

flex but I see in a report off the wire that they now support a 2-year freedom to farm experiment and, here is the kicker, with dramatically reduced transition payments. I raise this point because there is simply no consensus alternative. There is, however, consensus in the agricultural community on this legislation and I believe it is time for us to join together to reflect that consensus.

Mr. President, we all share the goal of continuing to provide the safest, most abundant, and the most affordable supply of food and fiber in the world. I know there are some who may call this welfare. As farm State Senators know, we have argued until we are blue in the face that the current system is not welfare but people are not listening.

Farmers know it is not welfare and most Senators do not consider the existing program welfare, but try to pass that off on an editorial board or local chamber of commerce. You cannot argue that the reform program will be accused of welfare when the existing system is accused of welfare.

In my State, farmers are supportive. Over time, more and more of the commodity groups representing farmers have weighed in. Missouri's corn growers were in this week to request that freedom to farm be adopted and a continuation of current law be rejected. Farm Bureau is asking us to move this legislation. The underlying bill represents serious reform, it moves us in the right direction and is fiscally responsible. This is why it has been endorsed by: the U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Citizens Against Government Waste; representatives of the Heritage Foundation; Citizens for a Sound Economy; National Taxpayers Union, Americans for Tax Reform, Consumer Alert; the Cato Institute; and the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

I understand that change is not easy and I congratulate again the efforts of the majority leader, Chairman LUGAR, and the bipartisan negotiators who have been searching for a way to move this legislation forward and get farmers a program that moves them into the next century. I think the President will see that farmers and citizens will be best served if he adopts this legislation and I am hopeful that Congress can continue to work on sensible regulatory reform, capital gains and estate tax relief and other measures that will help our farmers compete in the next century. I urge adoption of the bipartisan compromise.

I urge my colleagues to invoke cloture. The farmers of America deserve better than to be filibustered into uncertainty for the rest of the spring. We need to move forward on this bill.

JOINT MEETING OF THE TWO HOUSES—ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now stand in recess and proceed to the House of Representatives for a joint meeting.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 11:27 a.m., recessed until 12:45 p.m., and the Senate, preceded by the Secretary of the Senate, Kelly D. Johnston; the Deputy Sergeant at Arms, Joyce McCluney; the Vice President of the United States; and the President pro tempore of the Senate, Mr. STROM THURMOND, proceeded to the Hall of the House of Representatives to hear the address by His Excellency Jacques Chirac, President of the French Republic.

(The address delivered by the President of the French Republic to the joint meeting of the two Houses of Congress is printed in the Proceedings of the House of Representatives in today's RECORD.)

Thereupon, at 12:45 p.m., the Senate reassembled and was called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. COATS).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Presiding Officer, in his capacity as a Senator from Indiana, suggests the absence of a quorum. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

AGRICULTURAL MARKET
TRANSITION ACT OF 1996

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, how many minutes are left on our side of the aisle on debate of the farm bill at this time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are 18 minutes 45 seconds remaining on the Republican side.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield myself 10 minutes. Before speaking, I ask unanimous consent that George Stickels, a fellow in my office, have access to the floor during the debate on the farm bill.

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

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the issue before us is one of the utmost importance, the farm bill. We have to debate this now because, as everybody knows, the commodity provisions of the new farm bill were part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1995. That Budget Act was vetoed by the President. The farm bill provisions went down with that. We did not have the votes to overturn the President's veto on the Balanced Budget Act.

Consequently, the farmers of America do not know for the first time in 5 years, since we passed the 1990 farm bill, what the Government policy is toward agriculture. This is necessary information that must be factored in to a lot of business decisions that are made by farmers.

The legislation that is before us will guarantee an investment of \$6 billion in rural America this crop year, an investment in rural America at a time when there is a tremendous transition from the agriculture of the last half of the 20th century to the more free market, international-trade-oriented agriculture of the 21st century. When this transition is going on, this is when we need to bring some certainty to the business decisions of agriculture as best we can.

There has been some fault found, particularly on the other side of the aisle, with the fact that we might be spending \$6 billion in rural America as an investment when grain prices are high, even though there is not a profit in cattle, there is not a profit in livestock generally, particularly cattle and pigs, but right now there is some profit in grain.

Some people have said on the floor of this body that we are giving welfare to farmers at a time when there are high prices. The inclination is to say that there is too much money in this farm bill for agriculture. I have heard some of those same Members say that they could not vote for farm bills in the past because they did not do enough for agriculture. How ironic that we have the same people today suggesting that we might be passing a farm bill that is too good for agriculture. It just does not add up.

Not only does it guarantee an investment in agriculture of about \$43.5 billion over the next 7 years in this transition from a Government-controlled agriculture to a free market agriculture, but it goes from an agriculture system inclined toward domestic production for domestic consumption to a farm program for production to meet the competition and the demand of international trade. There is no more important time to do that.

Also, this legislation locks in the agricultural baseline and guarantees an investment in rural America of this \$43 billion. It is important to have that baseline out there because this legislation, like most legislation, does not provide for a farm program beyond the sunset year of 2002.

There will be plenty of time for Congress to enact legislation beyond that period of time. But if we are not careful, what we do today will preclude agriculture having a baseline, and then when we come up with a farm program beyond the year 2002, it may be impossible to raise the money for that baseline.

This bill before us locks in that baseline, guarantees payments to farmers and for other programs such as conservation programs and export programs. It provides a real safety net by