RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SPECTER). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCY PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 4461, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee on conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill, H.R. 4461, making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, the Food and Drug Administration, and related agency programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement of the Senate amendment, and the Senate agree to the same, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the RECORD of Friday, October 6, 2000.)

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my prepared remarks describing the provisions of this conference report be printed at this point in the RECORD.

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

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am very pleased to announce to the Senate that we successfully completed action in our conference committee and brought back to the Senate a bill that has already been approved by the other body by a substantial vote of support, and indications are that the President is prepared to sign this conference report.

I am pleased to make that announcement because during the development of this legislation and the markup sessions that we held here in the Senate, and discussions of the bill on the floor of the Senate, there were some very contentious and controversial issues that were debated and considered. We didn't achieve all of the successes that Senators wanted to achieve, as is usually the case in the situation where you are negotiating compromise with the other body and dealing with views and opinions reflected in the policies of the administration. But, taken together, given the expressions of support and interest in the Senate for the provisions that are in the bill, I am confident that most Senators will be very pleased with this result.

This is a good bill. It deserves the support of the Senate.

It provides a restrained approach to funding the activities of the Agencies and Departments of Government that are funded in this bill.

The total dollar amount for new budget authority, for example, is less than the fiscal year 2000 enacted level. It is less than the level requested by the President. It is less than the House-passed bill level, and it is less than the Senate-passed bill level.

The fact is, every effort was made during consideration of this bill to be restrained and responsible in the allocation of funds that are available to this subcommittee under the budget resolution.

The conference agreement provides total new budget authority of $74.5 billion for programs and activities of the United States Department of Agriculture (except for the Forest Service which is funded by the Interior Appropriations bill), the Food and Drug Administration, and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. This is approximately $1.1 billion less than the fiscal year 2000 enacted level and $2.3 billion less than the level requested by the President. It is $651 million less than the House-passed bill level, and $859 million less than the Senate-passed bill level.

This conference report also includes an additional $3.6 billion in emergency appropriations to compensate agricultural producers for losses suffered due to drought, fires, and other natural disasters; to meet conservation needs; and to provide relief to rural communities.

Including Congressional budget scorekeeping adjustments and prior-year spending actions, this conference agreement provides total non-emergency discretionary spending for fiscal year 2001 of just over $15 billion in budget authority and outlays.

I am pleased to report that this conference report provides funding at the President's request level, an increase of nearly $58 million from the fiscal year 2000 level, for activities and programs in this bill which are part of the Administration's ''Food Safety Initiative.''

The conference report provides adequate funding in our view for the Food Safety and Inspection Service, which has the responsibility of conducting inspections and monitoring the safety of our Nation's food supply to ensure that the food that is consumed by Americans and produced and processed here is fit for human consumption, and free from contamination.

This is a big challenge. It is a big worry all over the country because there have been instances where there have been problems in this area. We think this conference report responds to those concerns and that will have a very positive influence in helping to solve problems in this area of food safety.

Let me also point out the emphasis in this conference report on agricultural research and education programs. We have to maintain a high level of technological sophistication in order to continue to produce an adequate amount of food and fiber for our country at reasonable prices, and to do so in a way that permits a level of profit for those engaged in farming operations to stay in business. It is very difficult in many areas of the country now for farmers and ranchers to make ends meet. They are confronted with a wide range of difficulties.

We have to invest in research to try to find new ways of improving yields for the crops that are produced in our country, and to do so in a way that is not threatening to the environment or to the citizens of our country. We have a heightened awareness of problems that can occur in this area.

There is almost a near hysteria in Europe over this issue. We are confronting difficulties in trade because we are having problems getting licenses for commodities and foods that are produced in the United States because they have genetically modified organisms—GMOs—which is a big issue in the U.K. particularly. The tabloids have been fanning the flames of the hysteria that has taken hold there. The European Union has been very hesitant and difficult to deal with in approving licenses from exporters who would like to sell what they are producing in the European market. In my view, many of these practices are unfair and not based on sound science.

But we need to have a regiment of research and development that is beyond question in terms of its impact on human health and our environment. That is why it is as important this year, more important than ever before, to have a robust research and education program that is supported by the Department of Agriculture. In colleges and universities and in Agricultural Research Service laboratories all around the country, there are funds that will be made available to help achieve the goals in this area.

This conference agreement provides increased appropriations for agriculture research and education programs. Total appropriations of nearly $2 billion are provided for the Agriculture Research Service and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, $126 million more than the fiscal year 2000 level and $62 million more than the Senate-passed bill level. In addition, as requested by the President and provided in the Senate bill, $120 million in fiscal year 2000 funding will be available in fiscal year 2001 to fund the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems.

Approximately $34 billion, close to 46 percent of the total new budget authority provided by this conference report, is for domestic food programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These include food stamps; commodity assistance; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); the school lunch and breakfast programs; and the school breakfast pilot program, which is funded at $6 million. Included in this amount is the Senate-

passed bill level of $4.052 billion for the WIC program, including $20 million for the WIC farmers' market nutrition program.

The WIC program is a very important nutrition program and health program for women, infants, and children. Everybody is aware of the importance of school lunch and breakfast programs to help equip our children with the nutrition they need as they are at school so they can learn and do a good job at school.

We also have a Food Stamp Program that is funded in this bill. In my view, these are funded at adequate levels to meet the demands and needs we have in our country. We have been very fortunate in this time of economic expansion and growth for jobs to be created so those who want to work can find work. We have people coming into the country now under special visa requirements because we have an inadequate labor supply, or at least an inadequately trained supply of labor to do many of the jobs that have to be done in this country. Many entry level positions are now being filled by those who are newly coming into the country, many just for the purpose of working on farms because people who live here and who have been here for a while either don't want to do the work or for some reason are unavailable to those who need help on their farms.

This is a challenge. The point I am making in connection with the food and nutrition programs is we have been able to reduce the costs of some of these programs, particularly the Food Stamp Program, because of the expansion in the economy and the availability of jobs. We need to make sure through our budget policies that we continue to have an environment economically for job growth and expansion.

For farm assistance programs, the conference report provides $1.3 billion in appropriations. Included in this amount is the full increase of $89 million above the fiscal year 2000 level requested by the Administration for Farm Service Agency salaries and expenses, as well as appropriations which, together with available carryover balances, will fund the fiscal year 2001 farm operating and farm ownership loan levels included in the President's budget request.

