ROTH for that. He has done an outstanding job to formulate a sound and responsible IRS restructuring plan.

If enacted, these reform provisions before us today would improve IRS service, make the agency more accountable, and provide better protections for the taxpayers. I fully agree with Senator ROTH that the goal of IRS reform should be to make the IRS ''a service-oriented agency instead of a law-enforcement agency.''

Still, Mr. President, a fundamental question remains: can the IRS really be fixed by reform without scrapping the Tax Code? To answer this, we need to take a closer look into the problems with the IRS.

The passage in 1913 of the 16th amendment to the Constitution granted Congress the power to impose an income tax. A tiny division of the Bureau of Internal Revenue Service was created to collect the taxes. Eighty-five years later, this division, now known as the IRS, has grown to become the most powerful agency in the entire Federal Government.

The IRS today employs more investigative agents than the FBI and the CIA combined, and boasts a total workforce of more than 100,000. It is hard to believe, but more employees work at the IRS than in all but the 36 largest corporations in this country. The decisions its bureaucrats make daily affect every American who takes home a paycheck.

The agency's job is to administer and enforce the Nation's tax laws and collect tax revenue for the Government. To ensure that all Americans pay their taxes, Congress has given the agency almost unlimited power—power that

goes beyond the authority granted to any other agency in the Federal Government.

By law, the IRS can audit individuals or businesses. It can impose penalties and impose a lien on a taxpayer's property or bank accounts, or seize them altogether. Average taxpayers and small business owners have few little administrative or legal remedies against such a powerful agency.

Its unlimited power has made the IRS a wasteful, arrogant, incompetent, intrusive, and abusive agency. The IRS is driven by illegal quotas and collection goals. It has targeted the underprivileged for audits. It has mistreated hundreds of thousands of innocent taxpayers. Clearly, this is an agency out of control, an agency in need of a complete overhaul.

But let us not forget how the IRS reached this troubled point. Congress deserves much of the blame for the present state of our hostile tax system, for it is Congress that created the IRS in the first place.

Congress grants the IRS its unlimited power. Congress writes the complicated Tax Code that taxes Americans' income over and over and provides loopholes to thousands of special groups, making the Tax Code too complicated for even most attorneys and tax accountants to fully understand. Congress requires the IRS to squeeze more tax money out of the taxpayers so that Congress has more to spend. On top of that, Congress does not have time to fully exercise its IRS oversight responsibilities. Even while it talks reform, Congress is making the Tax Code ever more burdensome—since last year, Congress has added 185 new sections and 824 changes to the Tax Code.

Most IRS employees are decent, hardworking people who face an impossible task: interpreting and applying the hundreds of thousands of pages of the Tax Code and its related regulations. A recent study shows that more than 8 million Americans each year receive incorrect bills or refunds due to IRS errors. Each year, Money magazine hires 50 professional tax preparers to calculate a return for a sample family. No two preparers have ever had the same result; answers can vary by thousands of dollars. It just shows that the Tax Code is confusing and arbitrary, and this in turn encourages waste, harassment, corruption and abuse.

Tinkering with the system by merely restructuring the IRS will not solve its fundamental flaws. It is clear that the real problem with the IRS is not management, or administration, but the Tax Code on which all IRS decisions are based. This is such an ugly agency it is hard to make it pretty by reforms.

We can replace the IRS management, we can improve its service, crack down on abuses, increase its efficiency, and reduce its waste, but the fundamental problems will not go away. Reorganizing the IRS without real reform of the Tax Code will send a false signal to the American people that once we restructure the IRS, all its problem will be solved and there will be no need to reform our tax system. Unfortunately, as the history books reveal, it is not that easy.

We have tried to overhaul the IRS in the past, and somehow the agency always comes back more powerful and more abusive than ever before. At least two versions of a ''taxpayer bill of rights'' previously enacted into law have had little effect in taming the IRS. Even after last year's IRS abuse hearings, which resulted in promised reforms, the abuses continue.

