$11,000 less that a woman makes every year. That means women are essentially working 84 days for free while a man takes home a paycheck.

In the district of Illinois that I serve, women make even less than that. They make approximately 70 cents on the dollar. Keep in mind that number is figured for the same work, just with much, much less income.

Equal pay is not simply a women's issue; it is an issue for the middle class and working families. When women bring home more, they are able to provide better for their families.

Because equal pay for equal work would benefit hardworking families across my region, across the State of Illinois, and across the country, it is time that Congress pass the Paycheck Fairness Act.

## LET'S GET TO WORK

(Mr. CICILLINE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CICILLINE. Mr. Speaker, last night, the President addressed America and reminded us that America is a Nation of opportunity where, if you work hard and play by the rules and take responsibility, you can succeed. But he also recognized that many Americans don't feel that, in fact, this is working for them right now. He made very specific proposals to invest in infrastructure or innovation economy, early childhood education, additional manufacturing hubs, raising the minimum wage, fixing our broken immigration system, and extending unemployment benefits.

The President expressed his willingness to work with Congress to achieve these goals. What I thought was particularly significant is these were specific proposals that are achievable if we work together.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's get to work. Let's enact these proposals. Let's move our economy forward and put the American people back to work.

As well, I wish to extend my gratitude to Trudi for her service.

□ 0915

## COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

JANUARY 28, 2014.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
*Speaker, House of Representatives,*
*Washington, DC.*

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on January 28, 2014 at 6:07 p.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 1302.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

## CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2642, FEDERAL AGRICULTURE REFORM AND RISK MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2014

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 465, I call up the conference report on the bill (H.R. 2642) to provide for the reform and continuation of agricultural and other programs of the Department of Agriculture through fiscal year 2018, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 465, the conference report is considered read.

(For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of January 27, 2014, at page H1269.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) each will control 30 minutes.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Massachusetts seek recognition?

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, is the gentleman from Minnesota opposed to the conference report?

Mr. PETERSON. No, I am not, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XXII, the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. LUCAS), the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON), and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues, this has been a long and seemingly epic journey that the House Agriculture Committee has been upon, and Mr. PETERSON, myself, our colleagues, literally 3 years, actually 4, when you consider the beginning hearings under then-Chairman PETERSON to start this process.

We have all discussed the details. We will discuss the details more in greater length in just a moment on this final conference report that reflects the net result of both the Senate and House work.

But I would say this. Whatever your feelings might be about the policy issues involved within the bill, understand, this formal conference that has now come to a conclusion, soon, I hope, to be ratified by the body, reflects at the committee level, at the floor level in the House, and, I think, in the conference level, how legislation should be put together.

Many people criticize us and this body as dysfunctional. But if they look at all of the amendments we considered, every time we took the farm bill up in the committee, all of the debate, all of the discussion, if they consider the amazing amount of amendments we considered on the floor of the United States House and all the debates and the discussion and the votes, if they take note of how long and how much effort the principals and the conferees put into putting this conference report together, they would understand that this bill, while everyone may not agree with every line, every word, every policy in it, this bill reflects, unlike almost any that have been done for years, how it should be done—good men and women of different opinions working to get to a final product.

I hope this reflects a change in how we will do our business here across the board. I am proud of what we have done, and I am proud of how we have done it. I am proud of the reforms and savings. I am proud of my ranking member, and all my colleagues who have been involved.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Today, as the chairman said, after nearly 4 years of work, the House is finally considering the 2014 farm bill conference report. It has been a challenging and, at times, frustrating process, I think everybody will agree, but through it, the Ag Committee has persevered, and we did what we have always done. We worked together.

The report before us today represents a compromise. I know this is rare in Washington, but that is what is needed to actually get something done around this place. I didn't get everything I wanted. The chairman didn't get everything he wanted. That is how the compromise works.

For example, there has been a lot of discussion about dairy, but we are moving away from the old dairy program to a new program that I think is much more sensible, that has market signals in it to deal with overproduction. The only question I have is whether they are going to be strong enough. We will find out as we go through the process.

In the commodity title, I am still disappointed we didn't vote on planted acres. I think that would have been a smart thing to do, but it wasn't to be.

At the end of the day, I believe my reservations are outweighed by the need to provide a long-term certainty for agriculture and nutrition programs and the many positive improvements and reforms included in the final bill.

Among other things, the conference report will protect and improve the crop insurance system. That is probably the most important safety net. It continues current sugar policy, streamlines conservation programs so that we can continue to preserve our natural resources, provides disaster assistance for livestock producers, applies conservation protections to crop insurance, and recognizes the growing consumer demand for fresh fruits, vegetables, local foods and organics.

In closing, I want to thank the chairman for his work and congratulate him for working with us to get to a final conclusion here. Also, for his Members, our Members, for their support and hanging in there to get to this point.

I also want to thank the Agriculture Committee staff who have been working so hard over these last years, night and day, through all these different situations we have been in, and I will submit their names for the Record.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this process has gone on too long. We need to conclude it today. I urge my colleagues to support the conference report.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

COMMITTEE STAFF

Agriculture Committee Democratic Staff: Andy Baker, Nathan Fretz, Liz Friedlander, Keith Jones, Mary Knigge, Rob Larew, Clark Ogilvie, Lisa Shelton, Anne Simmons, Faye Smith; USDA Detailee: Robert Stephenson; Intern: Lauren Becker.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman LUCAS and Ranking Member PETERSON for all their hard work on this very difficult bill. I admire their tenacity, and I admire their passion on issues dealing with agriculture.

There are some good things in this bill, to be sure, but there are some things that I simply cannot accept. I think as we discuss this farm bill, that we should remind ourselves of a few simple facts, facts like this:

Hunger exists in the United States of America. Not a single congressional district in this country is hunger-free. Our food banks, our food pantries, the people who are on the front lines in the fight against hunger simply cannot do any more. They are stretched to the limit.

One final fact. This bill will make hunger worse in America, not better. If this bill passes, thousands and thousands of low-income Americans will see their already meager food benefit shrink.

And for what? Why? To meet some arbitrary deficit reduction goal? To pay the costs of the giveaways and the crop insurance program? To pay for the sweetheart deals for the sushi rice growers and the peanut farmers and God knows who else?

I know many of my colleagues would just like this whole farm bill issue to go away. They want to pass a bill and forget about it and move on to something else.

But, Mr. Speaker, the people who will be hurt by this bill aren't going away. They can't forget about it and move on to something else because they will suffer. They will have to make do with less food tomorrow than they have today.

I have heard all the arguments trying to justify this $8.6 billion cut in SNAP. Well, it is just a loophole, or it could have been a lot worse, or the States should pick up the slack, or local governments or churches or food banks or the tooth fairy.

Those arguments are easy to make from the comfort of our warm homes and our full bellies, but they ring hollow to an elderly person who will have to take their medicine on an empty stomach, or a child who will have to skip a breakfast before going to school.

I think it is wrong, and I cannot support it.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. CRAWFORD), one of my outstanding subcommittee chairmen.

Mr. CRAWFORD. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman LUCAS and Ranking Member PETERSON for putting in so much hard work and dedication and getting where we are today, and I echo the ranking member's sentiments to the staff. Thank you very much for everything that you have done.

After more than 3 years of being involved in the farm bill process, I am proud to support a final product that not only greatly benefits producers but deploys investments and jobs to rural America. Despite our sharp regional differences, we prevailed in crafting commodity programs that promote regional fairness by providing a strong safety net that protects all producers from market risk.

We can finally provide relief to our cattlemen by permanently reauthorizing disaster assistance programs after years of hardship. Rural development funding will bring critical investments to our rural communities, while conservation and forestry programs will preserve our natural resources for years to come.

While I am pleased with the farm bill before us today, I am disappointed that we left some important issues on the table like reforming harmful GIPSA regulations and fixing Country of Origin Labeling for the meat industry.

We could have gone further in relieving burdensome EPA regulations on small farmers, and I believe that the environmental activists in the Senate had far too much input.

Even though I believe we could have done more, I am proud of the conservative reforms we made to the food stamp program by eliminating waste and loopholes, setting the stage for work requirements. The Agriculture Committee accomplished the tough goal of cutting billions from our budget by repealing or consolidating dozens of programs.

I appreciate the patience of all of our Arkansas producers and rural communities through this process.

I strongly urge a ''yes'' vote on this farm bill conference report.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA).

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this conference committee report. There are a lot of reasons why, but first I would like to commend the chairman and the ranking members of both the House and the Senate Ag Committees and my fellow conferees and the staff for all the hard work that went into reaching this agreement.

While this is not a perfect bill—there never is—this agreement is the result of more than 4 years of bipartisan negotiations, two marathon committee meeting markups, multiple floor debates. As a matter of fact, this bill almost reminds me of the movie ''Groundhog Day'' because it seems to come back again and again.

For my home State of California, the leading agricultural State in the Nation, this farm bill is a dramatic investment in many of the specialty crops for research, for market production and the development programs which benefit our vegetable and fruit producers, which produce over half the Nation's supply.

These programs not only help my constituents produce the safest and most nutritious fruits and vegetables that we eat throughout the Nation, but also throughout the world.

Just as important for my district are the disaster relief programs that help farmers, ranchers, dairymen, and producers through these difficult times. Many may not be aware, but California is facing the driest year on record, which jeopardizes both food production and jobs in my district.

This bill contains programs that provide help when disaster strikes, from drilling wells to providing seed or direct assistance to growers or cattlemen who have been hurt by this devastating drought.

While I support the conference committee report, I am disappointed that we did not take the opportunity to resolve the meat labeling issues that threaten our beef and poultry producers, and our important trading partners, Canada and Mexico, who are deemed critical and are dealing with us in the World Trade Organization. I have currently drafted legislation on a bipartisan basis to try to fix this labeling issue once and for all.

This debate, though, has dragged on for way too long. Let's give farmers and ranchers and dairy producers the certainty that they deserve through a 5-year farm bill. Now is the time to get this farm bill done by passing this conference committee report.

□ 0930

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND).

(Mr. KIND asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend from Massachusetts for yielding me this time and for the leadership that he has shown on the nutrition title and for the plight of hunger throughout our country. It is commendable.

Mr. Speaker, I have been here for a few farm bills in the past. I used to be a member of the Agriculture Committee. I certainly appreciate how very difficult it is to put together a bipartisan farm bill with so many different moving parts.

I have all the respect and admiration for the leadership on the committee,

but I also sense that we have reached a point of fatigue and exhaustion. People just want this farm bill to go away after years of it being worked on, and I appreciate that, too.

But we are only given one opportunity every 5 or, in this case, 7 years to reform farm policy to make it better, to make it better for our family farmers, to make it more responsible for the American taxpayer, to make production agriculture work for all Americans, and I am afraid that this farm bill, yet again, pulls up short.

I would beseech my colleagues to take a little additional time to work on reform measures that do make sense. Rather than looking at another $8.6 billion in cuts to the nutrition title on top of previous cuts that have already been had, let's look at some of these subsidy programs.

I am afraid that the bill before us today maintains huge taxpayer subsidies that go to a few but very large agribusinesses at the expense of our family farmers around the country. It is going to lead to greater consolidation and production agriculture. It is going to continue to drive up land values. It is going to make it harder for new beginning farmers to enter the occupation. It is not responsible to these family farmers, and it is certainly not responsible to the American taxpayer.

We have got historically high commodity target prices in this bill so any slight dip is going to mean huge payments going out in the future. We have got the multiple entity rule now that we worked on in the previous farm bill being rolled back in this one. We have got payment limitation caps now being increased rather than brought down to where the will of this Congress was last year when we had that debate on the floor.

And while it is commendable that we are getting rid of the direct payment program, which was not justifiable, most of that money is being shifted now into the crop insurance program which, what I feel, is overly generous premium subsidy crop insurance subsidies to producers, which has the potential of taking further risk out of production decisions.

But we are also telling private crop insurance companies, We are going to guarantee you a 14 percent profit margin. We are going to pay your entire administrative and operating expenses. And, by the way, you are going to bear very little risk in offering these policies. The American taxpayer will still bear that risk. There is not a business in the world that wouldn't sign up for that offer. So why are we doing that in this farm bill?

Representative PETRI and I last year offered a commonsense modicum reform of the crop insurance program, asking these crop insurance companies to put a little more skin in the game. We understand it is a valuable risk management tool that needs to be there for producers, but this goes overboard with it.

Then finally, we have got a domestic cotton program that has gotten us into trouble with Brazil. If the average taxpayer knew that we, for the last 4 years, have funneled out $150 million worth of taxpayer subsidies going to subsidize Brazilian cotton farmers they would be livid. And yet this bill does not fix that cotton problem, and now it is up to Brazil whether they want to level economic sanctions against us.

More work needs to happen, and, unfortunately, this bill pulls up short.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY), one of our hardest working subcommittee chairmen.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the farm bill. This legislation provides much-needed reforms. It is fiscally responsible, saving billions in mandatory spending, promoting market-based solutions, and streamlining and consolidating more than 100 programs.

We have eliminated direct payments, which farmers received whether there were good times or bad, and replaced them with a safety net that provides help only when farmers need it.

The bill includes the most significant reform to the food stamp program since welfare was reformed in 1996.

While I am personally disappointed that we didn't fix the COOL and GIPSA issues—and I am committed to continuing to work on those—I do believe that this bill provides a balance of opportunity and security, and it strengthens our Nation's agriculture safety net for years to come.

