a unanimous consent request to roll votes tomorrow.

Let me simply say that at this point I am not at liberty to accede to that request. I would urge the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN] to withdraw the request, and perhaps we will be in a position tomorrow when we convene to accede to that request. Right now I have a number of problems on my side of the aisle that will prevent us from agreeing to it at this time.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. OBEY. I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that, and I am in total sympathy with it, but I think at least we can do the colloquies tonight and get those out of the way so that we can get to the substance matter. If the gentleman from Wisconsin would agree to that, I will appreciate it.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, I do not understand what the gentleman is suggesting there.

Mr. SKEEN. If the gentleman would continue to yield, Mr. Speaker, we will withdraw that unanimous-consent request, and do general debate, and end it there then.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, perhaps we will be able to agree to the request tomorrow.

□ 2000

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill (H.R. 2160) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, and that I may include tabular and extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HASTINGS of Washington). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Mexico?

There was no objection.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1998

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2160) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes; and pending that, I ask unanimous consent that the general debate be limited to not to exceed 1 hour, the time to be equally divided and controlled by the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] and myself.

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

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Mexico.

The motion was agreed to.

□ 2000

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 2160), with Mr. LINDER in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

By unanimous consent, the bill was considered as having been read the first time.

The CHAIRMAN. Under the unanimous-consent agreement, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN] and the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN].

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise to offer the fiscal year 1998 appropriations bill for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and related agencies. The bill totals $13,651,000,000 in discretionary spending and $39,796,855,000 in mandatory spending for a total of $49,447,051,000. This bill meets both the discretionary allocation of $13,650,196,000 and its outlay allocation of $13,967,000,000.

Mr. Chairman, this bill is the result of 13 days of hearings from mid-February through mid-March. The subcommittee took testimony from 252 witnesses, including 20 Members of Congress. We marked it up in subcommittee on June 25 and in full committee on July 9.

While our allocation was larger than last year, this bill spends about $424 million less than the administration requested. There are only a few significant increases in the bill: WIC, rural water and housing, FDA, and meat and poultry inspection. Most of the programs are reduced or frozen at the 1997 level.

This is a good bill and a responsible bill. I want to remind all my colleagues that this legislation pays for critical programs that benefit us and every one of our constituents every day of their lives, no matter what part of this great country they live in. At the same time, it spends carefully and fulfills our obligation to move towards a balanced budget.

Mr. Chairman I want to express my appreciation to the committee members and the staff, and particularly to the gentlewoman who is the ranking member, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR], who has been a great help to me. We have a great team going, I think, on this particular bill.

We have our differences once in a while, but they are mild compared to some we have heard in the earlier testimony before from this chair. So I want to thank all those folks who make this thing a reality, and for the hard work they do and the tremendous amount of time they put in.

Mr. Chairman, this bill represents a lot of hard work and contribution by both the Democratic and Republican Members. I believe it deserves strong support from both sides of the aisle. I have not asked for a rule on this bill because I want my colleagues to have a chance to discuss and debate any issues which they believe are important.

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise this evening to commend our chair, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN], an outstanding Member of this House to work with; all of the members of our subcommittee and the committee staff, for their wonderful leadership in putting together a solid bill. It will help keep our Nation at the leading edge for food, fiber, fuel, and forest production, as well as research, trade, and food and drug safety.

There is no question that agriculture is America's lead industry. Our farmers and our agricultural industries remain the most productive in the world, and they well understand, as we do, how difficult it is to maintain our Nation's commitment to excellence in agriculture in tight budgetary times.

Our bill appropriates $3.7 billion or 7 percent less than last year's budget, and $2.8 billion less or 5 percent less than the amount requested by the administration. Over two-thirds of the bill's spending is dedicated to mandatory programs, largely nutrition programs like the school breakfast and lunch programs and the Food Stamp Program, which comprise nearly 70 percent of the funding in this bill.

The committee provided $35.8 billion in mandatory programs, which is a decrease of $4.3 billion below the amount available for fiscal year 1997, and $2.4 billion below the budget request.

The bill includes a total of $13.65 billion for discretionary programs, which is $599 million more than the amount appropriated in the last fiscal year, and $424 million less than the budget request.

Mr. Chairman, those who serve farmers and work with agriculture are taught over and over again that there is a big difference between money and wealth. Our job on this Committee on Agriculture is to help create the wealth of America through the investments that we make in food, fiber, fuel, and forestry, all essential components of production agriculture.

Market-oriented farm policy means farming for the market, not the Government, and requires investments in research, some of it high risk, in conservation, in sustainability, in education and technology transfer, which will keep agriculture competitive as we move into the new century.

Overall, the bill represents a fair, bipartisan approach. The committee did face tough choices, given our spending constraints. There are no funds in this bill for any Member for university facilities. Our committee turned down over a dozen requests for university research facilities. Further, we were only able to fund $50 million of over $200 million in requests for agricultural research.

I am not proud of the fact that we can only provide $50 million. That is only a quarter of what we were asked to provide, but that is the reality in today's world. Facing tight budget constraints, we did our best to shift research needs to priority areas. But in every case where a priority program received additional funding, some other budget function had to be cut.

Farm ownership and operating loans sustained a major cut in this bill, and were reduced $229 million below FY 1997 levels. This will have an impact. APHIS, the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service budget, was reduced by approximately 4 percent, at a time when we are experiencing increasing problems with inspection at our ports of entry.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation operations programs, the primary source of technical assistance to producers and landowners, was cut by $10 million over last year's level, and more than $112 million below the President's budget request.

With the increasing public concern about food safety, I am pleased with the increase we were able to include for the food safety initiative under both the USDA and the Food and Drug Administration, as well as the Youth Tobacco Prevention initiative proposed under the FDA.

It is also noteworthy that this bill includes, after great compromise on the committee and struggle, an $118 million increase for the women, infants, and children feeding program, which will allow the program to maintain its current participation level of 7.4 million participants.

This bill also includes an $800,000 increase to upgrade investigative activities of the Grain Inspectors' Inspection Packers and Stockyards Administration regarding concentration in those industries. This increase is critical for monitoring and analyzing anticompetitive practices in the meatpacking industry, where now three huge firms control 80 percent of the meat that consumers in this country purchase.

Mr. Chairman, I continue to have serious reservations about some amendments which were adopted in full committee, and hope that these issues can be resolved during this floor debate. For example, our subcommittee, after considerable debate, provided $152 million for sales commissions to private crop insurance agents, as requested by the administration. However, at the full committee level, the chairman's en bloc amendment included a further increase of $36 million. There are many other programs that are of higher priority in this bill than underwriting private insurance agents, particularly in light of the April GAO report on abuses discovered in the crop insurance program.

In its report, GAO stated that expenses reimbursed with taxpayer funds appeared excessive, and I underline ''excessive,'' or did not appear to be reasonably associated with the sales and service of Federal crop insurance. These include, and I quote from the report, agent's commissions that exceeded the industry average, unnecessary travel-related expenses, questionable entertainment activities like skyboxes, expenses associated with acquiring competitors' businesses, profit-sharing bonuses, and lobbying.

