

Well, the principal advocates for a Government takeover of health care are now telling us that it is simply unacceptable that they are going to use medical savings accounts, which is a new opportunity in the marketplace. The President and the Senator from Massachusetts have keyed in on that and said, no, that cannot be in the marketplace. They are so opposed to this concept that they are going to block everything, leave the uninsured uninsured, leave the person who cannot move from one job to another unable to do that, let the person sitting out here—I met one of them just last week—who cannot get insurance because of a preexisting condition. Too bad. Let the self-employed, who cannot deduct their cost for insurance—they cannot deduct it like somebody who works for a company—too bad, we do not like medical savings accounts, even though the vast number of Americans do. So we are going to block it all, we are going to filibuster this election of conferees to bring a reasonable health care solution to the country to the table. No, America, you cannot have it because the new leadership and Senator Dole on our side wants this new product called medical savings accounts. So if it cannot be their way, it will not be any way.

If you really want to get to the bottom line, I think that they would be just as fine to let it go, not let this come into place, so we can come back with a new match of Government proposal after the next election.

Mr. President, what do folks think about these medical savings accounts? Here is a quote: "Today I would like to appeal to President Clinton to please support the MSA issue. Nearly 3 years ago, we went to an MSA plan, and it has been very helpful to us."

Is this one of those rich people they talk about? No, it is Penny Blubaugh, secretary and part-time bus driver for the Danville, OH, local school district. She is asking the Senator from Massachusetts and the President to let this go through, saying that it has been helpful to her. She would like others to take advantage of it.

Here is another one: "An amendment to the health care package has been offered to add a medical savings account provision. The United Mine Workers have a similar provision in our current contract that is anticipated to produce a significant savings to our previous insurance." This is a quote from a letter to PAUL SIMON of Illinois from Dan Reitz, political director of United Mine Workers' State chapter in Illinois. That does not quite fit the picture of this so-called rich beneficiary.

"Mr. President, we believe MSA's will be a huge benefit to the American public. MSA's are not a partisan issue. Democrats supported MSA's in the 102d and 103d Congress, and we support them in this Congress because they are a good idea. That increases access, controls costs, and offers options." That is in a letter to President Clinton from

Democrat Congressmen BOB TORRICELLI and ANDY JACOBS of New Jersey and Indiana.

Well, the list goes on and on, Mr. President. They have talked about—the Senator from Massachusetts and the White House—that it only benefits the wealthy and the healthy. But in truth, regarding the experience of 2,000 companies with MSA's, a recent study by the Rand Corp. shows that MSA's appeal to those of all income levels and would attract those of all health conditions, including the chronically ill. In fact, I was at a press conference and a press interview, and one of the persons there supporting this had fought off what might have been a terminal illness. So it is just inappropriate to characterize this as just serving the wealthy and the healthy.

Mr. President, I see the hour of time which I control has expired. I will just close by saying I hope that the White House will implore the Senator from Massachusetts to allow us to proceed with the health care reform that helps bring insurance to small businesses, to small farmers, people looking for some relief, people who are looking for a friendlier work environment in order to obtain health insurance. The Senator from Massachusetts has it all bottled up. The Senator from Massachusetts has it all bottled up, and that means millions of Americans are bottled up. It is time to bring this to an end and let these reforms become part of the American workplace.

I yield the floor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. I wish the Chair a good morning, and my colleague from Georgia. I enjoyed his reflection on health care.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT TIMBER CONTRACT EXTENSION ACT OF 1996

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I am going to speak on another subject but it is equally important to my State, and that is the introduction by myself along with Senator STEVENS and Congressman YOUNG of a piece of legislation known as the Environmental Improvement Timber Contract Extension Act of 1996. I introduced the bill late yesterday, and I did not have an opportunity to speak on it.

This particular piece of legislation would provide for timber contract extension. The bill would extend for 15 years the long-term timber sale contract on the Tongass National Forest between the Forest Service and the Ketchikan Pulp Corp. which is a subsidiary of Louisiana Pacific. This extension would provide Ketchikan Pulp with a stable timber supply over a sufficient length of time to amortize the cost of a new environmentally improved pulp mill. Improvements and energy efficiency equipment would be

installed at a cost of somewhere between \$150 million and \$200 million.

It is interesting to reflect that when this mill was first built back in the mid-fifties the total cost of the mill was somewhere in the area of \$55 million. In any event, Ketchikan Pulp Corp.'s situation is extremely unique because all of its timber comes from the national forest. In my State of Alaska there is no State forest of any consequence in southeastern Alaska, and the only private timber that is available is owned by the Native regional corporations.