Appropriations for conservation programs administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service total $873 million, $69 million more than the fiscal year 2000 level, and approximately $6 million more than the level recommended by the Senate.

Conservation programs, in my view, are some of the less well advertised programs of the Department of Agriculture. We have increased the amount of acreage available for the Wetlands Reserve Program by 100,000 acres.

We have also worked hard on these programs to ensure they help improve wildlife habitat on farms and on the lands that are owned by American citizens. We have incentive programs, not just mandatory programs, but programs that encourage the management of land so that conservation is enhanced, and the protection of soil and water resources is enhanced by the way landowners use and care for their lands.

We found that to be a very popular way of helping to encourage and obtain the best possible land management practices, rather than having a Federal Government come in with threats and other sanctions that can be imposed on landowners. It is better to do it in a way that is educational and nonthreatening and based on incentives rather than sanctions, fines, and penalties from the Federal Government.

We also see in this bill something that is important to every rural community: development programs, housing programs, water and sewer system programs. They are all important in rural America. Many of these communities have some of the lowest income families in America and therefore they don't have the economic base to pay the costs that would be required for utilities and other lifestyle enhancements that are available in the larger towns or the cities of our country. These programs are very important in States, such as mine and others, which have to depend upon Federal assistance to make sure they have safe drinking water, they have sewer systems, they have electric lights, they have telephone service access. These programs are funded in this bill this year.

For rural economic and community development programs, the conference report provides appropriations of $2.5 billion to support a total loan level of $8.8 billion. Included in this amount is $763 million for the Rural Community Advancement Program, $680 million for the rental assistance program, and a total rural housing loan program level of $5.1 billion.

A total of $1.1 billion is provided for foreign assistance and related programs of the Department of Agriculture, including $115 million in new budget authority for the Foreign Agricultural Service and total appropriations of $973 million for the P.L. 480 Food for Peace Program, $31 million above the fiscal year 2000 level, and the same as the President's request and Senate bill levels.

Total new budget authority for the Food and Drug Administration is $1.1 billion, $74 million more than the fiscal year 2000 level and $24 million more than the Senate-passed bill level. The conference report also makes available an additional $149 million in Prescription Drug User Fee Act collections. The increase in new budget authority, together with the redirection of base funds, provides FDA with an additional $130 million from the fiscal year 2000 level for funding requirements identified in the President's fiscal year 2001 budget request. These include the full increases requested in the budget of $30 million for food safety, $20 million for construction of the Los Angeles laboratory, and $22.9 million for premarket review. Also included is a portion of the increased funding requested for FDA to enforce Internet drug sales, enhance inspections, improve existing adverse events reporting systems, and continue counter-bioterrorism activities.

In addition, the conference report appropriates, contingent on a budget request, the $23 million FDA has identified it needs for fiscal year 2001 to carry out the Medicine Equity and Drug Safety Act of 2000. The FDA said it needed this amount for this next fiscal year to carry out the provisions of this conference report that provides these new responsibilities, to guarantee safety and efficacy of drugs in this new era, so that is included in this report.

For the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, $68 million is provided; and a limitation of $35.8 million is established on administrative expenses of the Farm Credit Administration.

As my colleagues recall, as passed by the Senate, this bill included not only the regular fiscal year 2001 appropriations bill, but a ''Division B'' providing supplemental appropriations, rescissions, and other emergency provisions relating not only to programs and activities under this Subcommittee's jurisdiction but to various other Departments and agencies of government. Provisions outside this Subcommittee's jurisdiction have been deleted by the conference committee and will be addressed, as appropriate, on other bills.

Funding for emergency assistance for farmers and landowners who have been affected by drought, fires, and other natural disasters that have occurred this year is now included as Title VIII of this conference report. The total assistance package has been scored by the Congressional Budget Office at $3.6 billion.

The Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to use such sums as necessary of the Commodity Credit Corporation to compensate farmers for crop and quality losses at the same rates as have been used in previous years. However, unlike years past, there is no limit on the amount of funds available for this assistance, thus eliminating proration of producers' payments and hopefully expediting payments.

Other assistance provided by the bill includes $490 million for the livestock assistance program, $473 million for dairy producers, and $328 million for producers of certain specialty crops.

The agreement provides needed conservation funding by making $35 million in technical assistance available for the Conservation Reserve Program and the Wetlands Reserve Program, and providing an additional $110 million for the Emergency Watershed Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Senators worked very hard in the conference on this issue, and other

issues as well. We have expanded the opportunities to sell what we produce in the international marketplace in this conference report as a result of changes in sanctions policy. There have been many initiatives introduced on this subject. I know the Senator from Indiana, Mr. LUGAR, has a wide, sweeping, and very thoughtful approach to this sanctions issue reflected in a bill he has introduced. I hope we can pass legislation in this area that sets new policies and establishes a new way of going about deciding when and where to impose sanctions that tie the hands of our exporters and have an adverse impact on our ability to sell what we produce on the international marketplace.

I am not saying sanctions are bad. We have to use them in certain cases. They have proven to be very effective in certain cases. Normally, this is when we have the cooperation of other countries. But when we just unilaterally impose sanctions, in many cases that ends up being more hurtful and harmful to our farmers and ranchers and businesses than to anybody else. We have to be careful how we approach this whole issue.

I think the conference committee exercised good judgment and an awareness of concerns throughout our country on this issue when it made the changes that are reflected here. I am hopeful with the emergency assistance provisions that are in the bill, the other programs that have been funded, the Senate will be able to enthusiastically support and approve the work that this conference committee has done.

This conference report carries a number of other legislative provisions adopted by the conference committee, including the Continued Dumping and Sudsidy Offset Act; the Conservation of Farmable Wetland Act; and the Hass Avocado Promotion, Research, and Information Act.

Mr. President, we are already well beyond the October 1 start of the new fiscal year. This conference agreement is the product of two lengthy sessions of the conference committee. The conference report was filed last Friday night, October 6, and was adopted by the House of Representatives on October 11 by a vote of 340 to 75. Senate passage of this conference report today is the final step necessary to send this fiscal year 2001 appropriations bill to the President for signature into law.

Senator KOHL is the ranking Democrat on the subcommittee. It has been a pleasure to work with him throughout the hearing phase of the development of our factual basis for writing this bill. In all the discussions we have had in working on challenges before the subcommittee, I could not have asked for more cooperation or careful and thoughtful assistance than Senator KOHL provided to me and to the committee as a whole.