GAO suggested that future reimbursement rates could be reduced. Consequently, the U.S. Department of Agriculture indicated to our committee that $152 million would be sufficient funding for this program for fiscal year 1998, and that these funds would provide assurance that valuable crop insurance products would be delivered by private crop insurance companies and their agents.

I strongly support the crop insurance program as a continuing safety net for our Nation's producers, but certainly a 24.5 percent level of commission, 24.5 percent, should be sufficient to encourage private companies to provide this service. Some might say it may even be too generous. Providing an additional $36 million increase to raise those commissions from 24.5 percent to about 27 percent of the value of the insurance policy is simply not the highest priority use of this subcommittee's limited funding.

I also remain concerned about some of the reductions proposed for salary accounts in the Department of Agriculture, particularly reductions in the Farm Service Agency, and the potential for disruption of the delivery of programs and services to farmers at the local level.

I strongly oppose the amendment adopted in full committee that would eliminate the salaries for the deputy and assistant deputy administrator of the Farm Services Agency. While we realize that the farmers and landowners in one State, Washington State, are very disappointed with the results of the 15th consecutive conservation reserve program sign-up, we strongly oppose this punitive and misguided attempt to effect a change through micromanagement of a Federal agency.

There remains in this bill, language adopted in full committee which seems to give special preference and consideration to one university building under the CSREES buildings and facilities account. With limited Federal funding available for priority programs, this subcommittee agreed in fiscal year 1997 that it would end the practice of building academic research facilities for universities.

While we followed this approach in subcommittee markup and provided no funding in this account, the language adopted in the full committee markup subverts an established process and I think compromises us at the conference committee level. It appears to give preference to one university while disallowing other priority proposals from consideration.

The full committee also adopted an amendment that authorizes on this appropriations bill by changing the designation of a community in California from a rural to an urban community. I have extremely strong reservations about the intent of this language, since no hearings were held on the subject. I underline, no hearings were held on the subject. It sets a very bad precedent, including unintended consequences that we may not fully appreciate. This language should be stripped from the bill.

Traditional farm programs continue to receive a decreasing portion of Federal support, and in my view, we should target our scarce agricultural dollars to smaller family farmers to assure competition in our industry now dominated by megagiants. I opposed last year's farm bill because I do not believe that it did enough to insure against undue risk to family farmers and to provide them with a safety net when times turn bad. While the farm bill made progress by enacting a $40,000 payment limitation, I remain concerned that large corporate farmers can still have undue call on Federal payments.

In recent decades, America has slowly eroded the historic basis of American agriculture, the family farmer, and is moving in the direction of giant corporate farms. We must address the increased concentration in agricultural markets that is squeezing family farmers out of business.

In the final analysis, a concentrated production system risks price manipulation and lack of competition. Commodity prices must be maintained at a level high enough to compensate for the costs of production, and to maintain standards of living in order to attract and retain farmers and farm production.

On the international front, we must also negotiate reciprocal trade agreements which encourage and enhance the ability of our farmers to compete in world markets.

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On agricultural trade, we must work harder to recapture lost markets and increase exports. As American agricultural exports grow, foreign agricultural imports to our country are being shipped in greater magnitude.

Since 1981, our agricultural exports have exhibited a rather roller coaster ride, first declining from $43.8 billion to a low of $26 billion in 1986, and then rising to a record high of $60 billion in 1996, but at the same time agricultural imports have increased from $10.8 billion to approximately $30 billion in 1996, now equaling half of our exports.

In many cases, these products our own farmers could be producing and marketing.

In closing, I want to express my appreciation to the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN] for putting together the best bill we could under current fiscal circumstances. Let me remind our colleagues in closing that the agriculture portion of Federal spending has taken more than its share of budget cuts in these past several years. Overall spending on programs in our committee's jurisdiction has declined from $70.8 billion in fiscal year 1994 to $49.45 billion in fiscal year 1998 projected.

Employment at USDA has declined by approximately 13,000 since 1993. County-based office staffing has been reduced by 13.7 percent since fiscal year 1993 and will be reduced further for a total cut of 40 percent by fiscal year 2002. I think our subcommittee has met the challenge to reduce Federal spending. I am not quite sure how much more we can do.

Mr. Chairman, I again thank the gentleman from New Mexico for his cooperation.

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

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW].

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Chairman, I rise for the purpose of entering into a colloquy with the distinguished subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN]. I am disappointed that the committee did not include funding for the Melaleuca Research and Quarantine Facility close to Fort Lauderdale, FL. The committee chose not to include funding although this project was authorized by Congress last year and specifically requested by the administration. Moreover, in previous years the committee has funded this project.

Mr. Chairman, this project is critical to the survival, the very survival of the Everglades. Therefore, I hope that you will work with me during the conference committee if the Senate chooses to fund this project.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SHAW. I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I want to tell the gentleman from Florida [Mr. SHAW] that I will certainly work with the gentleman from Florida during the conference on this bill. I regret that the subcommittee could not include funding for this project. It suffers from the fate of many worthwhile projects, as was mentioned by the ranking member. There is just not enough money to go around. However, I am sure that this project will be fully funded in time because of its great importance to the Everglades.

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY], our distinguished ranking member.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me the time.

First, I would like to simply say that I think that there are no two Members of the House who are more popular than the gentlewoman from Ohio and the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN]. I think everyone understands in these two individuals they have Members who want to work things out, they have Members who want to produce a bipartisan approach and who try to the best of their ability to accommodate the needs of this institution, the country and our individual Members.

I want to say that I expected to support this bill with a fair amount of enthusiasm in the early stages of consideration. But, unfortunately, in the full committee a number of amendments were adopted which will make that very difficult.

First of all, the gentlewoman has already mentioned the Crop Insurance Commission issue which was raised in full committee. The amount of funding put in the bill for that purpose now greatly exceeds that requested by the administration. I do not believe that that can be justified with so many other competing needs. I am for crop insurance, most definitely, but I am not for providing persons who sell it with a greater commission than they need in order to persuade people to buy what they ought to buy without any persuasion.

I would also say that the development in full committee which eliminated the assistant deputy administrator of FSA I find to be an unseemly personalization of differences between individual Members of the Congress and the agency, and I believe that just as it did when similar action was taken by previous chairs of this subcommittee, I think that in this instance it also brings disrepute on the Congress as an institution for acting in a manner that is that extreme. I think that that will have to be removed before it is accepted by the administration.

There are some other items as well. I would simply also take note that I do not know what exactly the number is, but I know the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is one of the very few women who have either served as Chair or ranking minority member of an appropriations subcommittee. There have been, as I understand it, two women who served as subcommittee Chairs and three who have served as ranking members. I want to congratulate the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] for ascending to that position.

Again, I express my appreciation for the way that the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN] tries to conduct affairs in this place.

I would also simply say that in general, at the proper time, I will be trying to insert in the RECORD a very interesting article from a newspaper in my home town called City Pages, which really traces the depths of despair which has developed on the part of many farmers in rural America because of the economic crunch that has beset them really for the past 20 years. In my view this bill cannot begin to address the damage that has been done to the social fabric of rural America and to the economic welfare of hard-working, struggling family farmers by what I consider to be inadequate and misguided farm policy over the past years, which unfortunately continues today.