We also have a unique difference in that we have in the Tongass people who live in the forest in the towns of Ketchikan, Juneau, Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka, Haines, Skagway are all in the forest, and were in the forest before the forest was created. And the theory was when the Nation's largest national forest was created there would be sufficient timber set aside for the modest industry that was in existence. We have seen some changes in that policy.

So I am introducing this bill as a result of, first, the important role that Ketchikan Pulp plays in the social, economic, and environmental vitality of southeastern Alaska; two, the strong bipartisan support within our State for this action; three, the record from the two field hearings which I held last month in southeastern Alaska in Juneau and Ketchikan which overwhelmingly supports the introduction of this legislation; fourth, the realization that the performance of the Forest Service strongly indicates that without some congressional intervention the Ketchikan Pulp mill will not survive without an adequate supply of timber.

Let me elaborate on each of these factors because they are important.

Let me describe the nature of the southeast forest in the Tongass. Thirty percent of our timber is dead or dying. It is old growth, virgin timber. But as with any living thing there is a process of growing, maturing, and then the death of the trees begin. The theory of utilizing these trees which have reached their maturity and are in the process of dying is the forest process of evolution which is associated with timber development. So what we have is a product that is only suitable for wood fiber, and as a consequence there is a justification for the pulp mill. Without the pulp mill, the lumber mill would be less profitable and the pulp would have to be exported creating virtually no jobs in my State.

So let me share with you what the forest told us about the evolution and the importance of the contract with southeastern Alaska as of May 28 at the oversight hearing in Ketchikan:

The long-term contracts in Alaska which required the construction and operation of manufacturing facilities such as sawmills and pulp mills facilitated the establishment of a timber industry in Southeast Alaska.

Prior to the 1950's, economic conditions in Southeast Alaska were characterized as boom-bust. Federal government employment, mining and salmon processing were

the economic mainstays. After World War II, mining was essentially gone, leaving a small local timber industry and commercial fishing in the natural resources sector. Both the timber and commercial fishing industries were subject to market swings from year to year and were seasonal in terms of employment. The United States favored the expansion of the timber industry through several long-term timber sales on the Tongass National Forest to stabilize employment in Southeast Alaska.

Making the best use of the timber on the Tongass required having suitable markets for both high and low quality timber and species. The markets were largely export markets in the Pacific Rim and were somewhat limited by the need to use most of the timber for pulp. The Forest Service advocated the use of long-term sales to establish a pulp industry that would bring greater economic diversity to the region and more year-round employment. If successful, more service and trade establishments were expected to follow—creating greater tax bases, which would provide opportunities for improved services, such as schools, water, fire protection, and the like. For all of this to come together, however, the Forest Service had to guarantee a long-term, stable timber supply to attract outside capital investment.

I found this testimony compelling. Mr. President. The Forest Service witnesses recounted the decisions of their predecessors back at the time right after the war in the late 1940's. Farsighted people recognized the nature and the importance of the resource and planning for an environmentally and economically secure future. The Forest Service recognized that, as a sole owner of land and timber, it controlled the economic and environmental vitality of the region.

What is the situation today? Why has it changed? Today Ketchikan Pulp Corp.'s operations directly or indirectly provide about 25 percent of the total annual employment wages in Ketchikan. Ketchikan Pulp Corp.'s municipal real estate and sales tax generated about \$13.6 million in revenues in 1992.

More broadly, the southeastern Alaska timber industry is the dominant contributor to real estate development in Ketchikan. More than 25 percent of all the households are timber dependent, and the typical timber employee can purchase more than 90 percent of the existing housing units. Ketchikan Pulp comprises more than 50 percent of the total borough's industrial assessed valuation.

I might add, Mr. President, that this is the only year-round manufacturing plant in our State of Alaska. So its importance cannot be understated.

We have tourism and fishing that are also important to the economy. But we need all of our basic industries—timber, fishing, and tourism—in that part of the State to maintain the healthy economy in the region. Quite simply, without some stability of timber supply, the economies of the region generally, and Ketchikan specifically, are in trouble.

Perhaps that is why the proposal to extend the KPC contract has received broad, bipartisan support from elected

officials throughout the State. Earlier this year, the Alaska Senate voted 18 to 1 to support a resolution urging the Congress to extend the contract. The Alaska House voted 34 to 3 to support the same measure. These are extraordinary margins of support.