I would urge my colleagues to vote ''yes'' on the safety net, vote ''yes'' for these modest reforms to food stamps, pass this conference report. Give our farmers and ranchers across this country the 5 years of stability and security they need to execute their business plans to allow them to continue to provide the American people with the most affordable and abundant food and fiber supply in the developing world.

Vote ''yes'' on the conference report.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. SCHRADER).

Mr. SCHRADER. Mr. Speaker, I guess for some people, you just can't do enough. I would argue, respectfully, to a lot of my colleagues that the work that has gone on on both sides of the aisle over the last 2 years is actually pretty exemplary.

The farm bill is always a difficult bill to pass. I believe the last one was vetoed a couple of times, and it had to be overwritten.

This bill, we are not at that point. But we have had a lot of bumps along the road, and it could be better. It could be better. But I have never yet seen legislation as exactly what I would preferably like to be voting on at the end of the day.

We make huge strides in this bill. There were draconian cuts to the SNAP and food stamp program that are no longer in here. There were onerous requirements and incentives to get people off food stamps that are no longer in here.

And for those that say people are automatically going to be cut as a result of this, that is not accurate. If the States step up and actually put $20 towards the heating assistance for these low-income folks that hopefully need that, they don't get a reduced benefit. And, yes, it is a reduced benefit. They still qualify for their base benefit in this bill. Moreover, if they just bring their heating and cooling bills in, they can still get the expanded benefit; it just requires a little more diligence. Hopefully, it puts some faith in America that their food stamp and SNAP programs are going to those who really need it.

As far as the subsidies go—hey, maybe we should change that; we should work on that some more. There will be another farm bill in 4 or 5 years. But we have made huge strides. We get rid of the direct payments program. That is monumental, folks. We have been trying to do that for 20 years.

The subsidies, the milk program, it is a totally new one. We are on a marginal insurance program. I think America understands that type of thing.

We have made huge strides here, and there are so many good things. For some of my colleagues on the Democratic side of the aisle, I mean, at the end of the day, it is pretty imperative that we have made huge strides in the specialty crop provisions, the organic provisions. We have done great with market access promotion programs. We have made it so that American farmers continue to produce the best food and fiber with a safety net that makes sure that the people in this country get the food they need and deserve and can do the best economically on the global trade scene.

I think this is a great opportunity. People here should be voting ''yes'' on this bill after all the hard bipartisan work.

Mr. MCGOVERN. I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, while I deeply respect my friend and colleague from Oregon, I have a slightly different perspective on this because I think the bill that is before us today is absolutely the least that could be done to get the bill passed. It has a number of items I do support, like specialty crops, which I have been working on for some time. I am pleased that organics have an opportunity to get to crop insurance.

But this bill, as I say, takes, allegedly, the savings from direct payments that have been opposed for years and plows them back into an enriched crop insurance program. It cuts $6 billion for conservation. Yes, there are some improvements in terms of administration, but at the end of the day, it cuts $6 billion when land and water is under pressure and needs it the most. This is shortsighted.

It is very likely going to cost a lot more in the long run for the reasons my friend from Wisconsin pointed out in terms of setting these targets higher. It is more generous in terms of rejecting a provision that was included in both the House and the Senate version to limit payments to individual farms to $50,000. The conference committee increases the limit to $125,000 and reopens a loophole closed in both the House and Senate bills, allowing the payments to be collected by multiple people.

It is just one more example of where the conference committee that I think had one meeting and sort of massaged these things to put the pieces together to secure a majority on the floor, is not, in any stretch of the imagination, in the best interests of most farmers, certainly not for the environment, and nor is it for the American taxpayers.

I respectfully urge its rejection.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. WOMACK) who has been very focused on these critical issues, especially those involving livestock.

Mr. WOMACK. Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to offer my congratulations to the chairman, to his ranking member, and to my colleague from Arkansas (Mr. CRAWFORD), one of the committee members, for their diligent work and for coming up with this committee report. This was not easy, to say the least.

That said, Mr. Speaker, because of the Senate's ''my way or the highway'' attitude, we are considering a conference report that does nothing to address an out-of-control agency, GIPSA, from imposing on American companies regulations that go well beyond congressional intent. Because of the Senate's all-or-nothing approach, we are considering a conference report that will subject American industries and companies to retaliatory tariffs.

For me, it would be easy to vote against this conference report. But unlike my Senate counterparts, I recognize that, in a divided government, each side must work to find common ground. Ultimately, this report, like many of the other bipartisan agreements that have been signed into law, moves the ball forward by making much-needed reforms to Federal programs and reducing spending. That is why, in the end, I will support it.

I am hopeful, however, Mr. Speaker, that the House Appropriations Committee will do everything in its power to fix some of these mistakes. I, as a member of that committee, will fight to rein in GIPSA, and I will work to fix the Country of Origin Labeling requirements.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE).

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by thanking Democratic Leader PELOSI for her confidence in me in appointing me as her representative to the farm bill committee.

I thank Representatives PETERSON and LUCAS and Senators STABENOW and COCHRAN for their leadership in negotiating this conference report.

Throughout this process, it was my goal to ensure a fair and balanced farm bill. While I do not agree with some of the provisions of this conference bill, I firmly believe it is a good compromise.

Given how far apart we were when this conference began, I am pleased Members on both sides of the aisle and across the Chamber were able to reach a consensus and show the American people Congress can work together.

The agreement rejects categorical eligibility, something that we have talked about for some time. The $8.6 billion savings in SNAP over 10 years—over 10 years—comes from a change in LIHEAP policy that would shrink benefits for approximately 850,000 households in 16 States. It does not eliminate a qualified household from access to SNAP, which was an important consideration on the difficult road to reach a compromise that prevents devastating cuts and changes to this critically needed program.

This agreement also expands economic investment in low-income, urban, and rural communities. It provides certainty and sound agricultural policies for America's farmers and ranchers.

Passing the farm bill has always been a bipartisan endeavor, and this conference committee report proves it is still possible for Congress to work through its differences and produce a balanced bill that meets the needs of the American people.

We have negotiated the farm bill for the last 2 years. It is now time to move forward. I strongly encourage my colleagues to join me and vote ''yes'' on this bipartisan, bicameral conference agreement.

Mr. Speaker, the nutrition title in the Conference Report for the 2014 Farm Bill is truly a compromise. It's not the bill I would write on my own. It fails to adequately tackle the hunger and poverty that stalks our country from inner cities to rural towns and suburbs across America. However, it is a genuine compromise and represents important improvements to our federal nutrition programs. We have kept SNAP intact and rejected every one of the harsh House provisions that would have ended food assistance to nearly 4 million people.

I am still deeply disappointed we were not able to make new investments in SNAP to help the struggling families in my district and around this country put food on the table. Millions remain unemployed and unable to provide for their families, and others who work in low-wage jobs or live on retirement income rely on SNAP to afford barely enough food.

Despite this, I believe this legislation will strengthen and improve SNAP and the many other nutrition programs authorized under the Farm Bill. SNAP has been vital in assisting millions of families and countless communities cope with the Great Recession. Not only has the program responded quickly to increased needs, but it has also delivered benefits with ever-increased accuracy despite higher caseloads and strained State administrative budgets. While we look forward to a strengthening economy, which provides more jobs, we expect a strong SNAP will remain critically needed.

This bill reauthorizes the program and makes some modest improvements. Despite expanding to respond to the increased need arising from the Great Recession, SNAP maintained historically low payment error and trafficking rates. The farm bill tightens eligibility in response to concerns about the way some States calculate benefits and media reports of unusual circumstances involving SNAP recipients, invests in fraud detection and prevention activities, improves retailer operations, and makes a number of small but important program changes.

I would like to take this opportunity to review some of the key provisions of the nutrition title. First, I want to address the one significant cut in SNAP benefits that is included in the title. We have curtailed a practice that about a third of the States use to raise SNAP benefits for some families and simplify administration of the program. CBO says that about 850,000 families in those States will lose about $90 a month because of the cut. Though a painful loss for these families, the change fixes an oversight in the SNAP benefit calculation that has allowed some States to let households deduct more income than warranted by their actual expenses. They do this by giving SNAP households with no heating or cooling expenses a token LIHEAP payment of $1 or less in order to leverage a heating and cooling deduction, which raises their SNAP benefits. For decades, the receipt of LIHEAP has automatically qualified households for a standard utility allowance within the shelter deduction calculation. This is the right thing to do when the LIHEAP program already has determined that the household pays heating or cooling bills. But these States with very small LIHEAP payments have allowed some of these families to receive larger benefits than their circumstances warrant under the SNAP formula.

Congress, however, did not intend to give households without heating or cooling expenses a deduction for such expenses. While I would strongly prefer to reinvest all of the savings from ending this practice back into meeting the needs of struggling households, it is reasonable to address this issue. This bill does so by requiring that a LIHEAP payment must be at least $20 for the State to use the LIHEAP connection to confer the SUA.

This change will lower SNAP benefits to 850,000 low-income households by $8.55 billion over ten years. This will not be an easy adjustment for these households, but it will establish a stronger and more credible link between the traditional LIHEAP program and SNAP benefits. As a conferee, it was very important for us that the people who really deserve to deduct heating or cooling costs have a chance to do so, and the change we are making to fix a narrow problem not disrupt the original purpose of the LIHEAP linkage in promoting efficiency and ensuring households get all the benefits for which they qualify.

This is why we gave the Secretary some flexibility here. I expect that the Department will work closely with State agencies to ensure households that now receive the SUA on the basis of a negligible LIHEAP payment will have the opportunity to clarify they actually do pay for heating or cooling, and this process

will not be burdensome. Some States have targeted these small LIHEAP payments to households in public housing that are highly unlikely to incur a separate charge for home heating or cooling. But other States have given a one dollar payment to most, if not all SNAP households. We know that a large proportion of these households actually do pay a separate charge for utilities and need the SUA to get an adequate level of benefits.

I also want to make clear this change is designed to affect only households in the 16 States that have provided a nominal LIHEAP benefit for purposes of qualifying households for a larger deduction. We got assurances from USDA that in the States that do not use the current rule in this way, SNAP participants would neither experience a cut in benefits, nor would there be a change in the way their income, shelter deduction, and benefits are calculated. This is an important implementation issue. States that, like my own State of Ohio and the majority of all States, do not provide a nominal LIHEAP benefit should be able to continue the way they determine eligibility for the SUA. Nor should low-income Ohioans be asked to do or verify anything differently from what they do now. None of the savings in the bill comes from reducing benefits for households that have LIHEAP payments that exceed the new $20 threshold, so USDA must ensure State implementation of the changes does not result in a benefit loss to a household legitimately receiving LIHEAP.

Finally, I am concerned we may not have given States enough time to make the change and protect households. States will have flexibility in phasing in the provision for most participating households, but for new applicants and households who need to reapply for SNAP in the coming months, the provision is effective just 30 days after enactment, which is a very quick time-frame for States to implement. Under SNAP regulations, States will be protected from being cited for errors during the first few months after enactment. I urge States and USDA to not hold households accountable for receiving slightly higher benefits because the short implementation timeframe has not given their State ample opportunity to adjust their benefits properly. I'm proud of what we have been able to accomplish as conferees to improve the program without unduly burdening the struggling families that turn to SNAP in times of need. We focused our reforms on the administration of SNAP, and I'd like to highlight some of the areas where we tightened eligibility to respond to some uncommon cases.

Over the last several years, there have been two reported instances of SNAP participants winning the lottery and remaining on the program. While a rare occurrence, and one that in many States already results in disqualification, we included a provision to make sure it does not happen again. We're focused on people winning a million dollars or some other life-changing amount, not someone who nets a few hundred dollars in scratch-off tickets that could very quickly be spent by paying overdue bills or paying for overdue auto or home maintenance. In implementing this provision, the Department should consider ''substantial'' to be truly extraordinary windfalls that will change lifestyles rather than provide more modest gains. Another key implementation issue is how the State discovers such winnings. Rather than clog application and report forms with questions that will apply to a negligible number of people, the bill requires State SNAP agencies to establish relationships with any in-State gaming commissions, so that the commissions will report any winnings that meet the threshold USDA will establish. The State agency will apply the regular income and asset tests to these households and the households will remain ineligible until they meet these tests. We do not see any need for any additional reporting by applicants or households, as the State-level reporting should be accurate and sufficient.

The farm bill also clarifies rules around eligibility for felons. People with criminal records fleeing from law enforcement and violating their parole are not eligible for SNAP. The farm bill reiterates people convicted of certain felonies such as murder and armed robbery who violate their parole or probation are ineligible for benefits. And it imposes a hard penalty on the families of those who do not comply—the household of the ex-offender will see a significant drop in benefits because the income and resources of the non-eligible member would still be counted. While harsh to innocent family members who may have helped their family member rehabilitate successfully by providing a place to live, it represents no change in the law and is the way other offenders, such as drug felons and those intentionally violating SNAP rules are treated now. Ex-offenders who have served their time and continue to comply with the conditions placed on their release, and who are otherwise eligible for food assistance through SNAP, will be able to apply for and receive assistance. Program participants should not experience any change from our desire to reiterate current policy with respect to fleeing felons. The SNAP eligibility and enrollment process already solicits information from applicants about their fleeing felon status and we anticipate those efforts will be not be disrupted or changed as a result of this re-articulation of current rules.

Another area where the conferees worked hard to make improvements is in the area of program integrity and fraud prevention.