I will be inserting that article in the RECORD despite its length because I think it is important, when people are looking at reasons for the tuning out of large segments of our population, when they are looking for reasons why so many people join these misguided militia groups around the country, I think it is important to understand that when people are economically pressed to the wall, that their reaction is sometimes irrational.

I would urge all Members, whether they are from urban or rural districts, to read it because it ought to teach us all a lesson.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. COLLINS].

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me the time. I rise to enter into a colloquy with the chairman.

Mr. Chairman, there is a proposed move by the USDA of an experiment station in Griffin, GA to another location. This station has been in place since 1949. Over the last few years, in fact the last 7 years, we have spent some $2.5 million in improvements, in new plant facilities there. The proposed site is nowhere near comparable to the existing site.

I am concerned, too, about the number of employees who would be affected by this move because these employees have been paid through another system, a university system, and would be ineligible for funds for moving to a new location.

I have inquired with USDA and have not received any response from my inquiry. My inquiry to the gentleman is for him to seek out why this move is being made, if it is logical, if it is sound fiscal policy and, if not, let us move in some way to restrict this move.

Mr. SKEEN. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. COLLINS. I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, yes, we will go hand-in-hand with the gentleman and see what the problem is and get some answers for the gentleman. That I pledge to the gentleman.

Mr. COLLINS. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Washington [Mr. NETHERCUTT].

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Chairman, I would like to engage the gentleman in a colloquy. I intend to clarify in this colloquy the intention of the subcommittee in its report language for this bill that, quote, ''The Committee believes that the funding provided to the Foreign Agricultural Service will enable the Foreign Market Development/Cooperator program to operate at the same level as fiscal year 1997.''

Is it the gentleman's understanding, Mr. Chairman, that the Foreign Agricultural Service is approving $32 million for approved foreign market development/cooperator program marketing plans in fiscal year 1998?

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. NETHERCUTT. I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I would tell the gentleman that the department intends to operate the FMD/cooperator program at a level of $32 million which includes new money and carryover funds. The bill provides sufficient funding for this. This is the meaning of the report language.

We have not earmarked this level because it is nearly a quarter of the budget of the Foreign Agricultural Service and USDA needs the flexibility, to change the FMD/cooperator budget to meet other needs which may arise during the fiscal year. On the other hand, the FMD/cooperator budget could go above the $32 billion level if USDA decides that is the best course.

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman very much.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. WALSH].

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

Mr. WALSH. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 2160 and its accompanying report that provides funding for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and related agencies for fiscal year 1998. I want to commend the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN], the subcommittee chairman, and the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR], the ranking member, for their leadership and fine work in crafting this difficult bill. I would also like to thank the subcommittee staff for their diligence and the long hours they spent putting the bill together.

The bill provides $49 billion for agricultural appropriations. This represents a reduction of $3.7 billion from last year's level. While discretionary spending in our bill has increased as a result of changes made to the food stamp and related nutrition programs, our subcommittee has had to make some very difficult choices as only a few of the programs in this bill are receiving increases over last year's level. The President's tobacco and food safety initiatives were largely funded in this bill, and the subcommittee has also provided $188 million for Federal crop insurance.

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We have funded the wetlands reserve program that will be increased by $45 million. We have also increased funding for the EQUIP Program. These are environmental measures within the U.S. Department of Agriculture budget that are very important to our conservation of soil. We have also provided $7.8 billion for child nutrition programs, such as school lunch and school breakfast and $25 billion for food stamps.

These are substantial commitments. Often the agriculture budget is considered an agricultural subsidy bill, but in fact it is not, it is the bill that provides the food and sustenance for most of our Nation's poor.

I thank our leadership for supporting these programs, for providing money for nutrition, and I would urge a strong bipartisan support for this bill.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. LAHOOD].

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I might enter into a colloquy about a particular research program.

As a part of the President's budget there was a proposal to stop many ongoing agricultural research projects. Many of these are very good research projects and have had long-term agricultural benefit. I appreciate very much the chairman and the ranking minority member in helping continue some of these projects.

There is one project I do want to ask about specifically. This project is known as the ''Genetic Engineering of Anaerobic Bacteria for Improved Rumen Function,'' research effort conducted at the Ag research lab in Peoria, IL. This project was not mentioned in the committee report, and I would ask the Chairman if he would assist me in ensuring that this project be included as a worthwhile project when the bill comes out of the committee on conference.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LAHOOD. I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I would be pleased to respond to the gentleman that he has my assurances that we will look after this project. The gentleman from Illinois has always worked with the committee and he asked to keep this project earlier in the year. It was just an oversight that it was not mentioned in the report, and we will do what we can to make sure ARS keeps this project alive.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO], an esteemed member of our subcommittee and full committee.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the ranking member, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR], for yielding me this time and for her hard and diligent work on the bill.

I also want to commend the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN] for listening to Members and for working hard to craft a good bill and for his work in bringing the bill to the floor today.

This bill does fund a number of important priorities, but I still have a number of concerns about it. I am particularly concerned about the prevalence of tobacco use amongst young people. I appreciate that the chairman worked with me and other members of the subcommittee to provide $24 million for the FDA initiative to block youth access to tobacco.

This is a good start toward the $34 million that was requested by the administration to stop kids from taking up smoking and becoming addicted. We need to bring that level up to $34 million. Three thousand youngsters start to smoke every day. One-third of them will die. We need to put an enforcement mechanism in place that curtails underage smoking.

I am also pleased that the bill provides funding for the President's food safety initiative, for the WIC Program, which provides essential nutrition assistance for pregnant women and young children, and for agricultural research.

I am dismayed, however, by a number of provisions and, in particular, by changes that were made at the full committee level. The full committee chose to recognize one specific construction project when, by agreement, numerous other worthy projects at sites around the country were left out of the bill and report. This is unfair to other members of the committee and to other Members of this House.

I am concerned that the full committee added funds above what the Secretary of Agriculture deemed sufficient for payments to crop insurance agents, even though the General Accounting Office has revealed that taxpayer dollars are being used for outrageous and unreasonable expenses, such as skyboxes at athletic events, country club membership fees, and corporate aircraft. We should not be providing extra dollars in this area.

The full committee could establish a dangerous precedent by its actions to eliminate two positions in the Department of Agriculture simply because a Member of the Congress is unhappy about the actions of an entirely different administrator.

While I do have a number of concerns, I again would like to thank the chairman and the ranking member for their efforts and express my thanks to the staff.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. LATHAM].

Mr. LATHAM. Mr. Chairman, first of all I want to thank the chairman, the gentleman from New Mexico, for yielding me this time and all his hard work; and the work of staff on the committee; as well as the ranking member, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] for the cooperation and help on this bill.

Mr. Chairman, I think some very important things are included in this; first of all, the sanctity of the contracts that we had last year. Last year I was on the authorizing committee and, as a farmer myself, I know how important it is to maintain those contracts to make sure that the farm bill, that really is going to help all farmers in the future, the sanctity of that farm bill stays intact.