I will submit the resolution for the RECORD at this time, and ask it be printed in the RECORD.

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

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 40 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

Whereas, for the last 40 years, the timber industry operating on national forest land in Southeast Alaska has been the largest private employer in Southeast Alaska; and

Whereas the United States Forest Service strategy for creating permanent year-round employment through a timber industry in Southeast Alaska has been to offer long-term contracts to attract pulp mills to use, and add value to, low-grade and by-product materials from timber harvesting; these pulp mills serve as a market for pulp logs and chips from the sawmills in Southeast Alaska; and

Whereas pulp mills assure full utilization and protect forest health by using that significant portion of the Tongass National Forest that consists of dead, dying, and over-mature timber; and

Whereas, since passage of the Tongass Timber Reform Act of 1990 (TTRA), a pulp mill and a major sawmill have closed, and more than 40 percent of the timber industry has been lost due, in part, to the failure of the United States Forest Service to make available the approximately 420,000,000 board feet per year needed to meet the jobs protection promises made by those who sought passage of the TTRA, all of which has created severe social and economic harm to the timber industry, its workers, and timber-dependent communities in Southeast Alaska; and

Whereas another of the reasons for the closure of the Sitka pulp mill was the adverse economic impacts of unilateral changes to its long-term contract made by the TTRA, those unilateral changes also adversely impact the economics of the Ketchikan Pulp Company (KPC) contract; and

Whereas KPC, which obtained a long-term contract to help create year-round jobs in Southeast Alaska, is the sole remaining pulp mill in Alaska, a major employer in Southeast Alaska, and the market for pulp logs and chips from all the other sawmills in Southeast Alaska; and

Whereas the loss of the KPC pulp mill would lead to the loss of the entire industry now operating on the Tongass National Forest with devastating social and economic effects on families and communities throughout Southeast Alaska; and

Whereas KPC pulp mill faces an uncertain future, not of its own making, as a result of the continuing log shortage created by the failure of the United States Forest Service to meet its volume and requirements under KPC's contract and the TTRA, as a result of the adverse economic impacts to its long-term contract caused by the unilateral TTRA changes, and as a result of the requirement that more than \$155,000,000 in capital expenditures be made over the next few years to meet new and ever changing federal environmental standards and operating needs; and

Whereas, as a matter of economic common sense, KPC cannot make all the necessary expenditures without the federal government extending its contract for a sufficient period to amortize those expenditures, without an

adequate supply of timber, and without modifying those portions of the unilateral TTRA contract changes that have adversely impacted the contract's economics; and

Whereas the legislature finds that an additional 15 years is a minimum reasonable period to extend the KPC's timber sale contract to allow such amortization and to provide opportunities for value-added alternatives that maximize the number of jobs and assures environmentally sound operations; and

Whereas the legislature finds that sufficient timber must be made available to maintain the KPC contract, to provide 100,000,000 board feet for the contracts to small business, and to reopen the Wrangell facility and a by-product facility in Stika; be it

Resolved, That the Alaska State Legislature respectfully urges the Alaska delegation in Congress and the Governor to take all steps necessary, this year, to extend the Ketchikan Pulp Company long-term contract for an additional 15 years and modify those portions of the contract which the TTRA unilaterally impacted, because such an extension and modification are critical to the environmental, social, and economic well-being of the Tongass National Forest timber workers, their families, and timber-dependent communities in Southeast Alaska and because such an extension is in the public interest of the State of Alaska; and be it further.

Resolved, That the Tongass National Forest should be managed for a healthy and diversified economy for the benefit of all users, including value-added forest products, commercial and sport fishing, seafood processing, tourism, subsistence, sport hunting, and local businesses that provide goods and services; and be it further.

Resolved, That the Alaska State Legislature also respectfully urges the Alaska Congressional Delegation, the Governor, and the United States Forest Service to take action this year to assure that sufficient timber be made available as part of any revision of the Tongass Land-Use Management Plan to maintain the Ketchikan Pulp Company contract, to provide 100,000 board feet for small business contracts, and to reopen the Wrangell facility and a by-product facility in Sitka.