The bill contains an important program integrity enhancement for multiple requests for EBT card replacements. Participants can lose cards. The cards may also be stolen or malfunction. Without a working card, households can't buy food. We've become aware of a very small number of households with more frequent requests for card replacement and this raises program integrity issues. The bill requires USDA to set a standard for excessive requests for card replacement and requires States to seek explanations from households that exceed this threshold as to why another card is needed prior to re-issuing a card. Similarly, States may not require households to provide their explanation in person or withhold the card based on the household's explanation. That requires following the procedures for an intentional program violation. Because of the critical importance of maintaining access to food assistance, the bill requires that States promptly give individuals a chance to explain. We expect USDA to monitor this closely; any delay in working with the household is a day they do not have benefits to purchase food.

There are many reasons why replacement cards are legitimately and urgently needed—people may not understand the card was reusable, they may confuse a PIN problem with a card problem, they may be victims of theft, or they may simply lose their card. These things can happen to anyone, but some people are particularly vulnerable. Accordingly, this bill requires protections for vulnerable populations such as persons with disabilities, homeless persons, and crime victims.

This provision does not empower States to use this process to terminate participation or impose undue new burdens on households. SNAP rules set out procedural standards for acting on evidence of intentional program violations—standards that balance the pursuit of program integrity with fundamental legal rights of accused persons. If a State believes its evidence indicates an intentional program violation in this area, it must replace the card and use its disqualification process to take any further action.

We've provided additional resources to USDA to improve integrity efforts. We applaud USDA's strong commitment to rooting out fraud in the program, but with a significant increase in the number of stores accepting SNAP, USDA must continue to improve its retailer monitoring efforts. This bill gives the Department additional resources to improve its technology to take advantage of innovations like data mining, which can reveal retailer redemption patterns and help identify stores that may be abusing the program. We expect USDA to focus on data analysis and other smart tools to maintain the high standards of compliance in the program. Again, this is an example of the conferees focusing on the improving the administrative side of the program, rather than placing onerous burdens, like photo identification requirements, on retailers or participants.

We've also provided funds to encourage State and federal partnerships to address retailer fraud through pilot projects. States selected for the pilot need to show they have committed resources to recipient trafficking and have a proven record of accurate determinations of fraud. In other words, States that have been successful in identifying and reducing documented fraud should be given a priority in partnering with USDA on retailer fraud.

There has been a lot of attention given to the relationship between SNAP and work. We know many households on SNAP have a working member and some States operate promising employment and training programs. Earlier versions of the farm bill in each house had widely differing approaches to the issue of work and, as a conferee, I'm proud we worked diligently to find areas of agreement and come up with some important reforms in the program without cutting people off for failure to find a job or imposing some other hardship on households.

While the majority of SNAP participants who can work are working, we want to do what we can to help those who are able to work but cannot find a job. SNAP Employment and Training (E&T) has allowed States to provide services to adults facing the three month time limit as well as individuals seeking to improve their employability, but it is time to evaluate what really works and encourage States to build upon successes.

So we have improved and increased funding for SNAP E&T. The bill provides $200 million to pilot and evaluate innovative and promising State employment and training programs. These pilots can be drawn from SNAP E&T

components, but can also include efforts to help those who already are working by providing the kinds of supportive services, like child care or transportation assistance, that often are insurmountable expenses to those with low-paying jobs. The conferees expect that States will expand their SNAP E&T activities or test new ideas, not use the funds to fund what they already are doing, or remove State dollars from their SNAP E&T programs.

Over time, SNAP E&T has served 3 different goals: a test of the willingness of the able-bodied to perform work activities as a condition of assistance, a means for some childless adults to exceed the 3-month time limit via workfare, and a way to enhance the employment prospects of SNAP recipients by improving their skills and abilities. Pilots will test approaches to meeting each of these goals and provide us with crucial information about the most effective approaches.

As conferees we thought a rigorous evaluation is a critical component of the pilot projects. With so many SNAP recipients who find jobs on their own, a key question is how do we know if the program and services the State offered made a difference. States that cannot guarantee they will participate fully in the evaluation and provide the necessary data for the evaluation should not be selected to participate. To ensure we learn something, we also have made the new money we provide available to the evaluation and for the State and federal costs of running the pilot. I am especially interested in learning about the most effective ways for States to assess the needs of SNAP participants upfront and to match those needs to the right education and training programs and other supportive services that will make a difference for that individual. This is information we do not have now and could help States to target limited resources to really make a difference in peoples' lives.

Finally, I applaud the conference committee leadership for designing a pilot project that gives States resources without creating punitive incentives to force people who cannot find work off the program. I know, however, some States may choose more punitive approaches under a theory that exposing a family to the possibility of losing their benefits will spur additional work effort. I do not support this view, but States are allowed under the pilots to sanction individuals who fail to comply with any work requirements under the same rules and terms as under the current SNAP E&T program. In addition, because we have added unsubsidized work as an allowable activity under the pilot, we have asked the Secretary to issue guidance about the very limited circumstances under which a person who is working could be sanctioned for losing his or her job. The last thing we intend is for people who are already doing what we want—that is, working—to face losing some or all of their SNAP benefits because they lose that job.

Beyond the pilot projects, we are very interested in learning what works in all States in getting SNAP participants the skills and training they need to get and keep a well-paying job. That's why we will require States to report on the results of their E&T efforts. USDA is charged to use this new information to look at how this program can achieve more lasting gains in self-sufficiency. The conferees also recognize SNAP participants are among the poorest and least skilled members of society. We do not expect it will be easy for all of them to quickly find employment, especially in the aftermath of the recession. We expect a study would consider some interventions—such as career and technical education or GED programs—may yield more gains over the long haul, but participants would not immediately find those jobs because they are gaining the credentials needed to get them. To that end, USDA's study needs to recognize getting better jobs may require getting more training, so delayed, but enduring improvements, are important.

I've been focused on changes to the program that affect participants. But SNAP is a program that helps both hungry households and the food industry. This farm bill continues to modernize the program, with a number of improvements for retailers.

One thing we were able to do is take important steps to ensure SNAP remains compatible with the evolving food retail landscape. To this end, we authorize the Secretary to test the use of mobile technologies in SNAP—things like smart phone apps that have become increasingly common in the larger retail world. This may be especially important to farmers markets and vegetable stands that are unable to install traditional EBT-processing machines. But allowing additional ways to accept benefits must not come at the expense of program integrity. We all share a deep commitment to ensuring only authorized retailers participate in the program and sufficient protections are in place to prevent trafficking. This provision reflects that priority. For example, we start with a pilot project to test the idea of using mobile technology, include protections for recipients, and prohibit any food price markups. We expect USDA to take ironclad measures to prevent fraud and require a report on the feasibility of the technology before allowing it to be used more widely than the pilot. USDA is to be commended for the good work it has done in reducing fraud in the program, and we expect the same attention to program integrity to be employed in testing new technologies before embracing them in SNAP.

This bill also allows pilot projects to test the feasibility of allowing the online purchase of food with SNAP benefits, reflecting a growing food industry trend toward online transactions with delivery. While allowing the ordering and purchase of food online is one way to make the program accessible to individuals who may have trouble getting to a store that can redeem benefits, again we worked hard to ensure the high program integrity standards apply to any new way of redeeming benefits. We expect USDA to aggressively address fraud for the same reasons set out above and require, in the bill, the agency halt any expansion of online transactions if integrity issues cannot be resolved. While the provision makes clear that delivery fees associated with online purchases may not be paid with SNAP benefits, I also expect USDA to set standards for the fees to ensure no adverse effect on food security. After all, low-income households rely on SNAP because they are unable to purchase enough food—to divert other scarce financial resources to pay delivery fees undermines the accessibility offered by the online option.

I would like to point out these new mobile and online technologies, common in the food retail world, do not rely on photo identification or other biometric information to authorize payments and maintain integrity. For both the customer and the retailer, the SNAP retail transaction should look like any other debit card transaction. Thus, I urge USDA to stop approving misguided efforts at the State level to require photos on SNAP cards or to be presented at the point of purchase. Technology has made these conditions on the use of benefits obsolete in the retail environment, and so they should be eliminated from the SNAP retail environment as well.

Benefits have been issued successfully on electronic cards for years, but there have been rare occasions when the cards, or the processing systems that deduct benefits from the cards, fail to operate. In these cases, program participants may be in even greater need of assistance and must be able to use their benefits to purchase food. This requires the capacity to quickly and efficiently issue manual vouchers to affected individuals. We expect USDA to issue rules that make it quick and easy to switch to manual vouchers for automated systems failures or natural disasters. Critical to successfully providing an alternative is establishing clear criteria that allow State officials to apply immediately in a variety of particular situations. The threat to program integrity posed by physical vouchers stems from vouchers issued when individual cards fail to work, not when there is an intelligible, systemic reason for the problem.

I commend my fellow conferees for working in a bipartisan way to identify areas of the program that could be strengthened in a way that minimizes administrative burden and does not impose a hardship on participating households. We've made some changes that will improve eligibility determinations and the quality of our research.

For example, we've taken steps to ensure federal funds used to inform Americans about SNAP cannot be used in inappropriate ways. Let's be clear, USDA has done a fine and necessary job getting information about SNAP to low-income households struggling to put food on the table. The program cannot be effective if those who may need it are unaware of its existence or believe they are not eligible. With the program's name change from the Food Stamp Program to SNAP, there was a great need for accurate information to be disseminated. Almost all of USDA's efforts have been appreciated and appropriate, but there have been reports of some ill-advised efforts, such as collaborating with the Mexican consulate and reimbursing community members who sign up eligible people on a per person or ''bounty'' basis. These were neither best practices, nor were they widespread, so we prohibited them in the farm bill. But in reality, many low-income households that are eligible are not signing up, and we know that is because, in part, individuals are unaware of the program or have misconceptions about it. For example, seniors often fear if they apply for assistance, they are taking away assistance from someone else. But that is just not true, and we need to be able to give these seniors truthful information so they can make the choice that is right for them. In this bill, Congress continues to support this kind of information sharing, while clarifying aggressive recruitment, including recruitment outside of the United States, is not permissible. Recruitment is trying to persuade or convince someone who has made an informed decision not to apply to change his or her mind. That hasn't

been a permissible activity and the bill simply codifies that practice. Providing people with positive information about the program and the benefits of applying or assisting them to navigate the complicated application process is not recruitment and is still allowed. We expect the agency will continue to provide necessary information while ensuring education funds are used appropriately.

Another change we made to strengthen SNAP was to give States access to more tools to double check the information SNAP applicants provide. The Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Child Support Enforcement oversees such a tool: the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH), which primarily is for State child support agencies to learn important information about the employment of noncustodial parents who live or work in other States. Currently States are allowed to use this database for some other purposes, including verifying employment and earnings of SNAP recipients. We have, in this bill, required States make use of the data available through the NDNH at the time a household is certified for SNAP, to help the State determine eligibility and the correct level of benefits for households applying for SNAP. We expect the Secretary to issue guidance to help States determine the most cost-effective and efficient ways to make use of this data source. For example, it makes no sense for States to pay to match every individual in every applicant household. There is no reasonable chance an 80 year-old disabled person or a four year old child has unreported earnings. The Secretary should work with the Secretary of Health and Human Services to explore ways to limit the cost of the match to State agencies and maximize payment accuracy.

The bill also codifies the existing State practice of verifying immigrant participation in the program by using the federal Systemic Alien Verification for Entitlements program (SAVE). It's a commonsense way for States to determine eligibility that does not require a household to track down paperwork or fill out unnecessary forms. We expect this to have no impact on client eligibility or responsibility since the data match is an administrative procedure. No other changes to immigrant eligibility have been made.

We fully expect State and local agencies, institutions and organizations that receive funding through USDA to study, evaluate or otherwise engage with SNAP will cooperate with USDA's own researchers. Some of these entities may have justifiable concerns in this day and age about sharing some data, especially private information about participant households. This bill includes a provision that explicitly requires cooperation, but ensures that it does not violate any important existing requirements, such as the personal privacy of SNAP participants.

I'd like to turn for a moment to other nutrition provisions in the bill.

Since 2001, Puerto Rico has been allowed to issue to 25 percent of households' SNAP benefit as cash, rather than in a form that can only be spent on food. While program rules require the cash also be spent for food, some cash is spent on other household necessities, though there is little evidence that any cash is spent on non-essential items. This is because the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) plays a unique role in Puerto Rico's safety net because other programs available in States (such as TANF and SSI) do not play a significant role on the island. Puerto Rico is already shortchanged on nutrition assistance—if NAP operated as SNAP does in the States, participation would be 15 percent higher and federal costs would be over 22 percent higher. Some have argued this cash allotment should be eliminated, a change that would be disruptive, and over which there has been little engagement with local stakeholders or affected parties. So the farm bill requires a study on the impact of eliminating the cash portion of the nutrition grant, and assuming such a change is feasible, gradually phases it out. But, we included an important protection for poor Puerto Ricans. The Secretary can exempt categories of participants if he or she has determined the elimination of the cash portion would cause undue hardship. The entire NAP caseload could be exempted if the study shows the policy change would have significant adverse effects.

Another provision in the bill requires USDA to pilot different ways to deliver food assistance to needy people in the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Here we expect USDA to look at different ways to structure food aid based on the structure of SNAP, but recognizing many of the SNAP administrative requirements may not be appropriate for such a small government and isolated population.