The full committee, of course, had a role to play in this, all members of our subcommittee and full committee, too. I want to express my appreciation to all of them. It was a pleasure working in conference with Chairman JOE SKEEN, from New Mexico, who is serving in his last year as chairman of the subcommittee. This is his sixth year in that capacity. The House has term limits on subcommittee chairmen. It effectively prohibits his service beyond this year as chairman of the subcommittee. But he has really been a hard-working leader in the House on the development of this legislation and this appropriations bill. We will miss working with him as chairman. We hope to be able to continue working with him closely in the years ahead, though, as a fellow member of the Appropriations Committee in the House.

MARCY KAPTUR, from Ohio, is the distinguished ranking Democrat on the House committee. It is always a pleasure working with her. She was very helpful in the development of this bill during our consideration of it in conference with the House.

I know none of this excellent work product would have been possible without the outstanding assistance and hard work that has been turned in by our able staff members: Rebecca Davies, who is the chief clerk on this committee, Hunt Shipman, Martha Scott Poindexter, Les Spivey, and with the wise counsel and influence of my chief of staff, Mark Keenum, and with others who participated in the development of this bill. I say thank you. It would not have been possible without their help. This is an outstanding work product. We appreciate your excellent effort. I do not want to leave out Galen Fountain either. He is the chief clerk on the Democratic side of our subcommittee. He has been a very helpful person to work with, and we appreciate very much his outstanding assistance, too.

I know of no Senators who have asked to be recognized at this point, but I repeat what the majority leader provided by way of information to the Senate in the opening announcements this morning. We have time reserved today, we have time reserved on Tuesday, and a short period of time on Wednesday for discussion of this bill, and then a vote will occur at 11:30 on Wednesday morning. I hope Senators will take advantage of these opportunities if they have questions or if they have statements they want to make in connection with the bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JEFFORDS). The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to commend the distinguished Senator from Mississippi for his leadership in producing a very sound Agriculture Appropriations bill. I have served with the Senator from Mississippi on that subcommittee for almost 20 years now and have participated in the conference just concluded which has produced this bill. I can personally attest to the professionalism, courtesy, and, perhaps most of all, the patience displayed by the Senator from Mississippi in presiding over those proceedings.

The public has little opportunity to know what goes on in the legislative process generally, but they do hear about the introduction of bills and they do see, on C–SPAN and otherwise, the committee meetings and the questioning of witnesses, and to some extent they see on C–SPAN II, to the extent anybody watches, what happens on the Senate floor. But the conferences are largely unseen by the public. That is crunch time, when the work is concluded. Everything else which is done is really of much less significance than the conferences, where the final touches are put on legislation which constitutes the laws of the country.

There are very long sessions. A week ago last night was illustrative of the point. The speeches tend to go very long. The presiding chairman has to have great patience, to have the proper balance between allowing every member to speak and getting the work completed. That conference had some very difficult issues, issues which related to relieving sanctions on Cuba, to allow more importations of food, and it went into an issue which is highly sensitive, where there really ought to be an evaluation as to our relations with Cuba. We did take a step in the right direction on releasing the sanctions as to food—really, largely as an economic matter for America's farmers.

In the foreign operations bill there is a provision, which this Senator introduced, to try to get more cooperation on drug interdiction, which the Cuban Government is willing to do. Then we had important provisions on reimportation of drugs, on which the distinguished Senator from Vermont, Mr. JEFFORDS, who is now presiding, was the leader.

It has come to pass that the appropriations bills, now, are the principal legislative vehicles, so to speak, for getting substantive legislation because it is only the appropriations bills, ultimately, which pass. So much of that is done in conference as opposed to amendments on the floor, which is the prescribed way.

The senior Senator from Mississippi presided at that conference, and we produced a very important bill. As I have heard him report on it today, I am struck by its promise and its importance for the American people under his leadership.

In the absence of any other Senator seeking recognition, 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. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. JEFFORDS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I first express my appreciation to the distinguished Senator from Pennsylvania, Mr. SPECTER, for his generous comments about my efforts in behalf of this legislation as chairman of the subcommittee. He also put in a lot of time and effort during the conference with the House and also during the development of this legislation in our subcommittee. He has been an outstanding member of the Appropriations Committee and, of course, chairs the Labor-HHS Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee in the Senate and does an excellent job in that capacity. I thank him for his very generous statements.

I also commend, as he did, the Senator from Vermont, who is chairing the Senate this morning, for his leadership on the drug importation issue. I don't think this would have been included in this legislation—I know it would not—were it not for the leadership of Senator JEFFORDS. It was this amendment that was included in the bill when the bill was on the floor of the Senate.

As the occupant of the chair remembers, we had a very heated debate. It was contentious. It was a matter of a lot of controversy surrounding it. I offered an amendment to the Jeffords amendment, which was adopted as it turned out, helping protect the safety and efficacy of drugs that would be imported under the provision of the Jeffords amendment. Then in conference with the House, everybody got involved, not just the conferees but the leadership of the House and the leadership of the Senate. Everybody, it seemed, had an opinion or a viewpoint on how that language should be changed or modified or improved.

As it turned out, the end result is something in which the Senator from Vermont can take a great deal of pride. His influence will always be remembered on this issue. I thank him for his courtesies during the handling of the issue and his good advice and counsel all along the way.

Mr. President, the crop disaster provisions in this bill take a somewhat different approach to compensating producers who may have suffered significant quality losses during 2000 caused by bad weather, insects, or other natural occurrences. The bill authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to compensate producers for quantity, quality, and severe economic losses. Loss thresholds for quantity and quality losses are separated in this bill, whereas they have been combined in previous disaster bills. Different crops have different values associated with declines in quality. The report language accompanying the conference report takes care to discuss special rules that should be considered for cotton, for example.

The conferees were concerned that this new calculation might have some unintended consequences and provided the Secretary of Agriculture with additional flexibility in devising an appropriate loss compensation program. Because there are crops, like cotton, that rarely have quality losses that are not accompanied by quantity losses, this bifurcated approach could have unintended detrimental consequences. The Secretary could use his authority to compensate for severe economic losses and calculate losses for cotton and other similar commodities in the manner done in 1999, when quality and quantity losses were combined to determine whether a producer had met the loss thresholds.

The Secretary could also use the authority provided him to provide assistance for severe economic losses to provide appropriate compensation to producers that incur the necessary expense to bring their 2000 crop all the way to harvest.