That is extremely important as we go through a transition of Government controls in agriculture to a truly free-market agriculture based on exports on value added products. I am very pleased with that portion.

Also the portion about funding for crop insurance. While we did increase in the full committee somewhat the funding for crop insurance, it is still a decrease from the amount that was spent on crop insurance last year. But it does maintain a level of funding which is absolutely critical for agriculture, unless we want to go back to the days of disaster payments and coming to the Federal Government year after year for more and more money.

If we are going to finally have farmers, who now in the freedom to farm bill have that freedom to choose the crops that they want, they also have to take the responsibility to insure that crop. And for us to cut the funding for crop insurance is absolutely wrong and upside down unless we want to get the Federal Government back involved in disaster bills year after year.

I am very pleased in this bill that we continue our commitment as far as agricultural research. This really is the future for agriculture. It is the basic research we need, especially in my district where we are challenged by so many environmental concerns today, with some of the hog lots and those types of situations.

The bill also continues to fund marketing export promotion programs that are absolutely critical. We talk about having free and open trade. While that is the case, and we would like to get to that point, we are not there yet, so we do need the Federal Government involved as far as having a way of competing in the marketplace around the world.

I am very pleased too that this bill includes funding for the President's food safety initiative, the meat and poultry inspection, and enforcement of the FDA tobacco regulations aimed at reducing youth smoking. It also continues the bipartisan effort to support the WIC Program and holds the line on Federal spending.

I think everyone should understand in the small portion of this agriculture appropriations bill that actually goes to farmers, we are at a level of about 20 percent of where we were 10 years ago in support for agriculture directly. I would challenge any other agency in this Government to take those kinds of severe cuts and still have an industry out there that prospers and grows.

We have finally unleashed the power of agriculture in America with the farm bill. This bill supports that. This is the right direction to go, maintaining the safety net through individuals taking responsibility for themselves. And I am just very, very pleased that after 60 years of Government controls in agriculture, we have finally freed up what is going to be the most dynamic part of this whole economy, and that is the American agriculture machine.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentlewoman from Hawaii [Mrs. MINK.]

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Chairman, I thank the ranking member, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR], for yielding me this time. I would like to rise initially to give my strong support to H.R. 2160 and to commend the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN], the chairman of the subcommittee, and members of the Committee on Appropriations for not yielding to the many demands and requests to amend the farm bill that we struggled so hard a year ago to enact.

I also rise to take the time during general debate to remind the House that, notwithstanding the popular view of Hawaii as a tourist mecca of the country and the world, that it is in my district that the bulk of the agricultural economy of my State is sustained. Therefore, we have a very strong support and reliance upon a strong farm bill, and I rise to reiterate the struggles that we had a year ago.

Specifically, on the sugar debate, which we anticipate once again will come during the amendment stages, I received a communication today, which I know I cannot insert in the RECORD at this point, but I would like to read from portions of it. It came from the American Sugar Alliance and is addressed to Members of Congress. It is signed in particular by a large number of organizations, but I wanted to cite one in particular, Gay & Robinson, of Hawaii, who is a sugar producer on the Island of Kauai, whose future will be intimately affected by the outcome of the debate on sugar, if there should be one.

Sugar cane and sugar beet growers, this letter says, in 17 States, went to their bankers last year to get financing, which they were able to achieve because of the passage of a 7-year farm bill. In the middle of all of this effort, we are now being threatened with the possibility of this program coming to a halt.

The sugar producers pay back their loans with interest, and that is why it is so unfair for people who attack this program to suggest that we have a subsidy and that we are costing the taxpayers money. In point of fact, we are producing about $40 million each year.

The giant food manufacturers are the ones that are attacking this program because they want to see foreign subsidized sugar dumped into our markets in order for them to increase their profits. So I hope that in the course of the debate on the amendments that we will rely on what we did last year and not break faith with the farmers of America.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1 minute, and I would like to respond to the gentlewoman from Hawaii and thank her for getting the road fixed out to the research station in Hawaii for the fruit fly project.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SKEEN. I yield to the gentlewoman from Hawaii.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Chairman, it was because of the gentleman's energetic intervention on that matter that we were able to resolve it. So I wish to thank the gentleman for raising this issue to my attention.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, reclaiming my time, thanks to the gentlewoman, my back healed up from that rough road.

Mr. Chairman I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. SMITH].

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time, and I rise to engage the chairman of the subcommittee and the gentlewoman from Idaho in a colloquy. I am very concerned about the administration's proposed American Heritage Rivers Initiative.

First, this initiative, originally announced by President Clinton in his State of the Union Address this last January, will threaten property rights if it is implemented. Although the initiative purports to be community led, it is the Federal agencies involved that will dominate the process and could well dictate to property owners how they can use their land.

If this occurs, we could see a severe erosion of the property rights guaranteed to American citizens under the Constitution. A prime example of this would occur in the West, where restricting cattle from streams, their only water supply, would create enormous uncompensated losses for ranchers.

The administration is advancing this initiative without sufficient input from Congress, and this concerns many of us greatly. The American people have not been granted a say about what is going on here. The agencies involved are currently planning to reprogram funds for purposes that were not authorized or appropriated by Congress.

□ 2045

We are all aware that the justification for creation of the program can be found in the words ''There is no new money involved.'' However, the reprogramming of funds to pay for an initiative where the voices of the American people have not been heard is simply not acceptable.

Until Congress has reviewed this initiative and the agencies have provided sufficient budget justification material as well as substantial protections for private property rights, I am proposing that Congress in general, and the Committee on Agriculture Appropriations in particular, withhold any funds for

implementation of the American Heritage Rivers Initiative.

I appreciate the work of the chairman on behalf of private property rights, but I remain concerned that there are no concrete protections for property rights. Any assurances that the chairman could provide that no reprogramming requests will be entertained by the committee until all questions have been answered and private property rights have been protected would be greatly appreciated.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SMITH of Texas. I yield to the gentlewoman from Idaho.

Mrs. CHENOWETH. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman from Texas [Mr. SMITH] bringing this matter to the attention of the Members. I, too, have grave concerns about the Clinton administration's American Heritage Rivers Initiative. There are so many things wrong about both the program and the process by which it was brought forth that we simply do not have time to go into the details now. But I wholeheartedly agree with the gentleman from Texas [Mr. SMITH].

Yesterday, the full House Committee on Resources met and held a hearing on this very proposal. It was very interesting, and I learned that this so-called initiative will cost the taxpayers millions and millions of dollars every year, and yet Congress has never authorized nor appropriated funds for the American Heritage Rivers Initiative.

And the last time I checked, we were still the responsible party for authorizing and appropriating money for new programs. But what this does mean is that other programs, such as Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service programs, that already have been authorized and money appropriated for those authorized programs, are being robbed by the American Heritage Rivers Program on line. And this was from testimony by Mrs. McGinty and Secretaries Bruce Babbitt and Dan Glickman.

When we are desperately striving to meet our existing obligations and commitments, when we ask the American people to once again tighten their belts, and when we continue to spend into our grandchildren's money and into their future by engaging in deficit spending, I have to ask if this is the best use of the taxpayers' money.