There is a wide range of options between the current block grant and full SNAP implementation. For example, we expect any program would be run with integrity, but this does not necessarily mean the SNAP quality control review process—one of the most rigorous to which any public program is subject—is the only way to review payment accuracy in the CNMI. In the area of benefit issuance, SNAP has highly detailed standards for Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) systems. This approach works well in the United States, but may not be appropriate for the CNMI. SNAP has very explicit rules about how benefits are determined and recognizes assorted expenses as deductions from income. CNMI may be better able to run a program with greater standardization of benefits. None of this is to argue for any specific approach. Rather, we expect USDA to look for ways to improve nutrition assistance to the residents of the CNMI in a manner that its government can deliver.

As I said at the start, Mr. Speaker, this bill is not perfect. I'm not pleased we had to reduce food assistance to any low-income households. But overall, we have continued the long tradition in the Agriculture Committee of bipartisan support for the program. It has taken us two years and countless hours to come to a compromise over a wide range of complex agriculture and nutrition issues while still contributing to reducing the federal deficit. This farm bill is an important step in dealing with the most important food and agricultural issues facing the Nation today. I again, voice my support for this language and urge my colleagues to support it as well.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE).

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose this compromise bill, although I congratulate the people for working very hard on it. But the change in the heat and eat option is not just a little technical change; it is a change that has a freezing, chilling impact on every single SNAP recipient in Wisconsin. It not only increases bureaucracy, it decreases SNAP benefits to Wisconsin families whose benefits were cut already in November.

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I am deeply concerned about the concrete hurt, hunger, and, quite frankly, the frigid cold that we impose today on thousands of low-income American households, including seniors, children, and the disabled. As many as 255,000 SNAP cases in Wisconsin will be affected by this change.

How do I explain this to the women, children, seniors, and disabled in households how this ''technical change'' is minor when they stand to lose $90 a month in benefits? When you consider what they lost in November, $90 a month to a poor family is not a ''technical change.'' It is a lot of money. It is more than $1,000 a year.

The price of food is not going to go down, nor is the price of fuel, nor is the purchasing power of the poor going to go up. SNAP benefits already do not meet nutritional needs throughout the month, and this change will mean that real food will be off real tables and out of the stomachs of current recipients. The proposed cut on top of ARRA resulted in a 9 percent drop in benefits allocation to Wisconsin. It is just too much.

In the heat or eat States, that is as much as 11 percent of all beneficiaries. In one step, we imposed new administrative costs on those States and make it harder to keep SNAP more responsive. Kids were off school 2 days—2 days—this week because of the frigid, dangerous cold. And throwing these families back to heat or eat is the wrong thing to do.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT), another one of my outstanding subcommittee chairmen.

Mr. AUSTIN SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I want to first say thank you to Chairman LUCAS and Ranking Member PETERSON. The Ag Committee has some of the most conservative Members of the House and some of the most liberal Members of the House, and I will tell you we have a lot of different opinions about what could and what should be done, but we had respectful discussion across the aisle and across the philosophical debates.

I have said many times from this podium that the foundation of our economy in this country is based on two things, one of them being manufacturing and the other one based on agriculture.

This bill does the things it needs to do to ensure that foundation for our agricultural producers to help with that part of the economy. It also ensures that, as those farmers go forward and do the things that they do in providing the food, the nutrition, and the fiber, not only for America but for the rest of the world, that Americans—

Americans—when they go to the grocery store, will get more for their dollar than any other country as they seek to feed their families.

We found agreement to clean up waste and abuse within many of the systems, including the food stamp system. We have given more money to food banks, which I think is extremely important in making sure that the most needy of American citizens have a place to go and make sure that they can get the nutrition that they need.

We have put some new policies in place, and I am confident that this bill is a move in the right direction. Where we have got those areas where we did not find the agreement, I am confident we will be able to come back and work on those.

I am proud to support this bill, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my colleague from Minnesota (Mr. WALZ).

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Speaker, thank you to the chairman and the ranking member for your incredible hard work. The folks of Oklahoma and Minnesota should be proud of the representatives that they have sent here.

I am proud of this piece of legislation. I stand in support of it. It has been 2 years. I feel like we have been at it most of our lives. And while I hear people pointing out problems, I am certainly there. If we had each written this bill, it would look different. I hear people say it is not perfect. We had a former colleague once who said, Of course it is not perfect. If you want perfect, you will get that in Heaven. And at times, this place is closer to Hell.

So this is a pretty good compromise that we have come up with. It certainly does things, and I am proud to say it makes bold new investments in clean and renewable, American-made energy. This is a tough decision in a tough budgeting time; and of the commitment of this committee to make that happen, I could not be prouder.

It also takes bold steps moving the country forward on conservation measures. One piece in here, protecting our native prairies in the Midwest, is fabulous. And I want to thank the gentlelady from South Dakota (Ms. Noem) for her unwavering effort on this.

I would say this: we reject the false choice that you have to choose between sportsmen's conservation and producing food on the land. You can have all things. And as the folks over at Ducks Unlimited said, this is one of the best pieces of conservation legislation in decades. We come out and do that. So we have struck a balance here, producing the food, feeding the world, clothing the world, and empowering the world, and at the same time providing for the heritage of our sportsmen and the pristine beauty of our country. So it can happen.

As a veteran, I am proud that we took a bold step in here trying to figure ways to get returning veterans back on the land. The average age of a farmer in this country is 57 years old. We need new folks on the land, and that comes with high land prices and access to capital.

Mr. PETERSON, Mr. FORTENBERRY, and I worked on some beginning farmer and rancher legislation. Senator KLOBUCHAR on the Senate side and the chairman made sure it happened here. It is going to work. It provides some of that access, and it keeps our family farms continuing on.

So there are things to point out that you are frustrated with. I understand that. But there is a lot of good in this bill. It is a compromise. We came together. We tried to find and strike those balances. We continue to feed those folks who need the safety net, and we continue to make sure that our producers have the certainty that they need.

I have to tell you, all across this country this morning, producers woke up and quietly went about their business feeding, fueling, and powering America. We can say ''thank you'' by passing this bill.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I am happy now to yield 3 minutes to my colleague from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO).

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, rather than producing a farm bill that meets our traditional responsibilities as a Congress to support working families and farmers, this bill will do great damage to the Nation's most vulnerable citizens. This bill slashes $8.6 billion from food stamps, our Nation's most important antihunger program—this is in addition to the $11 billion already cut—while it goes out of its way to reopen the loopholes that benefit millionaires and billionaires.

Interesting enough, this bill increases the deficit this year, and the Congressional Budget Office has said that it doesn't save the $23 billion that it claims to save. This bill results in winners and losers.

Winners—wealthy farmers and agribusinesses who will be able to pocket crop insurance subsidies and other government handouts beyond the already generous limits passed earlier by both the House and the Senate. The Congressional Budget Office, again, says it increases spending on crop insurance by $5.7 billion.

The Senate passed a bipartisan amendment to reduce the level of Federal premium support for crop insurance participants who make over $750,000, but the conference raised it to $900,000—winners.

Against the expressed wishes of both Houses, the bill's drafters reopened a loophole which was closed in both the House and the Senate bills which allows farming enterprises to overcollect on commodity payments—winners.

But then who are the losers? And there are losers in the farm bill. The losers are the 850,000 low-income households all over America, 1.7 million Americans who will lose 66 meals a month because of these cuts to food stamps.

Who are we talking about? Children who will go hungry and spend all the next day at school. They will go to bed hungry, spend the next day at school unable to concentrate because they are thinking about food. Veterans, roughly 900,000 of whom receive food stamps, and working families who will face an empty fridge and a gnawing pain in their stomach for weeks and weeks. Seniors have to choose between food or warmth, whose health will deteriorate for want of sustenance.

These are our own people we are consigning to this fate, hardworking people in our districts and in our communities. And if you vote for this bill, you will have to look them in the eye and tell them to go without food, that they have to endure hunger because we had to give more handouts to millionaires and to billionaires.

That is what this farm bill is about. Make no mistake. It increases hunger rather than decreases hunger in America. It picks winners and losers rather than ensuring we are supporting those that grow and those that consume the food we produce in this Nation of plenty.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. MCGOVERN. I yield the gentlewoman an additional 1 minute.

Ms. DELAURO. It picks winners and losers rather than ensuring that we are supporting those that grow and those that consume the food that we produce in this Nation of plenty, which is what farm bills have been about in the past.

I have negotiated nutrition titles in farm bills. This is a farm bill that undermines the health and the well-being of the most vulnerable in our society.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''no.''

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS), who has worked extremely diligently early on on this bill and through the entire process.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, thank you to Chairman LUCAS for the leadership he has shown in getting this conference report to the floor.

I rise in strong support of this conference committee report. It is a commonsense piece of legislation that deals with things such as overregulation. That is a silent job killer that this administration is implementing through our agricultural industry. I am proud that many of the provisions that I helped craft are in this final farm bill to reduce that opportunity for this administration to continue to kill jobs in this country.

We see some commonsense reforms to the SNAP program. Our goal should be to get people off of SNAP and into jobs. But, Mr. Speaker, this bill is a lesson in fiscal responsibility. It is one of the single largest cuts in mandatory spending that this Congress has done, which is putting our country on a path to complete fiscal responsibility. These

are some of the decisions that we need to make. Most of those cuts are in the agricultural side.

We need to understand that this is a commonsense piece of legislation. It is going to continue to reduce our deficit in this country, put us on a path to paying down our national debt, and putting excellent long-term farm policy in place for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH), a former member of the committee.

Mr. WELCH. Mr. Speaker, we serve in an imperfect Congress, and we are voting on an imperfect farm bill. In some cases, we spend far too much needlessly and irresponsibly, and in some cases we spend far too little unwisely and irresponsibly. But a 5-year farm bill is absolutely crucial to America, and it is crucial to Vermont dairy farmers.

This bill takes three important steps for dairy farmers in Vermont and throughout the country:

One, it creates a modern-day insurance program which protects farmers against the wild swings in feed prices which are totally out of their control;

Two, it protects taxpayers, as well as farmers, by limiting insurance to a farmer's base production; and

Three, finally, it gives USDA the tools to intervene if dairy prices drop dramatically.

Mr. Speaker, with its faults and imperfections, America does need a new farm bill. Agriculture is changing all around us. Local food is a growing sector in my State. The organic sector is booming, and people are much more aware of their food and farms. This farm bill invests in local foods, provides insurance to small farmers, and puts organic farming on a strong footing for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment on the nutrition title in the Conference Report for the 2014 Farm Bill. I served on the House Agriculture Committee through the 112th Congress, when the Agriculture Committee began its farm bill deliberations and wrote its first version of the farm bill, including the nutrition title. I am very familiar with the changes to the nutrition title in the final conference agreement. This bill represents an imperfect but bipartisan and bi-cameral compromise. While I am disappointed that the Conferees were not able to make new investments in SNAP to help the struggling families in Vermont and around this country put food on the table, the bill makes some modest improvements and has wisely rejected many of the cuts in the House bill.

In fact, the nutrition title reflects the success SNAP has had providing nutrition assistance during the historic rise in need as a result of the Great Recession. Not only has the program been responsive to need, but it's maintained historically low payment error and trafficking rates. The farm bill makes some improvements to keep the program operating efficiently and to remain the lifeline that it is for so many of our neighbors. It also modestly invests in anti-fraud efforts and promising employment and training programs.

I would like to address the one significant cut in SNAP benefits in the bill that affects households in Vermont. The farm bill cuts about $90 a month to about 850,000 families nationwide by increasing the level of federal energy assistance required to trigger higher benefits among recipients. This provision changes the SNAP benefit calculation for households receiving very small LIHEAP payments in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program benefits. This cut will cause pain for the households that will see their benefits reduced. Despite the change, it's important for people who have heating or cooling expenses to maintain the deduction they are eligible for. The conferees have assured us that the provision will maintain the fundamental link between traditional LIHEAP programs and SNAP.

For this change to be executed properly, it is essential that USDA work closely with states to ensure that no SNAP household who also participates in LIHEAP inadvertently lose benefits. Many of those that currently receive the SUA due to a $1 LIHEAP benefit may still pay for heating or cooling, and so they need a chance to show that they have those expenses. The process to do so should be designed to minimize the burden on these households.

More important is to ensure that households that do not receive smaller LIHEAP benefits are not adversely affected by any aspect of this provision's implementation. The Agriculture Committees debated several approaches to resolving this issue, and savings were never attributed to states that did not provide a smaller LIHEAP benefit. USDA must ensure that this provision's impact is limited only to household that receive a minor LIHEAP payment, such as $1. I do not envision that states will need to make changes to their forms or verification policies.

The farm bill also includes a number of improvements in the SNAP operation and administration. Like with the SUA provision, it's clear from these provisions that the conferees were committed to focusing on changes that placed the burden on state agencies, not households applying for or participating in the program. For example, there's a requirement that states check state lottery and gaming records to make sure no lottery winners who are ineligible, due to their winnings, stay on the program. It's a reasonable policy, and the conferees wisely require the state to rely on records to identify the rare instance rather than ask demeaning questions of every SNAP applicant. There are other examples—such as use of the national New Hire Database—where the bill charges USDA and state agencies to use databases, technology and back office functions to improve the program without burdening SNAP applicants and participants. I do not expect states to have to add questions to their applications seeking information on whether applicants were ever convicted of a heinous crime in response to the provision that reiterates current policy with respect to fleeing felons. Asking low-income families and seniors in need whether they have won the lottery or are a convicted murderer compromises the programs' image and would denigrate people for needing its help.