Mr. President, the distinguished Senator from Montana is on the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana is recognized.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, when we finally vote on the Agriculture appropriations conference report, I intend to vote for it essentially because the bill provides so much that helps so many people, many of whom are in dire straits. I am referring specifically to a lot of the people living and working in farm communities in my State of Montana and throughout the Nation.

I am especially pleased the bill provides $3.6 billion for weather-related disasters. The droughts and fires in my State, as well as other parts of the Nation, have been quite severe and, in many areas, devastating. This bill will help our citizens get through the most difficult times. I commend the Senator from Mississippi and others who have worked to help pass this bill.

I want to mention a couple of points of this bill which I think are erroneous. I object strenuously to the provisions in the bill with respect to restrictions on food and medicine sales to Cuba and restrictions on the right of American citizens to travel to Cuba.

Last July, I flew to Havana, along with my colleagues, Senator ROBERTS and Senator AKAKA. It was a brief trip, but I returned from Havana more convinced than ever that it was time to end our outdated cold war policy toward Cuba. For example, I believe we should have normal trade relations with Cuba. We do not. The President just a day ago signed permanent normal trade relations with China, a Communist country which certainly presents more of a national security threat to the United States than Cuba, but yet we do not have normal trade relations with Cuba. It makes no sense.

As a consequence, we Americans, the Congress, and the Federal Government, prevent our farmers and ranchers from exporting their products to Cuba. But our Japanese, European, and Canadian competitors have no constraints. They fill the gap. The result, obviously, is it helps those countries, it helps the Cubans, but it hurts Americans. Also, our policy has no impact on those Cuban policies that we would like to see changed—none whatsoever.

Most Members in the Senate and House have also recognized the absurdity of this policy. Earlier this year, the Senate and the House agreed to end the ban on food and medicine sales to Cuba. We had overwhelming majorities in the Senate and the House. Those votes expressed the will of the Congress. The votes clearly reflected the will of the American people.

Yet the Republican conferees simply overturned those House and Senate votes. The Republican conferees thwarted the will of the American people. The result is that there will be restrictions on the sale of food and medicine to Cuba. These restrictions guarantee that there will be few such sales, and those few that do occur will be done only by major companies, shutting out the small farmer. That is not the way law is supposed to be made in a democracy.

To rub salt in the wounds, the Republican conferees agreed to codify in law the current administrative restrictions on travel to Cuba. That action removed the flexibility of this President and future Presidents to liberalize or not to liberalize, depending upon what seems to make the most sense. The result is a further infringement on the right of Americans to travel freely. It also diminishes the right of Cuban Americans to visit family members in Cuba.

An overwhelming majority of the Congress recognizes we must end the anachronistic cold war policy toward Cuba. That policy harms the average Cuban. Clearly, it harms the average American. The current policy against Castro is a foil. It helps prop him up. Were we to lift the bans that would take away that foil, it would make it more difficult for him to stay in power. It is amazing how foolhardy our policy is. It is also a policy that hurts the American public. It is a great danger.

Once the resistance of the Castro regime begins—think of that for a minute. We have to think very carefully about how to help manage the transition that occurs in Cuba from the current-Castro regime to the post-Castro regime. Of course, the Cubans must make that decision. The nature of that transition has a very direct bearing upon this country. We have to be very careful.

Clearly, if we were to open up now, we could help influence a transition that is more in America's national interest. Current policy also clearly abridges the freedoms of Americans to travel. If we had to vote separately on these Cuban provisions, I would work hard to defeat them, but the other provisions in the bill are so overwhelming important for the health and prosperity of Americans that I will vote in favor of the Agriculture appropriations bill. But I repeat, the Cuba provisions are a serious step backward.

I yield the floor and 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. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, we are now considering the Agriculture appropriations conference report. It is critically important to a number of our States. It certainly is critically important to mine.

We are faced with one of the toughest downturns in the agricultural markets in the history of our country. We currently have the lowest real prices for farm commodities in 50 years, and we are in a very serious situation as a result. Literally, thousands of farm families will be forced off the land if there is not an adequate Federal response to this crisis.

A number of years ago we passed a new farm bill. That farm bill is not working. I think the proof is abundantly clear. The fact is, we have had to write disaster bills every year for the last 3 years to try to deal with this collapse in farm prices.

The situation now is even more grave as we have dealt not only with collapsed prices but also with what I call the triple whammy of bad prices, bad policy, and bad weather.

In my State, as in many others, farmers have not only had to cope with very low prices but, in addition to that, weather conditions that have dramatically reduced the value of the crop even from these very low prices.

I just had a farmer stop me when I was home and tell me he was offered 75 cents a bushel for his grain—75 cents a bushel.

A lot of people wonder, what is a bushel? We talk about these things in farm terms. I think many people in the country have no idea what a bushel represents. A bushel is almost 60 pounds. Can you imagine getting 75 cents for that product? That is ruinous. That is confiscatory. And it will drive thousands of farm families into bankruptcy if there is not a response.

Thankfully, each of the last 3 years, there has been a Federal response. Three years ago, I am proud to say, the first amendment was mine, offered with Senator DORGAN, to begin to respond to this crisis of collapsed prices. That developed into a $6 billion assistance package.

Last year, we had another package. Senator GRASSLEY of Iowa and I offered the only bipartisan package of assistance, and it formed the basis for what was agreed to, an $8.7 billion package. This year, for the third year in a row, we have already passed, and the President has signed into law, a package of $7.2 billion of assistance, again to offset these collapsed prices. But since that package was passed and signed into law, we also have these weather disasters across the country. In my State, overly wet conditions have led to an outbreak of a disease called scab that has dramatically lowered the value of the crop. In other parts of the country, there has been devastating drought, a situation where farmers have not received any rain throughout the growing season. As a result, they have almost total losses.

In this bill we will vote on next week, there is an additional $3.5 billion of assistance, including provisions to address the quality loss affecting my State's farmers; $500 million to address the quality loss circumstance in which farmers go to the elevator and in some cases the people at the elevator say, we won't buy your grain at any price because it is so loaded with this fungus called scab. That is the nature of the crisis.

It is so important that next week we pass that bill. It is so important that this aid start to flow. It is so important that we say to farm families across America, we are not going to let you fail because of a failed farm policy written in Washington. We are not going to let you face a circumstance just because our major competitors, the Europeans, are outspending us 10 to 1 in their support for their producers, that we let our people fall by the wayside. We are not going to say to our producers, just because the Europeans account for 84 percent of all the world's agriculture export subsidy—we only account for 1.4 percent—just because they are outgunning us 60 to 1 on that measure of support, we are not going to let you go under because of a failed policy out of Washington.