I think, instead, it is sort of like saying, well, if the peasants do not have bread, let them eat cake. No, this is not a priority to the American people, because it tramples on States' rights. And to this end, I introduced H.R. 1842, a bill to stop this ill-conceived proposal. And I note that the gentleman from Texas [Mr. SMITH] is a cosponsor, and I thank him very much for raising this ill-conceived program to the attention of the Members.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 2 minutes.

The gentleman from Texas [Mr. SMITH] and the gentlewoman from Idaho [Mrs. CHENOWETH] have raised a very important issue. The committee shares their concern; and in its report accompanying the bill, it addresses this issue with respect to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. And in the report, we have directed the agency to enhance its accountability of appropriations.

To underscore how serious this matter is, we have prohibited the agency from using funds to support the American Heritage Rivers Initiative, as well as other similar administration-hatched initiatives, until justification is provided and the programming and reprogramming requests are approved by Congress.

My colleagues can be certain that I have the same concerns as the gentleman from Texas [Mr. SMITH] and others and will not agree to funding this program until we can be completely assured that there are adequate protections for private property rights.

In response to me and as one of the steps in the right direction, the administration has agreed to add the following to the final version of the initiative: ''In implementing the American Heritage Rivers Initiative, Federal departments shall act with due regard for protection of private property provided by the fifth amendment to the United States Constitution.''

In addition to this, the Council on Environmental Quality has given numerous assurances that they will continue to work with me in clarifying and protecting property rights and agriculture. However, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. SMITH] has my assurance that I have no intention of entertaining any reprogramming requests until outstanding questions and problems with the American Heritage Rivers Initiative have been sufficiently addressed.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SKEEN. I yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio.

Ms. KAPTUR. I want to just ask the gentleman a question if I might.

Just for clarification purposes, in the report that accompanies our bill, we did direct the administration with the following language: ''Funds for these initiatives are not available until justification and reprogram requests are approved.''

So I think we put language in the report accompanying the bill to put our subcommittee directly in oversight over what is happening. And I will say to the chairman of our subcommittee, I was hoping our community could get one of these designations. We have several rivers we need help on. But I look forward to working with the gentleman on the language as we move to conference.

The CHAIRMAN. The time of the gentleman from New Mexico has expired.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 1 minute. The gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is correct. We have begun the process of making this a more responsible piece of legislation. It has already begun, and I assure the gentlewoman that we are going to work together to make sure that this Heritage system is conducted properly and in the right way, with the proper safeguards.

And we would like very much to have her river designated, but our river we are going to have to fight every inch, because water is water in our part of the country, and there is no substitute.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I inquire as to the time on both sides.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] has 7½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN] has 8½ minutes remaining.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. MCHALE].

Mr. MCHALE. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of the American Heritage Rivers Initiative and in sharp contrast to the comments that were made previously by the gentlewoman from Idaho [Mrs. CHENOWETH], my friend and colleague.

As indicated by the gentlewoman from Idaho [Mrs. CHENOWETH] in her comments, the American Heritage Rivers Initiative was a subject of a full hearing yesterday of the Committee on Resources. There is now an extended comment period for public participation.

Today's debate and the legislation introduced by the gentlewoman from Idaho [Mrs. CHENOWETH] amply demonstrates that there will be a full legislative role in this process. There is no new bureaucracy under this program, no new statutory authority given in terms of land use policy to the administration.

The initiative for inclusion in this program is purely local and voluntary. I would suggest to the gentlewoman from Idaho [Mrs. CHENOWETH] that if her community does not wish to participate, I respect that, but that she not block those efforts and those interests locally generated in communities, such as my own, to have 10 rivers nationwide designated for participation in this program.

I represent a community of 70 different municipalities. We are attempting to restore a river; and in that effort, we seek a Federal voluntary partnership.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Washington [Mr. NETHERCUTT].

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Chairman, I rise today in support of H.R. 2160. I thank the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN], the chairman, and the entire committee and subcommittee, which has worked so hard to formulate this bill that should be supported by all Members of the House.

We have worked diligently to make sure that our Nation protects the food we eat, ensures the safety of prescription drugs and medical devices used

every day in our homes and local hospitals and we make certain that children who are most in need receive food and care and our neediest school children are provided food during the school year.

This bill maintains agriculture research and foreign market development programs that will enable our farmers to expand trade and access as we transition from farm payments to self-sufficiency. Although important to the Pacific Northwest, the research projects contained in this bill benefit all of America.

I also want to make sure that the body knows that we have been careful to write legislation that considers the taxpayer and the long-term goals of agriculture. We are going to reduce the amount of pesticides used on crops by helping to develop insect resistance plants and develop new methods of disease and pest controls. So the environmental benefits in this bill are enormous, not only to farmers but consumers as well.

I know we will have a good debate tomorrow on the issue of defunding. Certain members of the Farm Service Agency, that was my amendment, and I look forward to that debate, because that debate will be all about accountability. It will require that Government officials acts fairly to all States, all regions of the country, and that they administer programs according to their charge, and that they do so fairly and equitably to all farmers.

We have heard a lot of talk in this body about fairness and expectations of Government agencies to do what they should do under the law. This is a good example and we will have a good chance to debate the whole issue tomorrow about what is fair and what is not and about what consequences there should be to Federal officials who do not do their job.

So I urge all Members to support this bill.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. MCCARTHY].

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me the time.

Of the $141 million provided for the commodity assistance program, I understand that the committee intends $96 million specifically for the commodity supplement food program, CSFP, to ensure that there is no reduction in current caseload. Is this correct?

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, will the gentlewoman yield?

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. I yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio.

Ms. KAPTUR. Yes, the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. MCCARTHY] is correct.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York. Reclaiming my time, I thank the gentlewoman; and I want her to know, as a new Member, I did not know anything about agriculture, and now I see it working in my community and feeding our elderly and our children and our women.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield one minute to the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON].

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of this bill. It is very important for us to realize what we are doing with American farm policy. Two percent of Americans are farmers, and yet they feed all 100 percent of us, plus many, many other people throughout the globe.

Our farm bill always gets criticized for the research, for the programs, and so forth. And yet within those programs is a very strong delivery system. As convoluted as it may seem, so often it makes sense when the fact that very, very few people in America go to bed hungry, and it makes even more sense when we realize that through the international programs, less go to bed hungry than they would without these programs.

We have had skirmishes. We are going to have skirmishes on peanuts, on sugar, on tobacco, on the market access programs, and on a number of other things. Yet, through it all, we must remember that we are feeding Americans with this bill and, finally, we are doing it at less dollars than we have ever in the past.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself as much time as I may consume, and I would like to inquire of the Chair on time remaining.

The CHAIRMAN. Each side has 5½ minutes remaining.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield one minute to the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. MCINTYRE].

Mr. MCINTYRE. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me the time.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN], the chairman of the Subcommittee on Agriculture Appropriations, if he would engage me in a colloquy.

Mr. Chairman, it is my understanding that the sum of approximately $24 million has been appropriated to the Food and Drug Administration for the purpose of implementing new regulations concerning tobacco sales to minors. In light of the fact this funding represents a $20 million increase over similar funding in the prior fiscal year budget, I would ask the chairman if it is his understanding and the understanding of those on the committee that none of this funding is to be used to monitor or regulate the growing, cultivating, or use of raw tobacco?