There are also some promising changes to the program for the retailers that participate. The farm bill authorizes pilot programs to test the use of mobile technologies in SNAP—things like smart phone apps that have become increasingly common in the larger retail world. This may be especially important to farmers markets and vegetable stands that are unable to install traditional EBT processing machines. While expanding potential options for retailers is important, it is critical to the long term success of the program that bad actors looking to take advantage of new approaches are kept out of the program. I urge USDA to set high retailer integrity standards and carefully monitor the pilots to prevent fraud. There's a similar provision that tests the feasibility of allowing the online purchase of food with SNAP benefits, reflecting a growing food industry trend towards online transactions with delivery. This can help make the program accessible to individuals who may have trouble getting to a store, but rigorous anti-fraud standards must apply to any new way of redeeming benefits, and it will require USDA to be actively engaged in monitoring the pilot.

I would like to point out that these new mobile and online technologies, common in the food retail world, do not rely on photo identification or other biometric information to authorize payments and maintain integrity. For both the customer and the retailer, the SNAP retail transaction should look like any other debit card transaction. Thus, I urge USDA to stop allowing misguided efforts at the state level to require photos on SNAP cards or to be presented at the point of purchase. USDA must increase its scrutiny of such efforts to ensure that all household members and authorized representatives can use purchase food on behalf of the household. Technology has made these conditions on the use of benefits obsolete in the retail environment, and so they should be eliminated from the SNAP retail environment as well.

I commend the work of the Agriculture Committee conferees to identify areas of bipartisan agreement that improve without imposing undue hardship on participating households. The Agriculture Committees have a long standing history of working together to solve difficult complex food and agriculture issues facing the nation. This farm bill is a solid step in the right direction and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 1 minute.

I want my colleagues to understand why those of us who are opposing this bill because of the SNAP cuts are so concerned.

On November 1, when the ARRA moneys ran out, all 47 million people who are on SNAP received a cut. For the average family of three, that was about a $37 reduction per month, which is a lot of money when you are struggling to put food on the table, because, quite frankly, the SNAP benefit in and of itself is not adequate. People end up going to food banks anyway.

If this bill passes, for over 800,000 families, well over 1 million people, for the average family of three, an additional $90 cut will go into effect. That is $120. I don't know where they are going to make that up. I don't know where they are going to go to get help. We can say, yeah, let the States pick it up. Well, the States aren't rushing to pick anything up. Well, let the charities pick it up. Read the newspaper.

Last week, The New York Times said that all of our food banks are at capacity. They can't do it.

So what is going to happen to these people? In the United States of America, the richest country in the history of the world, we ought to all pledge that nobody—and I mean nobody—ought to go hungry. That is what this fight is about.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, might I inquire how much time the three of us have?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Oklahoma has 11½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Minnesota has 8½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Massachusetts has 6½ minutes remaining.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM), who understands the diversity of weather and understands the challenges that producers have.

□ 1000

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding, and for his leadership on the farm bill, and also Ranking Member PETERSON for all of his hard work and diligence in finding some common ground on a bill that has been under negotiation for far too long.

I am so happy to be standing here with all of our Members and our colleagues from the farm bill conference committee, which I was honored to be a part of, and also with everyone else who is going to support this bill. It is extremely bipartisan.

It has taken a lot of hard work to get to this point. I am proud of the fact that we have a product in front of us that is not only good for producers, it is good for consumers. It secures our food supply into the future, which is one of the safest in the world.

We make reforms. We save billions of tax dollars. It is accountable to the taxpayer in this country. We conserve wildlife habitat. We provide a viable safety net for those who grow our food and for those who rely on food assistance as well.

While Congress was writing this bill, my home State go hit with droughts and blizzards that cost us tens of thousands of livestock. The livestock disaster programs that I authored are in this bill and will provide much-needed relief to those who are struggling so hard during this difficult time.

Our Black Hills National Forest is going to gain some regulatory relief and additional tools to combat the pine beetle that is destroying our Black Hills and our forests across this country.

The nine tribes in South Dakota are going to get a permanent Office of Tribal Relations—a real victory for all of our tribes across this country who really need to have better communication within USDA.

Thousands of hunters in South Dakota and across the country every year are going to be glad to know that they have got a provision in place that will help protect grasslands.

Whether you grow corn, wheat, soybeans, or cotton, producers are going to have more choices, which really at the end of the day is going to help them cover their risk that they take every year. I am proud of the bill, I am proud of our work, and I urge our colleague to support the bill.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am now pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCINTYRE).

(Mr. MCINTYRE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this farm bill. This is a strong, reform-minded bill with bipartisan support. It will grow our economy, create jobs, provide certainty, reduce our deficit, and save the American taxpayers $16 billion.

The bill reforms the farm safety net, strengthening crop insurance and commodity programs. These risk management tools assure farmers that help is there when they need it.

The bill also encourages conservation and develops export markets to help our farmers sell their products worldwide. Rural communities depend on the farm bill too. Through critical rural development programs, small towns can build hospitals, schools, fire departments, and police departments. This bill helps create jobs and economic development.

Water and wastewater programs, the most basic of public services that allow industries to come to rural areas, give access to healthy drinking water, and sanitary sewers, are part of this as well.

This bill has important tools for new farmers, and I can tell you, as one in the State of North Carolina, where one out of every five jobs are dependent upon agriculture or agri-related business, this bill is about jobs and our economy and ways that it helps States throughout America.

There is still some work to do, like bringing Country of Origin Labeling rules into compliance with WTO and reducing the GIPSA rules. However, our farmers, their families, and small towns all across America have waited too long for a new farm bill.

Our citizens in rural America are taxpayers just as much as those who live in urban and suburban areas. They deserve the respect of this Congress. They deserve a farm bill that works for our citizens who live in rural areas. They deserve the passage of this bill.

We all as Americans enjoy our wonderful supply of food and fiber that the good Lord has blessed us with and that our farmers work so hard to supply. We ought to work with our farmers and with agriculture and have a strong farm bill that our citizens in all of America deserve to have passed.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time at this point.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON), another one of our outstanding subcommittee chairmen.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this farm bill, and also to thank Chairman LUCAS and Congressman PETERSON for their leadership on agriculture.

As many of my House colleagues have already said this morning, this legislation is long overdue. This bill is truly worthy of its name, the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act, because of the historic reforms it legislates.

Overall, the bill repeals or consolidates about 100 programs. Along with sequestration reductions, it cuts mandatory spending by nearly $23 billion.

In the conservation title alone, we reduced programs from 23 down to 13. This change alone saves $6 billion, and I believe does so without undercutting the effectiveness of the needed programs.

We reform food stamps, and we do so through thoughtful, targeted changes, ensuring that those who truly need the assistance will receive it.

We finally get positive changes for our dairy farmers who work so hard 7 days a week providing milk for this Nation.

With the 2008 farm bill expiring nearly a year and a half ago, I urge my colleagues to vote for this legislation and finally give our farmers and rural constituents the support and certainty they deserve.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. LUCAS. I yield the gentleman an additional 1 minute.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't take that much.

Overall, this farm bill also assures that all Americans have access to affordable, high-quality, and safe food.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am now pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentlelady from Washington (Ms. DELBENE).

Ms. DELBENE. Mr. Speaker, this farm bill is bipartisan legislation that is good for our farmers and families. It is an accomplishment that will create jobs, help our farmers, and preserve access to healthy food.

This bill includes unprecedented funding for specialty crops and organic farms. It is no understatement to say that this is the best farm bill yet for specialty crop farmers.

I am proud the farm bill includes $200 million to fund my proposal to expand job training programs for SNAP recipients to find self-sustaining jobs.

Make no mistake: no one got everything they wanted. I am disappointed that nutrition assistance is reduced at a time when the need is high. However, this bill will not eliminate SNAP eligibility for anyone still in need. In addition, the removal of the dairy stabilization program is disappointing. This reform would have helped farmers and

protected consumers. This bill is an improvement but falls short of solving the entire problem.

Overall, this bill provides the certainty needed to grow our economy and bolster America's agriculture industry. I strongly urge a ''yes'' vote.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO).

Ms. DELAURO. I thank the gentleman. I just wanted to reiterate one thing. Some may view that I represent the State of Connecticut, the Third Congressional District in Connecticut, and, in fact, what do we know about farming? The fact is that we do. We have dairy farmers, people with specialty crops, and included in my history in this great body, I served as chair of the Agriculture Subcommittee on Appropriations. I also served as the ranking member, and, as I mentioned earlier, I had the opportunity to be part of the conference committee on the farm bill in 2008 and helped to negotiate the nutrition title.

If I can make one or two more points. This farm bill says that it is going to save $23 billion. They count savings from over a year ago. They talk about $16.6 billion. The Congressional Budget Office says that even as we cut that $8.6 billion from the food stamp program, taking meals away from 1.7 million of the most vulnerable in our society, we are increasing spending on crop insurance by $5.7 billion in the farm bill.

In case folks do not know, the fact of the matter is that Americans subsidize crop insurance. We pick up over 60 percent of the cost of the premiums on crop insurance. We pay 100 percent of the administrative costs in terms of crop insurance. We have 26 individuals who get at least $1 million in a crop insurance subsidy, and we can't find out who they are.

While the cuts in food stamp benefits are going to be felt immediately across those 850,000 households, primarily made up of children, the elderly, disabled, and veterans, few if any of the Congressional Budget Office projected commodity programs savings may ever be realized if crop prices continue to fall. This is reflected in that CBO score that the deficit would be increased this year with this bill. Only food stamps would be cut this year. We should vote against this bill.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, it is with the greatest of pleasure that I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. BENISHEK) who is so focused on these issues.

Mr. BENISHEK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman and the ranking member, who had to do a lot of work on this bill over the years, and I rise today in support of the Agriculture Act of 2014. This measure is important for farms and hardworking families in northern Michigan.

Northern Michigan is home to a number of centennial family farms, meaning they have been in the family for over 100 years—farms like the Bardenhagen's in Suttons Bay, where they grow asparagus, apples, cherries, and potatoes. Take a short drive down the road, and you will find another centennial family farm at the Wagner's in Grawn. They grow corn, wheat, soybeans, and raise beef cattle for their neighbors. These family-owned operations are a vital and growing part of northern Michigan's economy, and it has been an honor to get to know them.

These growers work hard to produce quality products—like tart cherries, apples, and asparagus—that feed northern Michigan and families around the world.

This bill represents the hard work and input of stakeholders from northern Michigan and across the country. While not perfect, it reflects the needs of our rural agricultural economy that is vital to Michigan's First Congressional District. I urge my colleagues to support passage of this bill.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DAVID SCOTT).

Mr. DAVID SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the ranking member.

Agriculture, ladies and gentlemen, is the heart and soul of our Nation. It provides the food we eat. It provides the clothes we wear. It provides the material to build our homes and our shelters. No committee is as engaged in the entire nooks and crannies of the fabric of this Nation as the Agriculture Committee. This farm bill is a product of what makes America great. What makes America great is our democratic Republic, the anchor of which is compromise.

I want to commend Mr. PETERSON, our ranking member, for his job; Mr. LUCAS, the chair of our committee, for his job. It has been 5 years we have been on this. I particularly want to thank Mr. PETERSON. It was a pleasure working with Mr. PETERSON on an issue very dear to him, which is dairy, as we worked out the fabric of that. I commend the leadership on our committee.

However, there is yet work to be done. The gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. DELAURO) was right. Mr. MCGOVERN was right. Ladies and gentlemen of this committee and this House and in this Nation, we have got a serious problem with hunger in this country, and it is not going away until we realize the gravity of it. Our veterans, our seniors, the most vulnerable—we must address this issue.

My position on this bill is that I will vote for it. We have worked on it. Is it a perfect bill? No, it is not. Are we a perfect Nation? No, we are not. But we are constantly striving, striving for that, and we will get closer to this perfect position as we bring all Americans involved and let no American go hungry in this country. I urge everyone to please vote for the bill.

□ 1015

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. CROWLEY).

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from Massachusetts for yielding me this time.

This legislation is commonly referred to as the ''farm bill,'' but it is also a ''food bill.'' On that note, it falls short.

To be clear, this is miles ahead of where we started with what I consider a truly heartless Republican proposal, and I know that our conferees worked hard to make improvements to this bill. In particular, I want to thank COLLIN PETERSON and the Members of the Democratic side of the aisle who are dedicated to work to improve this bill.

But it still leaves too many families behind. The SNAP cut in this bill may seem small on paper, but it is not to the families that it will affect. It is not to the food banks that are already stretched well beyond their means.

In New York City, 280,000 households are expected to see their benefits drop under this bill. Those are benefits that don't go anywhere near far enough to begin with.

We see every day in New York City how deep the need for food assistance is. Our food banks and community hunger organizations are doing everything they can to provide food to hungry families. They are joined by citizen heroes like Jorge Munoz, who I was honored to host last night as my guest to the State of the Union.

Jorge has been called ''an angel in Queens'' for his work in feeding the hungry. He saw a need on the streets of Queens and he jumped in to fill it, serving home-cooked meals out of his truck to what started as a small group of homeless and unemployed New Yorkers. As word grew of his generosity, so did the crowds eager just for something to get through that night.

Since 2004, Jorge has served over 225,000 meals on the streets of Queens, New York. He and I know there are more people out there who are hungry, who are cold, and who are in need of every bit of assistance that they get.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. MCGOVERN. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. CROWLEY. We should be doing more, not less. What is really troubling is that I know there are some on the other side of the aisle who think this doesn't cut food assistance enough. Imagine that—there is $8 billion—$8 billion worth of cuts in this bill, and still that is far less than they wanted to cut.

The fact that in some ways this bill can be considered a compromise option just shows how unreasonable the cuts proposed by the other side were. What have we come to when we argue about how much of a cut to hungry children and families is reasonable?