These are critical times. Our major competitors, the Europeans, have done everything they can to support their producers. I am not being critical. I admire them. They have stood up for their people. They understand that if you just abandon them to this world market, where we see catastrophic prices, what that will mean is an exodus from the rural parts of Europe, just as we are seeing that kind of circumstance in America. We are seeing thousands of farm families leave the land because the economics just don't work.

We obviously need this rescue package. We need this assistance. More than that, we need a new farm policy, one for the longer term, one that recognizes what is happening in world agriculture, one that understands the Europeans are supporting their producers at a rate of $300 an acre on average while we support our producers at a rate of $30 an acre on average. It is no wonder that Europe is moving up in world market share and we are moving down because our friends in Europe are doing it the old-fashioned way—they are going out and buying markets that have traditionally been ours. They have a strategy; they have a plan. Their plan is to dominate world agricultural trade. They are putting the money up to do it.

The harsh reality is that USDA now tells us for the first time in as long as anyone can remember, Europe is poised to surpass us in world market share. Let me repeat that: This year USDA tells us for the first time in memory Europe is poised to pass us in world market share for agricultural products. That ought to be a warning to all of us of what is happening. It is happening because the Europeans have spent tens of billions of dollars a year, nearly $50 billion a year, supporting their producers, paying for export subsidies so they can buy markets that have traditionally been ours. Shame on us if we allow them to take us out of world markets that have been ours for decades. That would be a serious mistake.

When I ask the Europeans, how is it you are able to convince your people to step up and support your producers in the way that you do, they say, it is very simple: we have been hungry twice in Europe. We never intend to be hungry again. We are not going to rely on outside food sources to feed our people. We just are not going to do it.

I hope next year we will begin the debate on a new farm policy, and we will recognize that unilateral disarmament does not work. It doesn't work in military affairs; it doesn't work in an agricultural trade confrontation. It hasn't worked with this new Federal farm policy. It has been a disaster. I don't know of any better proof for that than the simple fact we have had to write disaster bills the last 3 years to try to cope with the wreckage that is represented by this Federal farm policy: the lowest prices in 50 years; thousands of farmers being pushed off the land; an agricultural economy that is in deep trouble.

I hope next week, when we take a vote on the Agriculture appropriations bill, there will be strong bipartisan support for that package, and then when we convene next year we will begin the debate on a new Federal farm policy, one that recognizes that our major competitors are on the move. They are on the march. They have a strategy. They have a plan. They have an intention to dominate world agricultural trade, and we have an obligation to fight back, to give our producers, our farmers a fair fighting chance.

So far we have said to our farmers, you go out there and compete against the French farmer or the German farmer. And while you are at it, you take on the French Government and the German Government, too. That is not a fair fight. Our producers can compete against any producers anywhere in the world, but only if they have a level playing field, only if it is a fair fight. They can't win if the deck is stacked against them. That is precisely what is happening now. The deck is stacked against our producers in a way that is devastating.

It reminds me of the cold war, where we built up to build down. I believe we have to follow that same principle in

this trade confrontation with Europe. We have to add resources to force them to the table to negotiate to level the playing field so our producers are not at this extraordinary disadvantage where Europe spends $300 an acre on average to support their producers while we spend $30, where the Europeans account for 84 percent of all the world's agricultural export subsidy while we account for only 1.4 percent, outgunned 60 to 1. It is pretty hard to win a fight when you are outgunned 60 to 1 or 10 to 1. It makes it virtually impossible for our very efficient producers, very hard-working people, to have any kind of a chance.

These are the harsh realities of what is occurring in world agriculture. I hope next week, when that bill comes before the Chamber, we will stand up and vote aye. I hope when we start next year the debate and discussion about a new farm bill, we will recognize the harsh realities of what is happening in these world agricultural markets.

I yield the floor and 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. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BENNETT). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to urge my colleagues to support the Agriculture appropriations conference report that will be considered by this body in the next few days. I think it is a good bill with a number of desperately needed aid provisions for our Nation's farmers. The provisions included in the bill for prescriptions are also desirable.

First, though, I want to talk a little about my own family history and why I am so proud and honored to be the author of the legislation with respect to prescription drugs and pharmacies. My family, on the Jeffords side, came to Vermont back in 1794. At least, that is the first time they bought a piece of land. They settled in the northern part of Vermont up on the Canadian border. Gradually, they moved down to a community a little further south, about 20, 30 miles from the Canadian border. The family ran a drugstore in Enosberg Falls called Jeffords Drug Store for over a hundred years.

I remember the summers so vividly. We always spent 2 weeks in Enosberg Falls, spent a week on the family farm, and then spent a week down in town with Roger Pratt and Cora Pratt, my uncle and aunt who ran the drugstore. I remember some wonderful times there. I could go up to the soda fountain, without having to do anything, and I could get a soda. Sometimes, I would be given the job of trying to swat the flies and keep the flies away. That was before we had insecticides. I know sometimes I would probably get a little annoying when I was 8 or 9 years old while swatting them too close to the patrons sitting at the little tables where they got sodas. Later, I had the great thrill of being able to stand behind the pharmacy's soda fountain and make sundaes and all sorts of things. It was a wonderful experience.

But what I learned more than anything else was the importance of a pharmacy to a small town. In those days, it was probably as much of the health care plan as you could get, along with the local doctor. The pharmacy was your health care, unless you got really sick and you would go to the hospital. But more people came in to get advice from the pharmacist as to what they should take for this or for that. Things went along very fine for many years.

As time went on, my uncle died. My aunt, who was not a pharmacist, was working the drugstore and she had to hire a pharmacist to do that work. Unfortunately, she died. When she died, the question was, Who is going to get the drugstore and the property? I took the position that I would be willing to sell it to the pharmacist. I got it appraised, and a price was set. He said, ''I'm sorry, but I'm going to go down the street and open a pharmacy and I will run you out of business.'' I said, ''Okay, go right ahead''—because I am a stubborn Vermonter—''I will run you out of business.'' So I had to go around the State and find a pharmacist. So we kept the competition going.

I finally sold the drugstore for twice what he wanted to pay, and I learned important things such as if you want a generic aspirin, you can look right next to the Bayer aspirin, and you will find an aspirin that is identical but in a different bottle, and it is cheaper. I have used that knowledge all through the years to save a buck on aspirin and other things. Many useful lessons have come from that experience.