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MCINTYRE. I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. SKEEN. The answer to that question is, yes.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Reclaiming my time, furthermore, is it the committee's expectation that this authority should remain exclusively with the U.S. Department of Agriculture?

Mr. SKEEN. If the gentleman will continue to yield, once again, the answer is yes.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield one minute to the gentleman from Nebraska [Mr. BEREUTER].

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

□ 2100

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the legislation. I want to commend the chairman and the ranking member for an outstanding job in meeting the Nation's agriculture, agribusiness, rural housing and small community housing and development programs with limited resources. I am particularly appreciative of some assistance for the Midwest Advanced Food Manufacturing Alliance, 12 major leading universities plus corporations; a quarter of a million dollars for a very special and detrimental disease affecting grain sorghum; for drought mitigation research projects; and for various CSRS projects at the University of Nebraska.

Also I want to say to the gentleman, the gentlewoman and also to the former member, Mr. DURBIN, that I think that the loan guarantee programs for housing, like the 502 program and the demonstration for the 538 program, are working well. I appreciate their continued support and again I thank them for the tremendous work.

Mr. Chairman, I include the following letter for the RECORD:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
Washington, DC, July 9, 1997.

Hon. DOUG BEREUTER,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR DOUG: Earlier you wrote me regarding funding for several Department of Agriculture special research grants.

I am pleased to say that the FY 1998 Agriculture Appropriations Bill reported by the Committee includes $300,000 for the Alliance for Food Protection in Nebraska and Georgia, $200,000 for drought mitigation in Nebraska, $42,000 for the Food Processing Center in Nebraska, $423,000 for the Midwest Advanced Food Manufacturing Alliance, $64,000 for Nonfood Agriculture Products in Nebraska, and $59,000 for Sustainable Agriculture Systems in Nebraska.

I hope we will have not only your vote, but also your personal support when the bill is considered by the House.

Sincerely,

JOE SKEEN,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. POSHARD].

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. POSHARD].

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Illinois is recognized for 2 minutes.

Mr. POSHARD. Mr. Chairman, I wish to engage the chairman of the subcommittee in a colloquy.

Mr. Chairman, I am particularly concerned with the effect of additional

cuts in Farm Service Agency funding on staff positions in my district and across the country.

Can the gentleman describe to me the impact this funding decrease will have on FSA county jobs, in addition to county office closures and the ability of the FSA to adequately serve the needs of our Nation's farmers?

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. POSHARD. I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. SKEEN. Let me first assure the gentleman that I have worked closely with the Department of Agriculture in arriving at the current appropriation level. I am satisfied that, although less money will be allocated to the FSA under this bill, the funding level will not result in more office closings than was planned and agreed to by Congress in the Reorganization Act of 1994. The reason we are able to use less funds here is due to erroneous assumptions in the President's budget regarding FSA's nonsalary funding needs as well as a higher than expected staff year reduction by FSA in the months since submission of the President's budget.

Mr. POSHARD. Although I continue to harbor doubts about the effect of these cuts, I will accept the gentleman's response. However, Mr. Chairman, I must also express my serious concerns regarding the effects of the initial cuts to FSA which were included in the 1994 act. The impact of these cuts is ongoing and I believe that the hardships that they have caused in the form of job loss, office closures and the potential for decreased service availability must be addressed and should be limited as effectively as possible in the future.

Mr. SKEEN. I thank the gentleman for sharing his concerns with this body. I will continue to work with him to ensure that any changes within FSA are made equitably and with the serious consideration befitting such an issue.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from California [Mr. FARR].

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from California [Mr. FARR].

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from California is recognized for 1½ minutes.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise to thank the distinguished chairman of this incredible committee that has one of the most important jobs in all of Congress because it is so diverse to have to deal with all the issues of agriculture. I rise in support of a very important issue to American specialty crop growers.

As the gentleman knows, for 4 years the Salinas ARS station, located in the heart of the largest vegetable production area in the United States, has been without a research scientist, to the detriment of the lettuce industry.

Does the gentleman agree that the lettuce farmers would be greatly aided by filling this position with a scientist at USDA with expertise in lettuce breeding?

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. FARR of California. I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. SKEEN. I tell the gentleman from California [Mr. FARR] that, yes, I agree that the lettuce farmers would be greatly aided by the filling of this position.

Mr. FARR of California. I thank the gentleman.

Would the gentleman agree that the research for such a specific crop be conducted in the Salinas Valley?

Mr. SKEEN. Once again in the affirmative, yes, it is important that the research be conducted in the field under real farm conditions for the best achievable and quantifiable results. Research in the field is where farmers will have quickest access to breakthrough technology.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the gentleman's commitment and the commitment of the committee in directing USDA to fill this vacant research position at the Salinas Valley ARS station to ensure that the final bill will include funding for this ARS position to support onsite lettuce research.

Mr. SKEEN. It is my pleasure to assist the gentleman in this endeavor, and I appreciate his commitment to good agricultural research.

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman, and I look forward to supporting him on this great, important bill.

Mr. SKEEN. I thank the gentleman. We can sure use it.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. BARCIA].

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. BARCIA].

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Michigan is recognized for 1½ minutes.

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Chairman, I rise to engage in a colloquy with the distinguished chairman of the subcommittee, the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN] to verify the committee's intent with respect to two Agricultural Research Service projects.

Mr. Chairman, the committee has provided an increase of $500,000 for vomitoxin research, a matter of great importance to many of my wheat growers and millers. With this increase, will ARS be able to subcontract with universities to undertake portions of a broad research plan that I know was brought to the subcommittee's attention by myself and several of my colleagues?

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BARCIA. I yield to the gentleman from New Mexico.

Mr. SKEEN. The gentleman is correct. ARS could use existing authority and these funds to contract with universities to undertake appropriate portions of their proposal.

Mr. BARCIA. I thank the gentleman.

The subcommittee also provided $727,000 for global climate change research. My understanding is that this funding will allow the Consortium for International Earth Science Information Network to continue the agricultural related work that they already have under way with ARS. Does the gentleman share my understanding?

Mr. SKEEN. Again the gentleman from Michigan is correct. We funded this portion of the request of the Agricultural Research Service.

Mr. BARCIA. I thank the gentleman for his assistance and for his answers and also thank the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR], the distinguished ranking member of the subcommittee.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. STENHOLM], the extremely talented, knowledgeable and experienced ranking member of the authorizing committee.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas is recognized for 1½ minutes.

Mr. STENHOLM. I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time.

Mr. Chairman, I join in commending the gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN], the chairman of the subcommittee, and the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR], the ranking member, for the excellent work that they have done as well as the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. LIVINGSTON], chairman of the full committee, and the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. OBEY] the ranking member.

Working on the agricultural appropriation bill cannot be fun. We have so many needs and so many limited resources that the pressures are great, but they have done a good job and I rise in strong support of H.R. 2160.

