STATEMENT ON CRP FOR THE RECORD

HON. RICK HILL
OF MONTANA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, March 20, 1997

Mr. HILL. Mr. Speaker, I'm increasingly concerned about the timing of USDA's signup putting cropland into the national Conservation Reserve Program. From the information I receive, Montana farmers and ranchers would like to postpone the CRP signup for 1 year.

Language in the farm bill directed USDA to issue CRP rules 3 months after enactment. The deadline was missed by several months and the lateness of the current signup has led to much uncertainty in Montana. Montana growers who want to bid land into CRP are told by USDA they will not know whether they've accepted until June or July.

Farmers need certainty. They need to know: should they prepare land for planting wheat or grass for establishing a cover suitable for long-term enrollment in the program. If they aren't CRP-accepted, they're caught between nature's seasons and USDA's process. We can't change nature, but we can change the rules to help not hinder their futures.

My friends and neighbors are not the only ones confused about this delayed signup. I am informed that even local officials running the program are unclear about some of the new rules. None of this bodes well for farmers who need to make decisions about the future use of their lands.

Worse still, under the new CRP rules some of the most environmentally sensitive land for CRP is likely to receive a bid so low that farmers may decide to put those lands into crops, turning the program and its purpose upside down.

Mr. Speaker, I support the CRP program and so do Montanans who currently have over 2.85 million acres in CRP. It's voluntary and incentive-based. It's a good program for keeping marginal crop land in grass to prevent soil erosion and provide wildlife habitat.

However, I do not want my farmers to agonize over doing the right thing. I applaud USDA for their hard work, but the framework for decision is too short and it occurs too late in the farming season. It is also not well understood and has led to much uncertainty.

Mr. Speaker, I call on USDA to work with Congress. Take the time and energy required to look at this situation and do the right thing. Postpone the new CRP 1 year, so farmers can make plans for next spring. We can do better and we should.

DR. ERNEST S. GRIFFITH
HON. WILLIAM M. THOMAS
OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Thursday, March 20, 1997

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the late Dr. Ernest S. Griffith, who passed away at the age of 100 on January 17, 1997. Dr. Griffith served the Congress faithfully for 18 years as Director of the Legislative Reference Service, now the Congressional Research Service.

Considered by many to be the father of the Legislative Reference Service, Dr. Griffith transformed a fledgling agency into a vital source of expert information and analysis for Members of Congress and their staffs. When he came to the LRS in 1940, Dr. Griffith had a staff of 40 to handle some 25,000 requests per year. Resources within the legislative branch were scarce, and the Congress depended largely on the executive branch and special interests for its information.

By the time Dr. Griffith left the LRS in 1958, his staff had grown to 200, and the number of congressional requests received per year had tripled. The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 had expanded the LRS's mission and given it a permanent statutory basis for the first time in its history. Experts had been recruited from all manner of disciplines to provide the legislative branch with its own pool of knowledge and information. For the first time, the Congress had available to it a select group of experts who were both knowledgeable and nonpartisan, and who could be trusted and called on at any time for help. If ever a man left his mark, Ernest Griffith left his indelibly on the Legislative Reference Service.

Prior to 1940, Dr. Griffith's career was largely in university teaching and administration. After receiving his A.B. degree from Hamilton College, he was appointed a Rhodes scholar and received a Ph.D. from Oxford University. While at Oxford, he was the warden of Liverpool Settlement. He taught economics at Princeton and government at Harvard, and was the undergraduate dean at Syracuse University before moving to Washington in 1935.

In 1935, Dr. Griffith served as dean of American University's graduate school, where he also taught political science. He returned to American University in 1958 as the founding dean of the School of International Service. Dr. Griffith was a Fulbright visiting professor at Oxford and a lecturer at New York, Birmingham, and Manchester Universities, Swarthmore College, the University of Oslo, and the University College of Swansea.

After retiring from American University in 1965, Dr. Griffith was visiting professor at the International Christian University and Rykyo University in Japan, and lectured on American government in Turkey and Brazil. He was professor of American government at Alice Lloyd College in Kentucky in his middle eighties.

A prolific writer, Dr. Griffith authored numerous articles and books about the Congress, the Presidency, and the history of American city government. His book, "The American System of Government," was translated into more than 25 languages.

Between lectures and his duties as Director of the Legislative Reference Service, Dr. Griffith devoted himself to serving and improving the world around him. He was a founder of the Pioneers, a forerunner of the Cub Scouts, chairman of the board of an interuniversity training center for Peace Corps volunteers, and chairman of the Council of Social Agencies, a predecessor of the United Way. He taught Sunday school, served as a delegate to the Third World Council of Churches, and was treasurer of the Wilderness Society. He was also vice-president of the American Political Science Association and president of the National Academy of Economics and Political Science.

Mr. Speaker, Ernest Griffith was a man of intense passion and boundless energy, who dedicated his life to serving the public good. This is his legacy to us, and this is the legacy we honor here today. To his children, Margo, Alison, Lawrence, and Stephen, his grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, I extend our deepest sympathies.