Copies of this resolution shall be sent to the Honorable Bill Clinton, President of the United States; the Honorable Daniel R. Glickman, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the Honorable Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior; the Honorable Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives; the Honorable Strom Thurmond, President Pro Tempore of the U.S. Senate; and to the honorable Ted Stevens and the Honorable Frank Murkowski, U.S. Senators and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the Alaska delegation in Congress.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Further, the Governor joined in, offering his support for congressional action to extend the contract. In a May 23 letter to me, Gov. Tony Knowles informed me that the State of Alaska supports a KPC contract extension, contingent on KPC's agreement with the following five principles: to protect the environment, Alaska jobs, and other forest users; and to utilize the Tongass Land Management Planning [TLMP] process and value-added processing techniques. I am pleased to say that these conditions have been agreed to by KPC and are included in the compromise legislation I

have introduced today. I will include the Governor's letter for the RECORD.

I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD as well.

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

STATE OF ALASKA,
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR,
Washington, DC, May 23, 1996.

Hon. FRANK MURKOWSKI,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR MURKOWSKI: On behalf of Governor Tony Knowles, I hereby submit, for the hearing record, the attached letter from the Governor to Mr. Mark Suwyn, Chairman of Louisiana-Pacific Corporation, concerning a possible contract extension for the Ketchikan Pulp Company (KPC).

As the attached letter indicates, the State of Alaska supports a KPC contract extension, contingent on KPC's agreement with the following five principles: to protect with environment, Alaska jobs, and other forest users; and to utilize the Tongass land Management Planning (TLMP) process and value-added processing techniques. The State's support for a contract extension, however, leaves for the federal public process to resolve the issues of volume, contract duration, and pricing structure.

With respect to the TLMP process, which we understand you are also having hearings on, the State continues to provide information and comments to the United States Forest Service in an effort to develop a management plan for the Tongass that is based on sound science, prudent management, and meaningful public participation.

In addition to this letter for the record, the State plans to be represented at the hearings by Veronica Slajer, of the Department of Commerce and Economic Development, who will be in attendance to listen to the testimony of the witnesses. As we informed your staff earlier, Ms. Slajer will not be testifying at the hearings, but the State is interested in learning about what others think about these issues so that the State can incorporate these thoughts in the formulation of State policy.

Thank you for considering the State's views.

Sincerely,

JOHN W. KATZ,
Director of State/Federal Relations and
Special Counsel to the Governor.

Mr. MURKOWSKI. After receiving these views from the legislature and the Governor, I scheduled two oversight hearings on May 28 and May 29 in Ketchikan and Juneau, respectively. What I heard at these hearings was overwhelming support for the legislature's resolution, the Governor's action, and the extension of the KPC contract. I heard from tourism interests, bankers, and fishermen who supported the contract extension. While not unanimous, the preponderance of testimony offered over the 2 days—and I might add there were demonstrators who marched in Ketchikan, as well as in Juneau. Most of them, I am pleased to say, wanted to extend the contract—a larger portion, of course, in Ketchikan. These people recognize that there is no alternative source of timber available.

Last, I am introducing this legislation today because I have finally lost confidence in the ability of the Forest Service to provide a stable and sustain-

able supply of timber for southeast Alaska. Over the past few years, the agency has fallen further and further behind in keeping a working timber sale pipeline. This problem has worsened despite the efforts of Senator STEVENS to provide the agency with additional funding for timber sale preparation. Consequently, more than half of the operating mills in southeast Alaska have closed their doors during the last few years during this administration's watch. KPC is the last remaining pulp mill in the State. We only have the one.

This situation is absolutely critical. The Tongass is our Nation's largest national forest. Yet the level of economic activity associated with the production of forest products is very small, and sinking. We have only one pulpmill and a few scattered sawmills left. Employment in the industry has fallen 40 percent since 1990. New Yorkers burn more wood in their fireplaces and stoves than we harvest in southeast Alaska each year. Yet we have the largest of all our national forests.

In its May 28 testimony, the Forest Service acknowledged that the contract with Ketchikan Pulp Co. [KPC] has played an important role in the development of Alaska's resources in southeast. Given this admission, one would think that the Forest Service would want to see the mill stay. One would expect the Forest Service to weigh in in favor of a contract extension. But not so.

In very disappointing testimony, the agency maintained that the terms of the existing contract provide that all obligations and requirements of the long-term contract must be satisfied on or before June 30, 2004. In response to questions about any future obligations past that date, the agency insisted that it has none—none. This testimony was offered even though the preamble to the contract discusses a commitment to a permanent economic base.

On the question of whether Congress should extend the contract, the Forest Service testified that a long-term commitment of resources through a timber contract could further affect the flexibility of management on the Tongass—I do not know what that means, but I have an idea—and, further, that we are committed to completing the revision of the Tongass land management plan before we begin any discussion of future long-term commitments to timber related industries in Southeast. Yet in response to questions, the agency witnesses could not tell me: First, whether such commitments could be made within the latitude provided by the range of alternatives in the draft TLMP; second, whether additional National Environmental Policy Act analysis would be required; or third, whether such commitments would actually be precluded by the selected alternative of the final plan. The testimony was extremely unsettling. It convinced me that either the Forest Service and/

or the administration would like to see the KPC mill go away.