What I also understood by being near the Canadian border was what it meant to that pharmacist in recent years. The drugs his pharmacy purchased cost twice as much as the pharmacist paid across the border in Canada.

It is more than just a casual knowledge that led me to become deeply involved in the bill which we now have as part of the appropriations bill.

I thank Senator SPECTER and Chairman COCHRAN for their very kind words about me and my work in this area. I deeply appreciate that.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to urge my colleagues to support the Agriculture Appropriations Conference Report that will be considered by this body within the next few days. I think it is a good bill, with a number of desperately needed aid provisions for our nation's farmers. But today I would like to address the Prescription Drug Importation provision included in the bill.

We are all familiar with the problem. The cost of drugs, as a percentage of our health care dollar, is skyrocketing to the point of unaffordability for average Americans. During a time when we are experiencing unprecedented economic growth, it is not uncommon to hear of patients who cut pills in half, or skip dosages in order to make prescriptions last longer, because they can't afford the refill. Prescription medicines have revolutionized the treatment of certain diseases, but they are only effective if patients have access to the medicines that their doctors prescribe. The fact is, failure to take certain medicine can be just as deadly as taking the wrong pill.

Today we are confounded by the question: Why do drugs cost so much more in the U.S. than in Canada or abroad? It's a good question—one for which the drug companies don't have any good answers.

It's true that these companies are making some miraculous breakthroughs. But why must Americans have to shoulder seemingly the entire burden of paying for research, development and a healthy return to shareholders?

I believe it is time we put an end to this unfair burden. I don't think it is fair to expect Americans, especially your senior citizens living on fixed incomes, to pay the highest costs in the world for prescription medicines, many of which are manufactured within our borders.

That's why more than a year ago I started working with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the agency responsible for overseeing the safety of the drug supply in this country, to see if there were a way we could safely reimport prescription medicines into our country.

In July, on an overwhelming vote of 74–21, the United States Senate agreed to an amendment I offered, based on S. 2520, cosponsored by Senators WELLSTONE, DORGAN, SNOWE, COLLINS, and others, to do just that. Importantly, for the first time, we had developed and passed a proposal that did not, in the eyes of FDA, present public health and safety concerns. This was critical to me, because we have the gold standard in the U.S. when it comes to drug safety, and I don't want to do anything to undermine it.

Over the past few months, the drug companies have waged a furious campaign against my amendment, taking out advertisements and sending legions of lobbyists to Capitol Hill to argue that it would undermine safety. I don't think my amendment will undermine safety, but I do think it will undermine the price Americans pay for prescription drugs.

I was heartened by the positive movement in the Clinton administration over the past few weeks, from neutrality in July to outright support for my amendment, provided Congress gave enough money—$23 million this year—to FDA to carry out its responsibilities. Congress has agreed to do so, and if my proposal works out as I hope, it will be a small price to pay on the

potential billions of dollars that Americans will save on prescription drug costs.

The negotiators for the House and Senate on the agriculture appropriations bill have completed their work. Unfortunately, the process used in reaching this agreement was marred by partisanship. But the product is as strong as the one endorsed by the Clinton administration, and even stronger in some respects.

The proposal before Congress, while slightly different from my plan, is a strong and workable proposal. Critics have argued that the proposal has been weakened because it allows drug companies to frustrate the intent through manipulations of sales contracts. The fact is, this bill is stronger than either the House-passed or Senate-passed versions because it includes a clear prohibition of such agreements—something that was missing in the House and Senate bills.

Critics have claimed that the latest version of the bill contains a loophole regarding the labeling requirements. The fact is, the bill requires manufacturers to provide all necessary labeling information, and gives the FDA very broad power to write any other rules necessary to accomplish the intent of the provision. How much stronger can we get than that.

Critics have claimed that the bill unfairly restricts the countries from which these products may come. The fact is that the bill lists 23 countries to start the process, and lets the FDA expand the list at any time.

Critics have complained that this bill will expire after about 7 years.

The fact is that this is a vast improvement over the House-passed version which would have expired after only one year. As we all know, major legislation is frequently required to be reauthorized on 5 year cycles in order to force Congress to make improvements, and popular laws always survive this process.

This bill, like any other, is not perfect. But critics are wrong to suggest that it is weaker than the original Jeffords amendment. I ought to know. And so should John Rector, senior vice president for the National Community Pharmacists Association who has been a leader in the effort to reimport lower cost drugs and whose members would be responsible for making this proposal work.

Mr. Rector recently took the position that the bill, ''will result in the importation of far less expensive drugs.''

Might the drug companies try to evade the spirit of this legislation? some probably will. Have we anticipated every action they might take? Of course not.

But I am confident that our proposal will work, and that the process has improved it. That is why the pharmaceutical industry is fighting this tooth and nail—they know it will work. They would like nothing more than to see us defeat this bill. That should tell you something about what they think the effect will be of this provision.

Mr. President, I must say—I am disappointed with how partisan this issue has become, and I am disappointed that the White House has moved the goal posts on this issue. In fact, I'd like to quote from the letter that President Clinton sent to Speaker HASTERT and Majority Leader LOTT less than 3 weeks ago. In that letter, he said ''I support the Medicine Equity and Drug Safety Act of 2000 which the Senate passed'' and ''I urge you to send me the Senate legislation—with full funding.'' Mr. President, that is exactly what we are doing, except that the bill we are sending the President is even stronger than the original language.

But I am glad that the President has said he will sign the bill. I think this is because he knows that, at the end of the day, this provision will work, despite all of the political rhetoric.

I urge my colleagues to support this provision and support this Agriculture appropriations conference report.

I also would like to discuss the chart that is behind me that very succinctly asks and answers questions about the differences between the House amendment, the Senate amendment, and the conference agreement.

I think you will find by just looking at the complete list on the conference agreement, the important improvements that were made as it wondered through the normal legislative process which we all have to follow.

I ask unanimous consent a letter from the White House of September 25 be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE WHITE HOUSE,
Santa Fe, September 25, 2000.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: (DEAR MR. LEADER:) In your letter, you outlined a number of health care issues that you indicated could be resolved before Congress adjourns. I want to be equally clear about my priorities and hopes for progress this fall. As the days dwindle in this session of Congress, I am seriously concerned about the lack of movement on some of our most important issues. I am, however, encouraged to learn from your letter that the Republican leadership is now committed to providing Americans with access to prescription drugs available at lower cost from other countries.