I have only one negative remark to say about the work, and that was it has one blemish. The Nethercutt amendment, I think, was unfortunate. It will, as the gentleman from Washington [Mr. NETHERCUTT] mentioned a moment ago, be debated in full tomorrow, and I hope that the full House will join in striking this amendment. It has no place in a bill of the nature of which we are talking about today. But all in all it is a good bill.

The gentleman from New Mexico [Mr. SKEEN] has done a great job again in putting together as best we can to meet the needs of the number one industry in the United States. If one eats, he is involved in agriculture. It is something we have heard our colleagues from the urban areas talk about tonight, coming to realize that food production is extremely important to all of us. The authorizing committee does not have very many problems this year with the appropriators, and that in itself is saying quite a bit here today.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the debate tomorrow and helping to defeat many of the amendments that some of our colleagues will be offering which

they have every right to do, but I think we have to keep together the basic structure of agriculture as intended under the farm bill and with the intent of the appropriators and the work that they have done. I look forward to supporting them in that endeavor.

Mr. Chairman, H.R. 2160 is an important bill which funds the operations of the Department of Agriculture, the Food and Drug Administration, the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, and the many functions of those agencies. The Department of Agriculture is an important partner to our nation's farmers and ranchers, and with this bill Mr. SKEEN, Ms. KAPTUR, Mr. LIVINGSTON, Mr. OBEY, and the other Members of the Appropriations Committee have recommended a bill that carefully balances program priorities.

Mr. Chairman, agriculture is our Nation's most basic industry. Every day, slightly over 2 million farmers are laboring to produce food to feed a nation of 265 million people and much of the world. In 1996, our nation exported $60 billion worth of agricultural products and our trade balance in agricultural products was a positive $25 billion. The House considers this bill today under a backdrop of both uncertainty and opportunity over the prospects for the business of agriculture. Milk prices are at 5-year lows, wheat prices have fallen by more than half since a little more than a year ago, and corn prices are not much better.

At the same time, government financial support for agriculture is declining under the 1996 farm bill and the income certainty which once came with government programs for major crops no longer exists. Adjustments to these changes in conditions are occurring at a rapid pace as farm numbers shrink and concentration in agriculture grows.

Mr. Chairman, the economic upheavals that pose such a serious challenge to our farm families are closely paralleled by general conditions in the rural economy. As farming resources become concentrated into fewer hands, we also see a comparable trend in the rural industries closely associated with farming and rural life. Farm product processing facilities, rural retailers, and providers of financial services have become fewer and larger. In many instances, those towns which traditionally served as trade centers are being bypassed. The subsequent challenges to the leaders of those communities are truly profound.

Our Nation's important focus on the quality of our natural environment is one that is shared by our nation's farmers. The 1996 farm bill made important changes in programs meant to assist farmers and coordinate efforts to promote environmental health. Our policies work best when priorities set in Washington are closely coordinated with the natural interest the farmer and rancher have in promoting the health and productivity of the soil and the safety of our food supply.

Mr. Chairman, these trends in farm and rural economies pose significant challenges to the rural communities of our Nation and to those of us who serve them. H.R. 2160 will provide the Agriculture Department with the resources it needs to address the challenges facing rural America. Under the bill, funding is provided for cooperative efforts in agricultural research—the key to sustained economic viability for agriculture. It provides funding for the administration of the basic farm programs established under the farm bill. It provides funding for the delivery of federal crop insurance. It provides funds for the conservation programs which are an increasingly important focus of the mission of USDA. The bill also funds important programs that will help rural communities address the substantial economic challenges they face.

I am concerned about the impact the funding level provided will have on Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS] as well as the restrictions that the bill places on the amount of funds that can be transferred for technical assistance work.

According to the Department of Agriculture, the impact of the level of funding that was provided for NRCS salaries and expenses in the committee-passed bill would result in cutting NRCS employment by 500 staff years—over and above the personnel reductions that will occur from the absorption of projected pay increases, inflation, and retirement costs that this bill requires of all agencies within the Department.

It is my understanding the Senate's Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee recommends a higher level of funding for conservation operations than H.R. 2160. It is my hope the conference agreement will yield a level sufficient to ensure that NRCS is able to carry out vital mandated conservation activities.

With regard to the NRCS funding situation, Committee on Agriculture needs to deal with what I believe was an unintended consequence of language included in the 1996 farm bill. Section 161 of that bill to the extent it imposes a limitation on transfers for activities under the Commodity Credit Corporation Charger Act proven to have detrimental effects on the ability to provide adequate reimbursement for NRCS activities such as the agency's role in the Conservation Reserve Program sign-ups.

Mr. Chairman, I raise these issues because I am concerned about the fact that in terms of real dollars we are spending less today on conservation activities on private land than we did back in 1937. In constant dollars, we invested 6 percent of the 1937 Federal budget for USDA conservation programs. Spending on USDA conservation programs in 1996 was 0.17 percent.

By contrast, the appropriation for the Farm Services Agency [FSA] salaries and expenses represents a level of funding sufficient to run the Agency at the Administration's proposed 1998 level of staffing. The FSA work force has been reduced by more than 500 staff years in fiscal year 1997 since the President's budget was submitted. This reduction in personnel, along with lower nonsalary budget needs, means that FSA requires $44 million less funding in 1998 than the administration's February request, and will mean staffyears can be reduced by 1,000 instead of the 2,000 staffyear reduction included in the President's budget.

Mr. Chairman, I have a very real concern about language that was included in the Committee report regarding NRCS's implementation of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program [EQIP], specifically the allocation formula that was used to determine each State's share of EQIP funds.

The report indicates that EQIP funds were distributed based on historical allocations for programs which are no longer authorized. However, section 334 of the 1996 farm bill states that the purposes of EQIP are to ''combine into a single program the functions'' of the agricultural conservation program, the Great Plains conservation program, the water quality incentives program and the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program.

While these individual programs are no longer authorized, the intent of the Agriculture Committee and the conferees was very clear in last year's farm bill, in that this new program was intended to carry out the same types of practices as the repealed programs. The Department is expected to do this in a way that maximizes the environmental benefits per dollar expended, as well as take into account regional priority areas and the significance of the environmental problems being addressed.

Mr. Chairman, I believe combining the cost-share programs in the farm bill was a bold step which should prove to be beneficial in the long term. However, I am concerned that because of the limited amount of resources available and the great number of pressing needs throughout the country, we may have a situation where some types of activities may no longer be considered important, even though they may have legitimate conservation benefits.

Mr. Chairman, we should not tie the administration's hands in terms of the flexibility needed to respond to arising needs. Obviously, if the program does not meet expections, we can legislate changes. However, we should preserve a certain degree of administrative flexibility as well.

I believe that some lesser-known conservation programs that have been carried out over the years have yielded this country a great deal of benefit, and I want to ensure that this continues to be the case.

In my district, dairy farmers are striving mightily to comply with environmental requirements. We must do all we can to ensure that areas with specific needs have access to the programs and funding needed to meet particular, legitimate conservation and environmental activities.