They have apparently no interest in seeing KPC invest \$200 million to pioneer chlorine-free manufacturing technology that could benefit environmental control efforts nationwide. I think this is also tragic.

Mr. President, the simple facts are that without the contract extension KPC will be unable to amortize the required capital investments for environmental improvements, and it will go away. The company's new CEO also testified on May 28. He was refreshingly, if not reassuringly, frank. He said:

In the very near future, we have to decide whether to continue the large investments required to make KPC viable or whether the losses currently being inflicted by the inappropriate implementation of the contract can be carried any longer. Now, we are going to make that decision relatively soon. This is not an issue for the year 2003. This is a 1996 issue and decision.

We will make that decision, first of all, based on just to keep running today we must have the Forest Service meet the intent of the long-term bilateral contract, including the volume and pricing provisions. And, then, secondly, to continue to invest at the rapid rate that we are right now, millions of dollars per quarter, this revised version of the long-term contract must be extended a minimum of 15 years at an offering level of 192 million board feet per year.

The people of KPC and the thousands of people who have worked with us have met its—its contractual obligations to develop the economy and provide permanent, year-round employment for Southeast Alaska. We want the government to meet its contractual obligation to provide a sufficient volume of economically viable timber in a timely fashion.

Some in southeast Alaska suggest that the region does not need the KPC pulpmill to have a successful and sustainable timber industry. What is needed, in their opinion, is to eliminate the monopoly contract and develop more small, value-added manufacturing facilities.

This is wishful thinking. The independent mill witnesses at our hearings indicated that the lack of a stable timber supply will preclude any additional investments in southeast Alaska. The manufacture of pulp is a higher value added process than any of the alternatives suggested by opponents of the pulpmill. The loss of the pulpmill will destabilize the industry and the infrastructure of the region, and have a chilling effect on future industry investments. Available capital will migrate to other regions.

Mr. President, I cannot stand idly by and watch the town of Ketchikan die. I will not. I have introduced and ask respectful consideration of, the Environmental Improvement Timber Contract Extension Act. A copy of the bill and a section-by-section analysis was included.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico, under a previous order, has a period of 15 minutes under his control.

The Chair recognizes the Senator from New Mexico.

USE THE DISASTER RESERVE OF GRAIN

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I will try to talk for a few minutes here to alert my colleague and anybody watching about the importance of a Senate resolution which I submitted, along with Senators DASCHLE and DOMENICI and PRESSLER and LEAHY. That is Senate Resolution 259. It was agreed to by unanimous consent. I call on the Secretary of Agriculture to give that resolution very serious consideration.

The resolution simply states that it is the sense of the Senate that the Secretary of Agriculture should use the disaster reserve of grain, which is under his authority, to alleviate the distress of livestock producers. This should be done in the most efficient manner practicable, including cash payments from the sale of commodities that are in the disaster reserve.

The disaster reserve currently has about 44 million bushels of grain. The Secretary of Agriculture has two choices, essentially, as to how to proceed in compliance with the resolution. He can transport the grain from the Midwest, where it is currently stored, to the southwest, where that grain is needed.

Of course, this kind of an option would be time consuming; it would be inefficient. The other alternative, and that is what we urge in our resolution, is that he could sell the grain on the open market and use the proceeds from the sale as cash payments to livestock producers who are in the most distress. This action would provide significant relief to ranchers in New Mexico and in many other States.

Mr. President, the resolution I have referred to represents one of several efforts that we have made to provide immediate assistance to livestock producers. Those in the livestock industry cannot wait for the normal period that it takes to pass legislation in this Congress.

Many people have had to sell their cattle because they could not afford to feed those cattle. To bring a calf to market today, to get it up to the weight where you can bring it to market, a rancher is required to spend about \$350 on grain. Under the present circumstances, he could be expected to sell that calf for \$200 or less. That, of course, does not make sense. Many ranchers have had to sell their entire herds now, at this point, when the price of cattle is at a near all-time low.

A rancher from Quay County in my State on the east side of New Mexico reported that semis loaded with cattle have had to wait up to 18 hours to be unloaded at the slaughterhouse in Herford, TX. The cattle that remain on the range are in poor health.