As you know, our people are growing more and more concerned that the pharmaceutical industry often sells the same drugs for a much higher price in the United States than it does in other countries, even when those drugs are manufactured here at home. This forces some of our most vulnerable citizens, including seniors and people with disabilities, to pay the highest prices for prescription drugs in the world. This is simply unacceptable.

That is why I support the ''Medicine Equity and Drug Safety Act of 2000,'' which the Senate passed by an overwhelming vote of 74 to 21. This important legislation would give Americans access to quality medications at the lower prices paid by citizens in other nations. The Senate bill, sponsored by Senators JEFFORDS, WELLSTONE, DORGAN and others, would allow wholesalers and pharmacists to import FDA-approved prescription drugs and would establish a new safety system intended to track these imports and test them for authenticity and degradation. Before this provision could take effect, the Secretary of Health and Human Services would be required to certify that the regulations would, first, pose no risk to the public health; and, second, significantly decrease prices paid by consumers. With these protections in place and the $23 million necessary to implement them, this legislation would meet the test that we both believe is crucial—preserving the safety of America's drug supply.

Although your letter implies support for legislation similar to the Senate-passed bill, I am concerned by its statement that seniors would ''buy lower-priced drugs in countries like Canada'' [emphasis added]. Of course, few seniors live near the Canadian or Mexican borders and even fewer can afford to cross the border in search of lower-price drugs. Moreover, policies like the House's Coburn amendment would strip the FDA of all of its ability to monitor safety and prevent seniors from buying counterfeit drugs, putting their health in danger and their finances at risk.

I urge you to send me the Senate legislation—with full funding—to let wholesalers and pharmacists bring affordable prescription drugs to the neighborhoods where our seniors live. Though this initiative does not address seniors' most important need—meaningful insurance to cover the costs of expensive medications—it still has real potential to allow consumers to access prescription drug discounts.

I remain concerned that with less than one week left in this fiscal year, Congress has not passed eleven of thirteen appropriations bills; Congress has not raised the minimum wage; and Congress has not passed a strong, enforceable patients' bill of rights. And, according to your letter, the congressional leadership has given up on passing a meaningful, affordable and optional Medicare prescription-drug benefit.

I am extremely disappointed by your determination that it is impossible to pass a voluntary Medicare prescription-drug benefit this year. I simply disagree. There is indeed time to act, and I urge you to use the final weeks of this Congress to get this important work done. It is the only way we can ensure rapid, substantial and much-needed relief from prescription drug costs for all seniors and people with disabilities, including low-income beneficiaries.

On the issue of the Medicare lock-box, I have endorsed the Vice President's initiative, which has been effectively embodied in Senator Conrad's amendment that passed on the Labor-Health and Human Services appropriations bill. I am therefore encouraged by your commitment to passing this legislation; but we must still make all efforts to ensure that the Medicare payroll taxes in the lockbox are used solely for Medicare.

Similarly, I am pleased to learn of your commitment to pass a greatly-needed package of Medicare and Medicaid health care provider payment and beneficiary refinements. As you know, I proposed such refinements in my budget and in my June Mid-Session Review. This includes payment increases for hospitals, home health agencies, nursing homes and other providers as well as access to Medicaid for legal immigrants, certain uninsured women with breast cancer, and children with disabilities; extended Medicare coverage for people with disabilities; an extension of the Balanced Budget Act's diabetes provisions; and full funding for the Ricky Ray Trust Fund.

Again, I am pleased to learn of your commitment to providing Americans with access to high-quality, lower cost prescription drugs from other nations. There is no reason

why we cannot work together to pass and enact such legislation immediately. As we do, we should not give up on passing both a workable, affordable and voluntary Medicare prescription-drug benefit for our nation's seniors and a meaningful patients' bill of rights for all Americans. I will do everything in my power to achieve that end, and I look forward to meeting with you on these issues as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

Mr. JEFFORDS. I ask unanimous consent to have printed a side-by-side comparison, which is the chart I have behind me.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

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Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, as expected, Chairman COCHRAN and Senator KOHL have once again crafted an excellent Agriculture Appropriations bill that benefits not only the State of Washington, but natural resource dependent communities and rural economies all across the nation.

For my own State of Washington, this equates to more than $5 million in essential research programs for wheat, apples, asparagus, animal diseases, small fruits, barley and potatoes to name a few. I have long advocated for increased emphasis on agriculture research, noting that projects such as these advance the development of new technology, generate healthy food systems, promote environmentally sound growing practices, and maintain the U.S. dominance in agriculture production.

Also included in the legislation are the indispensable relief funds necessary to ensure the longevity of the once highly profitable and prosperous tree fruit industry in Washington. The $138 million in direct payments to apple producers will provide necessary short-term relief favored by Washington's orchardists.

The cranberry industry, lesser known to most but still one of the hardest hit in the agriculture economy, will also benefit from $50 million in relief.

In response to the other natural disasters that have plagued our nation, $3.4 billion in emergency spending is included for farmers and rural areas that have already experienced continued low farm commodity prices.

While the core issues in the bill are of great significance, there are two other issues in the conference report I wish to highlight. Both the sanctions relief and drug re-importation provisions deserve the Senate's support.

With respect to sanctions relief, I believe few members of Congress would argue that food and medicine sanctions fail to cripple regimes or handicap the ability of dictators to simply find these goods elsewhere. What sanctions on food and medicine do promote are uncompensated losses to America's farmers and poor health in sanctioned countries.

For more than a year-and-a-half, many members of this body have fought to right this situation and remove these onerous barriers. Obviously our efforts to provide a comprehensive package of sanctions reform has been met with determined resistance.

With that said, however, the compromise my friend and colleague from Washington, Mr. Nethercutt, brokered to the best of his ability, without ever losing sight of the common goal of sanctions relief, and to the severe chagrin of several influential members, was agreed to by the Agriculture Appropriations conference committee, of which I was a member.

While some will argue that this compromise is not comprehensive enough and does not perfectly mirror the language of the original Senate bill, this language is unquestionably significant. What the language does include is sanctions relief for exports to Cuba, Iran, Sudan, North Korea, and Libya. If my colleagues believe this major shift in policy does not make a positive statement regarding Congress' intent to provide sanctions reform, I think they are sadly mistaken.