Yes, this bill is not as bad as it could be, but it is not as good as it should be. That is why I will be voting ''no'' against this bill today.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. COLE), who has some of the

most productive agricultural land and some of the most amazing farmers and ranchers.

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great personal privilege and pleasure for me to come down here on behalf of 14,000 farmers and ranchers in my district and 75,000 farmers and ranchers in the State of Oklahoma, and goodness knows how many tens of thousands of people beyond that in various phases of agriculture and ag industry, and thank my good friend, Chairman LUCAS, for what he has accomplished.

I think it is easy to be the critic; but I think all of us on this House floor know how long and how arduous this struggle has been to bring all the competing interests together, to bring both sides of the aisle together, to bring both Chambers together, and to bring the administration together in support of this legislation.

It is easy to see why you would support it if you actually step back and take a look at what it does. First, it does save $23 billion. Frankly, those cuts largely don't come out of the safety net programs, where actually there is simply relatively modest, but important reforms. They actually come out of the production end of this business. Changes need to be made there, but we ought to recognize those are tough changes in and of themselves.

Second, it preserves the capability of this country to continue to produce more food and fiber than anybody else in the world—not just for our people, but for all over the world—and to deliver that at a cheaper price than anybody else in the world. It is worth reflecting that Americans pay a lower percentage of their income for food than any other country in the world. Guess what? With the additional income, they are able to do other things, invest in other things, and go on.

Finally, I am particularly pleased that the safety net has been preserved and that important programs are in place. We ought to recognize that wouldn't have been possible without my friend Chairman LUCAS, all he has done to bring us together and how hard he has worked.

This bill, frankly, deserves the support of every Democrat and every Republican on this floor. I urge my colleagues to be supportive when the time to vote comes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers. I believe I have the right to close. I reserve the balance of my time, unless we are ready to close.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Massachusetts will be recognized first to close.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close if there are no other speakers, but my understanding is that Mr. PETERSON may have one other speaker.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, we had one Member that wanted to speak, and we are trying to ascertain his whereabouts at this point.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Let me give an update on the times remaining. The gentleman from Oklahoma has 5¼ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Minnesota has 3½ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Massachusetts has 2 minutes remaining.

The gentleman from Minnesota is recognized.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I know that Members want to get out of here and get on planes and so forth, so after Mr. MCGOVERN closes, I will yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

First of all, let me say that I am grateful to Chairman LUCAS and Ranking Member PETERSON. I appreciate their hard work. I appreciate their dedication on these issues. It is a privilege to be on the Agriculture Committee, and I am proud to serve with them, as with the other members of the committee on both sides of the aisle.

Unfortunately, I cannot support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close by speaking to my fellow Democrats.

Last night, we sat in this Chamber and we listened to the President give his State of the Union address. When he talked about raising the minimum wage, we all stood up and cheered. When he talked about the need to address income inequality, we all applauded. But cheers and applause aren't enough.

I ask my colleagues to think back, to remember listening to their parents or their grandparents talk about how Franklin Roosevelt always stood up for the little guy. Remember those pictures of Bobby Kennedy touring through Appalachia and touching the cheeks of hungry children.

That is why we became Democrats in the first place. Those are the people that got us into politics. Those are our people.

Don't throw that away just to be able to say you voted for a farm bill. Don't turn your backs on our heritage and on our history by giving bipartisan cover to what I believe is a flawed bill.

We don't have to do this. The price of admission to pass a farm bill should not be more cuts to SNAP. Make no mistake about it, my friends on the Republican side are not through when it comes to SNAP. They are going to come back after this program again and again and again.

We need to push back. We need to say enough.

Some have rationalized these cuts; some have tried to explain them away as being nothing but closing a loophole. They are wrong. People are going to be hurt. People all over this country—1.7 million people—are going to be impacted by this. There should be nobody in this country—the richest country in the history of the world—who should ever go hungry. That should be a nonpartisan issue.

But to my fellow Democrats, in particular, this is an issue that we have championed time and time again over the many years of the existence of this country.

I urge my colleagues to vote ''no'' on this conference report. Vote your conscience.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PETERSON. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to close as well.

I want to again thank the chairman and all of the Members on both sides of the aisle for their work and hanging in there for all these months and years to get to this point, and congratulate the chairman on what I expect to be a successful outcome in a little bit of time here.

With that, I would ask everybody to support this conference report, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

First, I would also like to join my colleague in adding to the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD a list of the majority staff members.

I must say in all fairness, while there was cooperation among the members of the committee itself, the cooperation among House and Senate Members was exemplary.

I would also note the work of our staff, those good men and women, R and D, House and Senate, over the course of these years cannot be underestimated or underappreciated. The hours, the spirit of comity, the focus on accomplishing things, trying to do good policy, it just cannot be overstated how important all those good folks have been.

With that, Mr. Speaker, let me simply close by saying this: no one cares more about agricultural policy, farmers and ranchers, consumers and everyone in the process that takes it from the seed to the plate or the bowl than I do. But I think in good faith I can say my colleague Mr. PETERSON cares just as much as I do. The members of our committee care just as much as we do.

This bill, done in what I would like to define as regular order through the committee process and the floor and the conference, may not have exactly everything my friends on the right would want or my friends on the left would want, but it represents making the process work, achieving consensus, putting into place policies that are better than what were there before to drive this effort forward.

I know that we sincerely disagree on many things, and I know some of my friends don't sometimes act like they care about what happens out on the farm or the ranch. I know that is not the case. They do care.

But I would simply say this: no matter how much money we spend on supplemental programs to make sure our fellow citizens have enough to eat—and

that is important—never forget if there is not a product on the shelf, if there is not meat in the case, if there are not vegetables or fruit available, it doesn't matter how much you subsidize. The food has to be there.

That is why I have said all along a farm bill still has to have farm in it. This Agriculture Act of 2014 lives up to that. It makes a commitment to our fellow citizens who are in tough times, but it will also ensure the food will be there.

Don't take us down the path that many other countries have gone through in the last century of people lined up at empty shelves, people hoarding particular ag products because it is available that day because they will trade it the next day when something might be available.

Let's continue to do this miracle called American agriculture. Oh, by the way, depending on how you define ''miracle'' in the environment we have worked together in, this farm bill might not be quite defined by most people as a miracle, but it is amazingly close.

Mr. Speaker, let's pass the conference report, let's complete our responsibilities, let's show the rest of this place how it is supposed to be done.

I yield back the balance of my time.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE STAFF LIST

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Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Agricultural Act of 2014.

I want to congratulate all the conferees on getting to this point.

Even though the bill is not perfect, it is needed.

I am confident that this legislation will serve Nebraska farmers well.

My main concern with the bill was making meaningful reforms to SNAP so that it serves those who really need it without the rampant waste, fraud, and abuse that currently plagues the system.

I am pleased that the conferees included the establishment of a 10-state pilot program to empower states to engage able-bodied adults in mandatory work programs.

This is a commonsense reform and it's my hope my home state of Nebraska choses to participate in this pilot.

This farm bill is a step in the right direction.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate all of the work of the Agriculture Committee and especially Chairman LUCAS, to bring this very long farm bill negotiation to a conclusion. Agriculture and all of its supporting industries desperately need a five-year farm bill and the stability it brings.

I am profoundly disappointed, however, that the bill does not take the opportunity to resolve some very important issues affecting livestock. The Country of Origin Labeling rule proposed by the Administration is unworkable and puts our livestock industry at a significant disadvantage. It will invite punitive trade sanctions. That requirement should have been repealed, and I will continue to work to repeal it.

Similarly, Congress has regularly prevented the implementation of the controversial provisions of the GIPSA marketing rule through the appropriation process. I assume we will continue to do so, but it would have been better to remove that threat permanently.

There was also an opportunity missed to resolve the issue related to horse processing, and so the needless suffering of old and unwanted horses will continue, as will the effects on the value of horses across the country.

At the same time, the biggest issue facing agriculture in my district and throughout most of Texas has been the drought. I appreciate the permanent livestock disaster program in this bill, which will be very welcomed by livestock producers of all sizes throughout our region of the country.

I believe that the reforms made to commodity programs are needed and will strengthen the political viability of those programs into the future. Having additional risk management tools available to producers who are increasingly competing in a global market should be quite helpful.

Finally, I would strongly prefer to make greater reforms in food stamps and other nutrition programs, such as were contained in the House passed version, but given the realities of the political situation in Washington, I believe that the savings in this bill are a step, at least, in the right direction.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have joined the majority of Democrats and Republicans who unilaterally alike passed a bill that will fund our Nation's most important anti-hunger program which touches nearly 1 out of 7 Americans by a vote of 251–166. The bill now heads to the President's desk who has indicated he will sign it into law in a matter of days.

In these tough budgetary times, we should not signal to our constituents that helping those most in need is no longer a priority. I am pleased that the bipartisan, bicameral five-year farm bill contains major reforms including eliminating the direct payment program, streamlining and consolidating numerous programs to improve their effectiveness and reduce duplication, and cutting down on program misuse. Additionally, this bill excludes the drastic $40 billion cut in the House-passed version of the farm bill, but makes progress in addressing hunger and poverty by investing new resources in other nutrition programs.

The bill also renews critical investments in important programs for beginning farmers, local food systems, organic agriculture, and healthy food access, and also adds conservation requirements to the receipt of crop insurance premium subsidies. The final bill also rejected proposals to eliminate market and contract protections for livestock and poultry farmers.

Congress first enacted the farm bill in response to the Great Depression in order to foster growth in our Nation's economy and to protect those who were most in need. Today, we are still recovering from what some economists call, ''the Great Recession.'' We find ourselves at a crossroads where we must decide how to manage our fiscal priorities while still protecting those who were hardest hit by the recent recession. President Eisenhower once said, ''Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.''

This bill is far from a perfect one. However, given a lengthy two-and-a-half-year process and the importance of renewing funding for the most innovative programs for the future of agriculture and nutrition, I supported this carefully negotiated package in an effort to do more good than harm. I have received letters from numerous groups including several of the largest general farm organizations in the country which have voiced support for this bill. I am pleased this bill maintains the long-standing bipartisan fashion in which urban and rural members unite to support this package.

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman LUCAS and Ranking Member PETERSON for their work on this issue.

Although I have deep concerns about this bill, I understand that in divided government, no party will get everything it wants.

That said, this bill lays the foundation for a fundamental reform of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP—namely, it will allow states to require work in exchange for benefits. Before the 1996 welfare-reform bill, several states experimented with work requirements, and the evidence gathered from those experiments led to the most expansive reform of the welfare state ever.

This bill also partially closes a loophole in the SNAP program known as ''heat and eat''—a reform included in previous House Budgets.

Finally, this bill eliminates Direct Payments, excludes supply-management provisions in the dairy program, and reduces the deficit by $16.6 billion over the next ten years. This bill would save more money than doing nothing.

I wish this bill included more reforms to our agricultural programs. It did not include crop-insurance reforms supported by both the House and the Senate. We should have a safety net for our farmers. We should help the little guy—the family farm that's in need. We shouldn't bankroll the big guys. So we should tighten the eligibility standards for crop subsidies. I'm disappointed we didn't use this opportunity to make fundamental changes to business as usual.

But on the whole, I think this bill will do some good. It will save more money than if we did nothing. It will provide some much-needed certainty to family farmers. It is an improvement over the status quo, and so I support it.

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I would have voted ''yes'' on rollcall 31 on the Conference Report to accompany H.R. 2642, ''The Farm Bill.''

This conference report has made great improvements in reducing the draconian cuts to the SNAP program proposed in the House passed version of the Farm bill. While I appreciate the reduction in cuts, we should do more to help those most in need. The Conference report also eliminates the King Amendment, which would have destroyed critical state safety and labeling laws. The bipartisan bill includes strong conservation provisions that will help protect our nation's soil, water and wildlife resources. Most notably, the bill makes federal crop insurance subsidies contingent on basic soil and wetland conservation practices. While not perfect, this conference report is a

fair compromise that will hopefully lay the groundwork for finding additional common ground in the future.

Ms. DELBENE. Mr. Speaker, the 2014 farm bill is an important example of how Congress can produce meaningful bipartisan compromise. Overall, this Farm Bill represents years of hard work from a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers, farmers and stakeholders from across the country to put together a bill that is good for our farmers and families. It's a major accomplishment that will create jobs, help our farmers and preserves Americans access to quality, healthy food.

As in all compromises, no one got everything they wanted. I'm disappointed that the bill includes reforms that will reduce nutrition assistance funding at a time when hunger and poverty remain too high in our country. However, unlike the original House Republican proposal, which was a $40 billion cut and would have removed nearly 4 million people from SNAP, the compromise agreed to today will not eliminate SNAP eligibility for anyone still in need. This outcome will garner bipartisan support not just because of what it excluded but also for the important reforms and program improvements that it includes. I would like to discuss the SNAP provisions in the nutrition title in greater depth to ensure my colleagues have a richer understanding of the outcome of the Conference Committee agreement and what it will mean for the program and its participants.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP here in Washington, DC and as Basic Food in Washington State, is the backbone of our federal nutrition assistance safety net. The program has more than proven itself during the economic down-turn of the last several years. With its help, millions of struggling families and seniors are able to put food on the table each day. The program efficiently and accurately delivers benefits that have a significant impact on low-income Americans. Nevertheless, I saw it as my role as a member of the Agriculture Committee and as a conferee to search for ways in which the program could continue to improve. This farm bill represents the conferees' shared vision for ways to improve several aspects of SNAP's basic operations.