Twenty-two of the thirty-three New Mexico counties have been declared disaster drought areas. Farmers in

these counties, in many cases, have had to plow their fields into large clods to keep the wind from blowing precious topsoil away.

Without question, the current hardships affect the entire community. In certain areas of New Mexico, banks are having to let ranchers and farmers pay only interest on their loans.

This drought has also started an early fire season with very devastating results in my State. As of May 5, fires had burned 162,000 acres of Federal land in the two States of Arizona and New Mexico. This figure is twice the area burned in the entire year of 1995. As a result, in our State, fireworks have been banned statewide.

Part of my State did receive rain in the last 2 days. However, as welcome as that rain is, it is clearly not enough. We have talked to various extension offices around New Mexico, and the indications are that the amount of rain received was very sparse and widely distributed. In Chaves County, the extension office indicated that they received one-tenth of an inch of rain in areas that are usually farmed, and even less than that in grazing areas.

The normal rainfall from January until the present time is about 2 inches. In Eddy County, in the southeast part of our State, they reported they had a few drops of rain a few days ago. Roosevelt County, on the east side of New Mexico, had one-half inch in the town of Portales, but less out in the county. Lincoln County indicated that there was some rain in Carrizozo, none out in the rest of the county.

Mr. President, let me show a chart which I think makes the case much better than a description by me could make. This is the Palmer drought index, which is the primary way in which people in the weather predicting business and weather analysis business determine the extent of the drought that is being experienced.

This is a map as of May 25 of this year. It is the most recent map. Though the map was made on June 4, it is valid for the period up through May 25.

This shows that the blue, or turquoise areas on the map are those which are considered moist, by normal standards.

The yellow areas—and you can see much of the Northeast is having a moist season so far this year—the yellow areas are normal.

The tan areas are moderate.

The reddish areas are severe drought. And then the purple areas are listed as extreme drought.

You can see the very large area throughout the Southwest that is listed as experiencing extreme drought conditions under this map. Most of my State, most of Arizona, much of California, much of Nevada are listed in extreme drought conditions. Mr. President, this is not a modest problem; it is a very serious problem for the State.

We have seen some measures taken to deal with this hardship, but they are

not enough. The President has announced some actions, but I believe we must pursue all avenues available. For this reason, I continue to encourage the Senate to take up and to pass a bill that I introduced on May 13, S. 1743, the Temporary Emergency Livestock Feed Assistance Act of 1996. We requested the Secretary of Agriculture to give us his comments on that bill, and I have a letter from him, which I ask unanimous consent be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, let me read two or three sentences from that. The Secretary of Agriculture, in this letter dated the 12th of June, says:

The Department of Agriculture supports the concept and intent of the proposed legislation as a means to provide some form of assistance to livestock producers who cannot receive assistance under either crop insurance or the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, as the administration proposed in legislation submitted to Congress last year in formulating the 1996 farm bill.

He goes on to say:

The extension proposed in S. 1743 could be operated through the current LFP policy and procedure with very limited changes. Therefore, if the legislation were enacted, it could be implemented in a very short timeframe.

Under the bill, Mr. President, the producers who have suffered at least a 40-percent loss of feed production would be able to apply for assistance through their local farm service agency. The livestock eligible would be cattle, sheep and goats.

The old program was funded through the Commodity Credit Corporation. This bill changes that funding mechanism. S. 1743 targets \$18 million from the Cottonseed and Sunflower Seed Oil Export Assistance Program. If market conditions remain the same, we are informed that these funds will go unspent this year unless we use them for the purpose that we have designated in S. 1743.

Mr. President, we now have 16 cosponsors for this legislation. It is a very impressive bipartisan group of cosponsors: Senators DASCHLE, DOMENICI, BAUCUS, GRAMM, DORGAN, GRASSLEY, EXON, HATCH, HARKIN, INHOFE, JOHNSTON, KYL, FEINSTEIN, PRESSLER, HUTCHISON, and KASSEBAUM are all cosponsors of the legislation with me. I urge other Senators to join us in this legislation.

This bipartisan bill will give immediate relief to the livestock industry. I know there are some in this body who hesitate to resurrect a program that was eliminated in the recently enacted farm bill, but let me point out that S. 1743 addresses many of the reasons that the program was eliminated and corrects the problems.

Several provisions have been placed into the bill to guard against some of the abuses that had been pointed out in the program previously. For example, a rancher must have owned or leased the livestock covered in our proposed legislation for at least 180 days. If the