Mr. President, let me make this clear: it is vitally important that we continue our efforts to reform the IRS, and I strongly support Chairman ROTH's work and his legislation. My point is that we should not let this debate delay or derail real tax reform—to delay us from carrying out the demands of the taxpayers to scrap the Tax Code and replace it with one that is simpler, flatter, fairer, and friendlier.

This Chamber already passed a resolution to sunset the Tax Code. Now we should set a date to establish a new tax system. Once we have eliminated the Tax Code, there will be little, if any, need for the IRS and its playbook or its abuses.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

Mr. CONRAD addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. CONRAD. I ask unanimous consent to be able to speak as in morning business for 12 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I certainly would not object, but I ask the chairman if I might be able to speak for 8 minutes by unanimous consent following Senator CONRAD.

Mr. ROTH. A total of 20 minutes then. The manager has no objection.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CONRAD. I thank the Chair.

THE FARM CRISIS IN NORTH DAKOTA

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rose 2 days ago to alert my colleagues to the economic disaster that is befalling North Dakota with a dramatic drop in farm income. And I showed this chart; the headline: ''North Dakota Farm Incomes Washed Away In 1997,'' that showed from 1996 to 1997 farm income dropped 98 percent in North Dakota.

In fact, in 1997, the total farm income in the entire State of North Dakota, one of the most agricultural States in the Nation, was down to only $15 million—$15 million—of farm income spread among 30,000 farmers. That was a farm income per farm of only $500.

Mr. President, the Wall Street Journal yesterday had a front page article entitled ''Off the Land,'' and they confirmed the basic outlines of the story that I ve been telling for the last 2 days on the Senate floor. And in their front page story, they pointed out, ''On the Northern Plains, Free-Market Farming Yields Pain, Upheaval. After Deregulation, Drop In Wheat Prices Compels Many Growers to Quit. The Effect Spreads South.''

Mr. President, the article in the Wall Street Journal goes on to report that:

> Cheap wheat and bad weather are doing to Nathan Johnson what they couldn't do to three preceding generations of his farming family.
>
> They are defeating him.

Mr. President, this is a story from northwestern Minnesota, but it is identical to what is happening right across the border in northern North Dakota.

This story goes on to say:

> Last year, a disease called scab wiped out half the wheat [that Mr. Johnson] planted on the land around his family's 1887 homestead near the Canadian border. And now, a glut of foreign wheat is pushing down the grain's price at the local elevator to an unprofitable $3 a bushel. These days, Mr. Johnson is trying to rent out his land and looking for work in the city.

Mr. President, the article goes on to say:

> Across the Northern Plains, the long migration away from agriculture is turning into a stampede. From Montana to Minnesota, thousands who made their living growing wheat are quitting the prairie. A blizzard of barnyard auctions is sending chills down the Main Streets of the towns that live off farmers.

One man is quoted as saying:

> ''We're doing a sale every day,'' says Brad Olstad of Steffes Auctioneers Inc. in Fargo, N.D. ''Wheat is a dying crop.''

And wheat, of course, is the commodity that goes to make bread, to make pasta; and they are talking here about it being a dying commodity.

> Bad years are nothing new around here. Wheat prices were lower in 1990, when a similar coincidence of bumper harvests around the globe swamped the market. The drought of 1988 destroyed wheat fields. But none of that was as deadly to farmers as what is happening now: deregulation.
>
> Two years ago, Uncle Sam began withholding from the decades-old business of protecting farmers against the vagaries of weather and markets. Grain and cotton farmers no longer receive ''deficiency'' payments when prices are below target levels. Shelved, too, was the disaster-aid program that pumped $18 million into Kennedy—

This is a small town in Minnesota that is being reported on in the Journal article—

> and the rest of Kittson County after the 1988 drought.
>
> * * * * * *
>
> The bottom line: Many of Kittson County's farmers are suffering their biggest financial losses ever. ''Deregulation is turning into a disaster for us,'' says Duane A. Lyberg, president of the Northwestern State Bank.

Now, that tells you something about the depths of this disaster. It is not just farmers reporting on it, not just, as I reported yesterday, implement dealers or other suppliers to farmers; but now the bankers are reporting to us what a financial disaster they are facing.