One of the changes that we are making, of which I am most proud, is the plan to test promising strategies to connect more SNAP participants to employment. This legislation includes pilot programs to test innovative means of supporting SNAP recipients' efforts to improve their lives. This was an aspect of the original House bill that I worked on with Chairman Lucas and Ranking Member Peterson. Unfortunately, the House passed nutrition title also included work pilot provisions that had elements that were of serious concern to me. As a result, I did not support that bill's final package. As conferees, however, we worked to overcome those differences. Many of us worked long hours to help craft these pilots, and I think the final provision shows the impact of those efforts.

The farm bill provides $200 million to pilot and evaluate innovative and promising state employment and training programs. States can test activities that are currently allowed under SNAP's employment and training program, activities that are allowed under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant and supportive services that SNAP offers to enrollees in SNAP employment and training programs such as child care and help with transportation costs. We wanted to be sure that states were able to create innovative programs for volunteers such as the Job Training Initiative in Seattle which focused on skills building or education programs that might improve an individual's employability. Moreover, it was very important to us to ensure that states could try interventions that have not been permitted in SNAP in the past—such as offering child care assistance to an underemployed or unemployed parent whose primary barrier to work may simply be safe affordable child care. The same approach could be taken with transitional housing or other innovative strategies to support individuals' ability to increase their earnings. By including TANF activities, we were able to ensure that states could test strategies around subsidized and unsubsidized employment. We were inspired by the effective subsidized employment programs states ran through the TANF program during the economic downturn with federal funds made available through the Recovery Act. States like Florida and Mississippi were major champions of these efforts and we wanted to be sure the pilots would support further efforts.

One of the changes that is potentially most important is the inclusion of unsubsidized employment, including private–sector employment, as a component to which states could assign individuals. Obviously, unsubsidized employment is the goal to which almost all workers aspire. On the other hand, because state agencies will not have full control over, or even full information about, how these workplaces operate, we felt the need to include significant safeguards. Longstanding protections against the displacement of other workers remain, as do workplace protection laws such as those for health and safety, wage and hour standards, family leave, workers' compensation, and the like. We expect the Department will promulgate extensive standards in this regard and will supplement those standards as experience shows necessary. In addition, the agreement ensures that individuals who participate in employment activities in the work pilots should not be subject to sanctions unless clear evidence shows that that the individual wilfully refused to take actions that she or he could safely and properly take. If the employer does not give the individual as many hours as expected, or if the employer finds the individual's skills lacking, or if the employer asks the individual to work at a time when the individual lacks child care or transportation, no sanction should apply. Where the state is uncertain what happened or has no clear evidence of wilful refusal to comply, no sanction is appropriate. Often, states just will not be entirely sure what happened because they do not have the oversight over private employers in the way that the usually do over work programs the states themselves operate.

The inclusion of private-sector employment as a component to which workers could be assigned does not in any way disparage states' existing authority to treat jobs that SNAP applicants and recipients have found for themselves as allowable work activities, obviating the need for other placements and allowing the state to provide supportive services the way it would to applicants and recipients in activities to which the state had assigned them. We have no reason to value, or support, a job that an enterprising recipient has found for her or himself any less than we do a work assignment or training program to which the state has assigned her or him. In each case, SNAP E&T's single-minded goal should be for the applicant or recipient to succeed.

While the pilot projects are the work-related aspects of the title that have gotten the most attention, the conferees included other important reforms to SNAP employment and training. Consistent with the original House bill, we felt it is very important for states and USDA to do a better job of tracking outcomes for the services that they offer SNAP participants. For their part, USDA must use this information to assess whether SNAP employment and training can do better and achieve more lasting long-term outcomes. That information will be crucial to us when we reauthorize the program in another five years. Of course, we understand that SNAP participants are often poor and low skilled. We were very clear that expectations and outcomes for these services need to be appropriate. Not everyone will find employment immediately, especially in this economy. We expect that these measures will consider that some employment and training services—such as career and technical education or GED programs—may yield more gains over the long haul but participants would not immediately find those jobs because they are gaining the credentials needed to get them. To that end, USDA's study needs to recognize that getting better jobs may require getting skills first, so delayed but enduring improvements are important to monitor. We also believe, informed by the great work of the Basic Food Employment and Training Program in my home state of Washington, that connecting individuals to the right activity to help them move forward is half the battle. We have called for USDA to increase their monitoring of states' employment and training programs and we expect them to make individual assessment of SNAP work registrants, which is already a requirement, a key feature of their state reviews.

Another key provision of the package is the effort to address the relationship between SNAP and the Low-Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program or LIHEAP. Of course, I am disappointed that the final legislation includes any benefit reductions at all. Washington is one of the states that had been using this option to leverage additional benefits to our low-income households. I am satisfied that the conferees did the best they could in narrowly targeting those reductions to impact only those households who are claiming a standard utility allowance by virtue of their receipt of a very small LIHEAP benefit and, as a result, receiving a larger SNAP benefit. I wanted to be sure that we would not impact households who receive more traditional LIHEAP benefits. USDA assured us that individuals who currently claim the SUA as a result of their participation in or expected participation in LIHEAP will continue to be able to do so. This change is meant to have its desired effect by states dropping their nominal LIHEAP programs and informing USDA that they no longer provide token payments. In that way, no one in the 34 states that have not adopted this practice will see additional verification requirements or barriers to claiming the SUA. At the same time, in my own state, households that participate in our regular LIHEAP program should not experience

any change in their certification process as a result of this change.

Moreover, nothing in this legislation will have any negative effect on those households that have energy costs. We understand that, across the country, a wide range of billing arrangements exist between landlords and tenants. Even if a tenant does not pay utility bills directly, if the landlord imposes a surcharge for utilities, the tenant should be entitled to the standard utility allowance. States have the capacity to look into and understand the various arrangements that exist, and we should honor their determinations. A token one dollar LIHEAP payment will not trigger eligibility for the SUA, but if the state commits real money to energy assistance for a household because it believes that household is vulnerable to utility costs, we should continue to honor that judgment. The final legislation appropriately honors that principle, unlike some earlier drafts.

Although on a much smaller scale, the bill includes several other provisions where our intent was to tighten up or to clarify program rules in a way that addresses concerns, but that does not increase application burdens on the millions of law abiding low income individuals who participate in this program. Our goal wherever possible, was for state SNAP agencies to bear the burden of implementing these changes so that we would maintain the same level of access for SNAP households. Take for example the provision to require that all states verify immigrant eligibility through the Citizenship and Immigration Service. That requirement ensures that all states are taking advantage of this high quality third party information to verify immigration status. Nothing about this change, however, will change the way that immigrants provide information about their immigration status. The same is true of the prohibition on households with individuals who win significant lottery or gambling winnings from participating in the program. The conferees agreed that this prohibition should not be implemented by requiring all 47 million individuals on SNAP to report whether they had or had not recently won the lottery. To ask extremely poor individuals that question would border on offensive. Instead, states will have to work with their state level lotteries to obtain a list of lottery winners against which they can match to the SNAP caseload. We also took the same approach on the reiteration of the current law restriction on fleeing felons. Some of the conferees felt strongly that we reiterate that individuals convicted of particularly heinous crimes who fall out of line with the terms of their parole are not eligible for SNAP. As that is the current policy, there is no need to make changes to states' application or verification systems to implement this provision. We also included several provisions that are consistent with current USDA rules and guidance governing SNAP. Our goal was to codify these rules into federal law. As such, we banned household expenditures on medical marijuana as an allowable expense under the medical expense deduction. We codified the rules regarding students participate in employment and training. Similarly, our efforts to clarify that SNAP outreach workers may not earn a bounty for each application they help an individual complete or may not pressure someone who doesn't wish to apply to do so are consistent with current USDA guidelines and rules governing outreach. None of these provisions should have any impact on current clients our state outreach programs.

Finally, we included several provisions that will help to improve access to healthy food options by requiring stores to stock more perishable foods, allowing community supported agriculture programs to participate as authorized SNAP retailers, and testing new ways for clients to make purchases with their SNAP benefit card (for example, by swiping SNAP cards on mobile devices at farmers' markets) that could open up the program to more retailers with healthy options. In testing these new technologies, we have urged USDA to take every precaution to ensure that these advances do not compromise program integrity. We anticipate they can overcome any challenges on this front and successfully implement these options. The bill includes many other provisions that affect other nutrition programs. I am very pleased that we are increasing funding for food banks and emergency food providers. These organizations are on the front lines of hunger and merit all the support we can provide. We've also included support for community food program grants and created a new national healthy food incentive program modeled after private and foundation efforts to incentivize health food purchases for SNAP participants by providing participants with vouchers to purchase foods at local farmers markets. These efforts will complement our efforts to address hunger through the major federal nutrition programs.

As I said before, this bill is not perfect. However, the farm bill conference report successfully addresses the most important food and agricultural issues facing our country today while contributing to deficit reduction. I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of Chairman Lucas and his determination to get the Farm Bill across the finish line. The Chairman and his staff have put tremendous work into this bipartisan, bicameral bill.

This bill is not perfect. There are several areas we could have done more on. I wish we could have implemented more reforms in the food stamp program.

I am also very disappointed that this farm bill does not address important issues for livestock and poultry producers—my constituents back in North Carolina. As you know, the House–passed Farm Bill did include language on the Country of Origin Labeling law and on USDA's ability to write regulations related to the buying and selling of livestock and poultry.

Yet, neither is included in this conference report.

More importantly, as my constituents have pointed out they now face retaliation from our trading partners. Also, USDA's livestock regulations now threaten to dictate the terms of their private contracts.

Both can cause severe economic harm to North Carolina's farmers and ranchers and to the U.S. economy and both must be addressed. I look forward to continuing our work on these important issues and getting a resolution quickly.

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my reluctant support to the Conference Report on H.R. 2642, the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act, also known as the Farm Bill. This conference report presents us with a difficult choice. On the one hand, it contains numerous provisions that benefit our agriculture communities and it represents another bipartisan accomplishment from both chambers. On the other hand, it makes ill–advised changes in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that, had they been presented in a separate bill, I would have strongly opposed.

The agricultural policy contained in this conference report is a positive step forward for our nation's farmers and rural communities, including those I represent in Northwest Oregon. Strong funding authorizations for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative and Specialty Crop Block Grant Program will help a wide variety of food producers in my district, from blueberry and hazelnut farms to vineyards in the world–renowned Willamette Valley wine region. The commitment to pest and disease research in the bill is key to a healthy nursery industry in Oregon, and the conference report includes language that will allow organic producers and Christmas tree farmers to establish check off programs that are critical to their long–term success.

For Oregon's struggling counties, this bill includes an essential extension of the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. PILT helps the budgets of counties with large expanses of un–taxable federal land, and its reauthorization in this bill is welcome news to the cash–strapped rural areas of Oregon. For the environmental community, the conference report represents an important commitment to responsible farming practices, with crop insurance premium assistance tied to conservation compliance measures that will help protect soil quality and fragile wetlands.

Unfortunately this bill comes up short in one vital area: nutrition policy. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is a pillar of this nation's social safety net, providing food assistance to those in need, including many seniors and children. I do not support the changes to SNAP in this conference report, but they are preferable to the previous Farm Bill proposal considered by this chamber, which I voted against. Although I am pleased that the bill provides additional funds for food banks under the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), I am troubled by the impact that the SNAP cuts will have on Oregon families.

I will reluctantly support this conference report because the investments in our rural communities included in this bill will help many of our constituents continue the long climb back from the lingering effects of the economic down-turn. We must invest in these communities to ensure that still more of our constituents don't come to rely on federal assistance programs like SNAP. And despite unfortunate cuts to the SNAP program, this bill is a vast improvement on the devastating SNAP cuts that the House bill originally contained. Congress must now commit to assisting those individuals who rely on federal nutrition programs in other ways, and I will continue to work with my colleagues on this issue.

The Farm Bill conference report is far from perfect, but it contains several provisions that will benefit Oregonians. I urge its adoption.

Mr. LATHAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the House on the passage of a new farm bill. I know that the Chairman, the Ranking Member and many other members of this body have worked diligently for a very long period of time to reach this point. I am glad that this body has finally passed legislation

that can bring some certainty to Iowa producers and allow them to plan for their economic futures. While I know that we would all agree that this process has taken far too long, I appreciate the endless hours of work to bring us to this significant accomplishment. I trust the legislation will soon make it to the President's desk.

However, no farm bill is perfect and I would be remiss if I did not point out that this bill does not address all of the serious issues of concern to the agricultural community. Congress must address the serious issues related to Country of Origin Labeling in the meat industry. Our livestock producers are quite appropriately concerned that they may face trade retaliation from some of our closest trading partners if these issues are not properly addressed. There are also legitimate concerns regarding USDA's ability to write regulations related to the buying and selling of livestock, which are not addressed in this farm bill. While I am very pleased with what has been accomplished here today, I urge my colleagues to join me in making sure that we complete the work on those issues which were not included in today's legislation.

Mrs. ROBY. Mr. Speaker, today is a monumental day for our nation's agriculture policy. After three years of hard work, today the House of Representatives finally approved a final Farm Bill that provides certainty for our nation's farmers and institutes money-saving reforms to agriculture and nutrition policy that we've needed for some time.

Agriculture is our top industry in Alabama, employing more 580,000 Alabamians. Agriculture alone is worth around $70 billion to our state's economy. That is why this bill has been one of my top priorities since being elected to Congress in 2010.