Perhaps even more pivotal, this language prohibits the Administration from imposing any new unilateral food or medicine sanctions without the consent of Congress. What with the Administration considering wheat sanctions on Japan for that country's whaling practices, I hope this change in policy will be supported by agriculture advocates. This is another significant goal the sanctions coalition has sought to attain.

I choose not to argue with my colleagues over the merits of the Cuba travel or financing restrictions contained in the bill, but instead choose to remind my colleagues that we have accomplished something great here.

While this compromise does not reflect everything we intended when we sought to achieve our goals, it does contain the core principles necessary in order to ensure unilateral sanctions reform. And I remind my colleagues that it is a compromise.

It's not perfect. It's a starting point, a means by which we test the system. If the changes we have incorporated into this bill aren't workable, then we will work to change them.

No one in this body believes agriculture trade will resurrect with each of these countries overnight. Will Iran announce a wheat tender in the next few months? Few years? We cannot tell. Sanctions reform will take work, and it will take time. But we must begin somewhere and we must begin now rather than later.

I fear some of my colleagues have lost sight of the ultimate goal, and I hope they and the Administration would not seek to undermine the language our agriculture community supports and desires.

As a representative for a Northern border state, I have been privy to issues surrounding drug prices. Everyday Americans pay 50 percent, 60 percent, 70 percent or more for prescription drugs than our neighbors in Canada, in Mexico and for that matter most of the rest of the world. Who does

this affect most? Those who take the most prescription drugs—typically seniors, and those without any kind of prescription drug coverage from their insurance. But all Americans pay more whether through higher prices at the drugstore counter or higher insurance premiums.

Why does this problem exist? American pharmaceutical companies sell the exact same prescription drugs overseas, drugs developed and manufactured here in the U.S., for a fraction of the price they demand from American citizens. Other countries have implemented price control policies that successfully tempt manufacturers to discriminate against American consumers with higher drug prices. Our drug companies agree because the costs of manufacturing are nominal, and they can make some profit overseas by simply charging Americans all of the high costs of research and development.

This bill takes a first step towards solving this problem. It allows wholesalers and pharmacists to go to Canada and other countries where prescription drugs are sold at deep discounts and bring the same FDA-approved, FDA-manufactured products back to the U.S. in order to pass the discounts on to American consumers.

It is important to note that safety is a priority in this bill. Only products that have been determined to be safe and effective can be brought into the United Sates. The importer is required to test for authenticity and degradation. And importers can only bring in these products from countries that the Secretary of HHS has determined have an appropriate regulatory infrastructure to ensure the safety of prescription drugs.

This provision should give our American families access to lower cost prescription drugs that are safe and effective.

Is it perfect? Probably not. But, I hope it will work and I hope it results in lower prices for consumers in the U.S. and eventually puts pressure on drug companies to end price discrimination in the U.S. Critics say the bill has loopholes and drug companies will find a way around it. Let me be clear—if they do I will be back to make sure this provision is even stronger. I hope that is not necessary, that drug companies will simply end the current discrimination against Americans by charging fair prices here in the United States.

This is not my favorite idea for dealing with price discrimination. It is a much more complicated solution than I would prefer.

My idea is straightforward and based on a law that has applied to every product sale in the U.S. since 1935—the Robinson-Patman Act. This law simply says that manufacturers can't use price to discriminate among buyers. If that principle is applied to prescription drug sales overseas—drug companies would no longer be allowed to discriminate against their best customers—American families.

But this bill is something that can be done this year to lower prices for American consumers. I believe it represents a genuine step forward to lower prescription drug costs for all Americans.

With all that said, the bill before the Senate not only represents a response to the core needs of agriculture, but signifies a profound shift in sanctions reform, and puts the drug companies on notice. While I have indicated that neither proposal represents perfection, what each does signify is the goal of Congress to address issues vital to those we represent. I sincerely hope my colleagues will work to pass this bill without hesitation.

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

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

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, we do have a number of items that have been cleared for consideration, including in this package a series of energy bills that Senator DASCHLE and I talked about yesterday on the floor. There are a number of Senators who have been involved in this effort. I thank them all. This is important legislation.

We do have a number of other unanimous consent requests we will need to go through. It will take a few minutes. There are a lot of very important issues here. Most of them have been cleared on both sides. There may be a couple here that there will be objections to, but there is a necessity to make that request.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 4292

Mr. LOTT. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 4292, the Born Alive Infant Protection Act of 2000.

Mr. LOTT. I further ask consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CONRAD. There are Members on our side who would like to offer amendments, and on their behalf I am constrained to object at this point.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 4201

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 779, H.R. 4201, the Noncommercial Broadcasting Freedom of Expression bill, and I further ask consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements related to the bill be printed in the RECORD

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. CONRAD. Again, there are Members on this side who would like to offer amendments to that legislation, and on their behalf I am constrained to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. LOTT. On this bill, Mr. President, we will continue working to see if we can come to some sort of agreement on how it might be considered. I have a special interest in this one because a former staff member of mine—now an outstanding Member of the House of Representatives—Congressman CHARLES ''CHIP'' PICKERING of Laurel, has been working on this and got it passed through the House. I will continue to see if we can find some way to get it passed before we leave.

CALENDAR

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, with regard to the energy bills and water-related package, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed en bloc to the following bills reported by the Energy Committee: Calendar No. 710, S. 2425; Calendar No. 774, H.R. 2348; Calendar No. 776, H.R. 3468; Calendar No. 849, S. 2594; Calendar No. 853, S. 2951; Calendar No. 856, H.R. 3236; Calendar No. 857, H.R. 3577; Calendar No. 882, S. 1848; Calendar No. 883, S. 2195; Calendar No. 884, S. 2301; Calendar No. 900, S. 2877; Calendar No. 929, S. 3022; Calendar No. 935, S. 1697; and Calendar No. 938, S. 2882.

I further ask unanimous consent that the committee amendments be agreed to, the bills be read the third time and passed, any amendments to the title be agreed to as necessary, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and statements relating to any of these measures be printed in the RECORD, and all proceedings occur en bloc.

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

BEND FEED CANAL PIPELINE PROJECT ACT OF 2000

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill (S. 2425) to authorize the Bureau of Reclamation to participate in the planning, design, and construction of the Bend Feed Canal Pipeline Project, Oregon, and for other purposes, which had been reported from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, with an amendment; as follows:

(Omit the part in boldface brackets.)

S. 2425

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the ''Bend Feed Canal Pipeline Project Act of 2000''.