This bill is a win for Alabama farmers and foresters. It is also a win for taxpayers. The Farm Bill replaces outdated policies left over from the Pelosi-led Congress and represents a positive step toward fiscal responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members of my Agriculture Advisory Panel who have proved so beneficial to my staff and I throughout this process. This group includes a representative from each county in Alabama's Second Congressional District and representatives from a wide variety of commodities and industries. We have held numerous meetings in the District to share ideas, listen to concerns, and discuss a way forward on agriculture policy. I cannot say enough about how much I appreciate these individuals for sharing their time, knowledge, and ideas.

One of the provisions included in this Farm Bill is a direct result of a brainstorming session of our Agriculture Advisory Panel. The Farm Bill includes a provision to reduce the amount of land allowed into the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), restricting the increasingly-frequent practice of paying landowners to let fertile cropland go unplanted for years.

Members of my Agriculture Advisory Panel are: Andy Wendland, Walt Corcoran, Kenny Childree, Tom Duncan, Carl Sanders, Andy Sumblin, Josh Carnley, Salem Saloom, Ricky Wiggins, Rhett Johnson, Tony Beck, Monica Carroll, Albert Curry, Andy Bell, Neil Outlaw, Cindi Fain, Ed White, Gary Mattox, Dale Armstrong, George Jeffcoat, Richard Holladay, Hassey Brooks, Edwin Marty, John Dorrill, and Ed Berry.

I also want to mention the hard work of Mike Albares on my personal staff who put in countless hours of work to help me through this process. Mike, a native of Dothan, is well aware of the importance of agriculture to South Alabama, and I appreciate his dedication to our local farmers.

I want to thank Chairman Frank Lucas and his staff for their diligent work throughout what has, at times, been a challenging process. I want to recognize Ranking Member Peterson and his team for all that they have done to work across the aisle to get this bill finished. Agriculture policy has almost always been a bi-partisan issue, and this final product is no different.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that this bill isn't perfect. I would have liked to have seen more reforms to nutrition programs, but we will continue to work toward that goal. Undoubtedly, the reforms contained in this Farm Bill are a major step in the right direction.

Thank you again to the countless individuals who helped make this Farm Bill happen. I look forward to continuing to be a strong advocate on behalf of Alabama's farmers.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 465, the previous question is ordered.

The question is on the conference report.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, this 15-minute vote on adoption of the conference report will be followed by a 5-minute vote on approval of the Journal, if ordered.

The vote was taken by electronic device, and there were—yeas 251, nays 166, not voting 14, as follows:

[Roll No. 31]

YEAS—251

Aderholt
Bachus
Barber
Barletta
Barr
Barrow (GA)
Barton
Beatty
Benishek
Bera (CA)
Bilirakis
Bishop (GA)
Bishop (NY)
Bishop (UT)
Black
Bonamici
Boustany
Brady (TX)
Braley (IA)
Brooks (AL)
Brooks (IN)
Brown (FL)
Brownley (CA)
Buchanan
Bucshon
Bustos
Butterfield
Byrne
Calvert
Camp
Cantor
Capito
Capps
Carney
Carson (IN)
Carter
Cassidy
Castor (FL)
Chaffetz
Cleaver
Clyburn
Coble
Cole
Collins (NY)
Conaway
Costa
Cramer
Crawford
Crenshaw
Cuellar
Culberson
Daines
Davis (CA)
Davis, Rodney
Delaney
DelBene
Denham
Dent
Diaz-Balart
Dingell
Duckworth
Duffy
Ellmers
Enyart
Farenthold
Farr
Fincher
Fitzpatrick
Flores
Forbes
Foster
Frankel (FL)
Fudge
Gabbard
Gallego
Garamendi
Garcia
Gardner
Gerlach
Gibbs
Gibson
Goodlatte
Granger
Graves (MO)
Griffin (AR)
Griffith (VA)
Grimm
Guthrie
Hall
Hanabusa
Hanna
Harper
Hartzler
Hastings (FL)
Hastings (WA)
Heck (NV)
Heck (WA)
Herrera Beutler
Hinojosa
Horsford
Hoyer
Hudson
Huffman
Huizenga (MI)
Hultgren
Hurt
Issa
Johnson (GA)
Johnson (OH)
Johnson, E. B.
Johnson, Sam
Joyce
Kaptur
Kelly (IL)
Kelly (PA)
Kildee
Kilmer
King (IA)
King (NY)
Kingston
Kinzinger (IL)
Kirkpatrick
Kline
Kuster
Labrador
LaMalfa
Larsen (WA)
Latham
Latta
Lipinski
Loebsack
Long
Lucas
Luetkemeyer
Lujan Grisham (NM)
Luján, Ben Ray (NM)
Lummis
Maffei
Maloney, Sean
Marchant
Marino
Massie
Matsui
McAllister
McCarthy (CA)
McCaul
McCollum
McHenry
McIntyre
McKeon
McKinley
McMorris Rodgers
McNerney
Meadows
Meehan
Messer
Michaud
Miller (MI)
Mullin
Murphy (FL)
Murphy (PA)
Negrete McLeod
Neugebauer
Noem
Nolan
Nugent
Nunes
Nunnelee
Olson
Owens
Palazzo
Paulsen
Pearce
Pelosi
Perlmutter
Peters (MI)
Peterson
Petri
Poe (TX)
Price (NC)
Rahall
Reed
Reichert
Renacci
Ribble
Rice (SC)
Richmond
Rigell
Roby
Roe (TN)
Rogers (AL)
Rogers (KY)
Rogers (MI)
Rokita
Rooney
Ros-Lehtinen
Roskam
Ross
Runyan
Ryan (WI)
Schneider
Schock
Schrader
Schwartz
Scott (VA)
Scott, Austin
Scott, David
Sessions
Sewell (AL)
Shea-Porter
Sherman
Shimkus
Shuster
Simpson
Sinema
Sires
Smith (MO)
Smith (NE)
Smith (NJ)
Smith (TX)
Southerland
Stewart
Stivers
Terry
Thompson (CA)
Thompson (MS)
Thompson (PA)
Thornberry
Tiberi
Tonko
Turner
Upton
Valadao
Vela
Wagner
Walberg
Walden
Walorski
Walz
Wasserman Schultz
Webster (FL)
Welch
Whitfield
Wilson (SC)
Wittman
Wolf
Womack
Woodall
Yoho
Young (AK)
Young (IN)

NAYS—166

Amash
Andrews
Bachmann
Bass
Becerra
Bentivolio
Blackburn
Blumenauer
Brady (PA)
Bridenstine
Broun (GA)
Burgess
Capuano
Cárdenas
Cartwright
Castro (TX)
Chabot
Chu
Cicilline
Clark (MA)
Clarke (NY)
Coffman
Cohen
Collins (GA)
Connolly
Conyers
Cook
Cooper
Cotton
Courtney
Crowley
Cummings
Davis, Danny
DeFazio
DeGette
DeLauro
DeSantis
DesJarlais
Deutch
Doggett
Duncan (SC)
Duncan (TN)
Ellison
Engel
Eshoo
Esty
Fattah
Fleischmann
Fleming
Fortenberry
Foxx
Franks (AZ)
Frelinghuysen
Garrett
Gingrey (GA)
Gohmert
Gosar
Gowdy
Graves (GA)
Grayson
Green, Al
Green, Gene
Grijalva
Gutiérrez
Hahn
Harris
Hensarling
Higgins
Himes
Holding
Holt
Honda
Huelskamp
Hunter
Israel
Jackson Lee
Jeffries
Jenkins
Jordan
Keating
Kennedy
Kind
Lamborn
Lance
Langevin
Lankford
Larson (CT)
Lee (CA)
Levin
Lewis
LoBiondo
Lofgren
Lowenthal
Lowey
Maloney, Carolyn
Matheson
McClintock
McDermott
McGovern
Meeks
Meng
Mica
Miller, Gary
Miller, George
Moore
Mulvaney
Nadler
Napolitano
Neal
O'Rourke
Pallone
Pascrell
Pastor (AZ)
Payne
Perry
Peters (CA)
Pingree (ME)
Pittenger
Pitts
Pocan
Polis
Pompeo
Posey
Price (GA)
Quigley
Rangel
Rohrabacher
Rothfus
Roybal-Allard
Royce
Ruiz
Ryan (OH)
Salmon
Sánchez, Linda T.
Sanchez, Loretta
Sanford
Sarbanes
Scalise
Schakowsky
Schiff
Schweikert
Sensenbrenner
Serrano
Slaughter
Smith (WA)
Speier
Stockman
Stutzman

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Swalwell (CA) | Vargas | Weber (TX) |
| Takano | Veasey | Wenstrup |
| Tierney | Velázquez | Williams |
| Titus | Visclosky | Wilson (FL) |
| Tsongas | Waters | Yarmuth |
| Van Hollen | Waxman | Yoder |

NOT VOTING—14

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Amodei | Jones | Ruppersberger |
| Campbell | Lynch | Rush |
| Clay | McCarthy (NY) | Tipton |
| Doyle | Miller (FL) | Westmoreland |
| Edwards | Moran | |

□ 1059

Messrs. HIGGINS, HUNTER, ISRAEL, and Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California changed their vote from ''yea'' to ''nay.''

Mr. HINOJOSA changed his vote from ''nay'' to ''yea.''

So the conference report was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, on rollcall No. 31, had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

Stated against:

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, due to being unavoidably detained, I missed the following rollcall vote: No. 31 on January 29, 2014.

If present, I would have voted: rollcall vote No. 31—H.R. 2642—Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013 Conference Report, On Passage, "nay."

Ms. EDWARDS. Mr. Speaker, due to attending a previously scheduled event with President Obama in the 4th Congressional District of Maryland, which I have the honor of representing in the House of Representatives, I was absent from votes in the House this morhing (Wednesday, January 29th) and missed rollcall vote 31. Had I been present, I would have voted "nay" on rollcall vote 31 (final passage of the Conference Report on H.R. 2642, the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act of 2013).

## THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the unfinished business is the question on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal, which the Chair will put de novo.

The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evans, one of his secretaries.

## APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO BRITISH-AMERICAN INTERPARLIAMENTARY GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCALLISTER). The Chair announces the Speaker's appointment, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276(1), and the order of the House of January 3, 2013, of the following Members on the part of the House to the British-American Interparliamentary Group:

Mr. MCINTYRE, North Carolina

Mr. DELANEY, Maryland

## GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the conference report to accompany H.R. 2642.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oklahoma?

There was no objection.

## ADJOURNMENT TO FRIDAY, JANUARY 31, 2014

Mr. LUCAS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that when the House adjourns today, it adjourn to meet at 3 p.m. on Friday, January 31, 2014; and when the House adjourns on that day, it adjourn to meet on Monday, February 3, 2014, when it shall convene at noon for morning-hour debate and 2 p.m. for legislative business.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Oklahoma?

There was no objection.

## REMOVAL OF NAME OF MEMBER AS COSPONSOR OF H.R. 1635

Ms. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that I be removed as a cosponsor of H.R. 1635, the National Commission on Federal Marijuana Policy Act of 2013.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

## HONORING THE SERVICE OF TRUDI TERRY, CHIEF CLERK OF DEBATES

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to rise today and extend my sincere thanks, on behalf of all of us, to a distinguished public servant, Chief Clerk of Debates Trudi Terry, that humble lady who sits behind us.

After 15 years of serving the United States House of Representatives and the American people, it is with sadness that we see such a fine and dedicated public servant retiring.

Trudi began her tenure in the House in 1999 as a transcriber in the Office of the Official Reporters. Her diligence and commitment to her duties saw her promoted to Chief Clerk of Debates in January of 2004.

Trudi's outstanding contribution to the smooth running of this institution over the past decade has been substantial, and her warm demeanor will be missed by all of us who work in this Chamber.

I will remember Trudi as a bubbly and energetic and warm personality who always went out of her way to help. I hope that Trudi enjoys the added time so she can now commit to her hobbies of attending the theater and bird-watching, much better than watching Members of the House.

So I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in thanking Trudi Terry for all that she has done for all of us in the House of Representatives, and to truly wish her the best in the years to come.

Congratulations, Trudi.

## HONORING THE SERVICE OF TRUDI TERRY, CHIEF CLERK OF DEBATES

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, what a joy it is to rise and join my colleague, Congresswoman ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, and to applaud the long career and the great contributions of a woman who has listened to countless speeches and addresses on this floor over the years, our House Chief Clerk of Debates, Trudi Terry.

She will soon retire, but she came to this House in 1999 as a transcriber, and she has served as Chief Clerk of Debates for the past decade. For 10 years, through early morning 1-minutes and midnight debates, she has sat on the dais behind this lectern, kept a record of all of our conversations and colloquies, and been of invaluable service to all of us in this body.

No matter how heated it got down here, Trudi has been helpful and patient and kind to each and every one of us.

She has lived an amazing life. Before coming to Washington, her experiences have run the gamut. Born in Amarillo, Texas; teacher in Alaska, New Mexico, Tennessee, and Virginia; an office manager in Honolulu; and a preschool director at Yokosuka Naval Base in Japan.

Trudi, we say thank you to you for your hard work, for your service, both here on the House floor and across this great Nation.

We congratulate you on your retirement. Many years of health and happiness, so that you can travel, take the photos, go to the theater, and, yes, bird-watch. Do the things that we kept you from doing while we debated and tried to legislate.

You will be missed, my friend. You will be missed. And if you miss us too, you can always find us on C–SPAN.

But get a life, Trudi, and enjoy it.

## THE FARM BILL CONFERENCE REPORT

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1