Mr. Chairman, this is a good bill overall but it does have one significant blemish. The Appropriations Committee adopted an amendment designed to eliminate the jobs of the Administrator and Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs of the Farm Services Agency. As I understand it, the amendment stemmed from the dissatisfaction of its sponsor with a policy decision related to the Conservation Reserve Program. Frankly, by the trivial approach taken by my colleagues on the committee. This provision is particularly unworthy in light of the important and profound work accomplished by this legislation in so many other areas.

Mr. Chairman, I intend to offer an amendment to strike this provision from the bill, and I hope my colleagues will join with me to acknowledge that there are better ways to respond to adverse administrative decisions than to eliminate the jobs of Department officials.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, it appears that once again we will use the annual agriculture appropriations process to debate the merits of several farm bill programs. While the House has the ability to address these issues—and did so during debate on the farm bill—through the normal legislative process, we will again rehash these debates today.

Mr. Chairman, our colleagues continue to challenge farm programs in spite of the evidence of their success. Ours is the best-fed nation in the world. Our food is delivered to us in return for a lower percentage of disposable income than any other industrial nation in the world. Nonetheless, Mr. Chairman, we will hear today the sad story of how our Nation's's family farms are somehow managing to take advantage of the enormous candy-manufacturing conglomerates.

Mr. Chairman, I hope my colleagues will pay careful attention and will acknowledge the many reforms made to our program in the 1996 farm bill, and stand against these amendments which, if adopted, would greatly diminish the standing of an otherwise excellent piece of legislation.

Mr. Chairman, I thank my colleague for the time, and I again wish to commend the Committee on Appropriations and its leadership for the excellent work they have done on this important bill.

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of H.R. 2160, the Agriculture appropriations bill for fiscal year 1998.

First, I need to thank my chairman, JOE SKEEN, and the ranking Democrat, MARCY KAPTUR, for their work and assistance this year. This is my first full year on the subcommittee, and I have enjoyed participating in our budget oversight hearings and offering a much-needed California perspective.

The work of our subcommittee was nearly doubled this spring because of our consideration of the supplemental appropriations bill. I want to commend JOE SKEEN in particular for his inclusive manner during those proceedings—he included JIM WALSH and me in his deliberations on the agriculture components of that bill because we were conferees on the bill representing other subcommittees, and that spirit is evident throughout this bill as well.

H.R. 2160 is not a perfect bill. In fact, it continues an alarming trend in providing the absolute minimum resources to USDA to run the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the rural development agencies and other important agencies in order to fund some other significant initiatives.

For example, we have done a good job in proposing increases for the President's initiatives in the area of food safety and youth tobacco prevention, as well as increasing resources for competitive research and for the operations of the Food and Drug Administration. We've increased WIC although not as much as the administration requested. We have also funded the administrative costs of crop insurance—a new responsibility handed to us by the 1996 farm bill.

However, those increases have come at the expense of many of the Department of Agriculture's normal operations, where we have actually reduced salaries and expenses for many agencies. Over time, this can only have a detrimental effect for the services that many of our farmers and others expect from USDA.

We also had some contentious debate in the full committee and some unfortunate party line votes on some less consequential matters. I was particularly disappointed in one amendment adopted in the committee that added report language recommending that up to $4.75 million be made available for a building at Auburn University.

Actually, I support a limited amount of funding in this account. My highest priority has been the final Federal funding component for an important integrated pest management research facility at the University of California at Davis.

A new pest is introduced into California every 60 days, and it is imperative that we have the up-to-date facilities to develop effective methods to deal with them. This facility will support and accelerate research needed for environmentally compatible pest management strategies.

Institutions who benefit from these funds—such as the University of California at Davis—are required to provide a specific and verifiable cost-share. So this program represents a real commitment by State governments and the Federal Government to developing the successful agriculture strategies of the future.

I understand the desire by the committee to phase out and halt this funding over time. However, I believe we have a responsibility to States that have put up hard matching dollars in good faith and whose projects are within a reasonable range of funding for completion. Since the bill lacks funding in this account, I was disappointed that the committee voted along partisan lines to single out the building at Auburn for special consideration.

Despite some of these reservations, I support the bill and I think JOE SKEEN and MARCY KAPTUR have done a good job under demanding circumstances.

I have particular praise for several items of importance to California agriculture and to my district.

First, the bill has fully funded the President's proposed food safety initiative—or, I should say, comes within $200,000 of fully funding the President's initiative. We include funds for the Food and Drug Administration to improve surveillance, upgrade research and inspections, and perform increased risk assessments. We also provide funds for the Food Safety and Inspection Service to increase related surveillance and inspections. In addition, the food safety initiative increases related research in both the Agricultural Research Service and the Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service.

This is a promising initiative, and it is an area of increasing importance to the health concerns of American consumers. I am very happy to have had a part in pushing this initiative forward, and I commend our chairman and other members of our committee for ensuring that it is funded in a year when our agriculture budget is under considerable stress.

Second, the bill provides funds mandated by the Agriculture Committee for the Market Access Program [MAP].

I anticipate that this program will come under attack again this year by an amendment seeking to eliminate it.

But there is probably no more important tool for export promotion than MAP. In California, where specialty crop agriculture is the rule, export promotion is extremely important.

Agriculture exports climbed to $59.8 billion in fiscal year 1996—up some $19 billion or close to 50 percent since 1990. In an average week this past year, U.S. producers, processors and exporters shipped more than $1.1 billion worth of food and farm products to foreign markets, compared with about $775 million per week at the start of this decade.

The overall export gains raised the fiscal year 1996 agricultural trade surplus to a new record of $27.4 billion. In the most recent comparisons among 11 major industries, agriculture ranked No. 1 as the leading positive contributor to the U.S. merchandise trade balance.

As domestic farm supports are reduced, export markets become even more critical for the economic well-being of our farmers and rural communities, as well as suburban and urban areas that depend upon the employment generated from increased trade.

Agriculture exports strengthen farm income.

Agriculture exports provide jobs for nearly a million Americans.

Agriculture exports generate nearly $100 billion in related economic activity.

Agriculture exports produce a positive trade balance of nearly $30 billion.

MAP is critical to U.S. agriculture's ability to develop, maintain and expand export markets in the new post-GATT environment, and MAP is a proven success.

In California, MAP has been tremendously successful in helping promote exports of California citrus, raisins, walnuts, prunes, almonds, peaches and other specialty crops.

We have to remember that an increase in agriculture exports means jobs: a 10 percent increase in agricultural exports creates over 13,000 new jobs in agriculture and related industries like manufacturing, processing, marketing and distribution.

For every $1 we invest in MAP, we reap a $16 return in additional agriculture exports. In short, the Market Promotion Program is a program that performs for American taxpayers.

Third, the committee has continued to provide the greatest possible funding for research stations of the Agricultural Research Service, and through the special grants and competitive grants in the Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service.

I am particularly grateful that funds have been provided in support of our nutrition research centers. These centers will play an important role in the food safety research that will be a vital part of the food safety initiative. Funds have also been provided to begin the move of the Western Human Nutrition Research Center to the campus of the University of California at Davis. I believe its location there, along with one of the preeminent nutrition programs in the nation as well as our ag and medical schools, will provide the synergy necessary to make important research strides in the years to come.

There are other research areas of importance to California, including alternatives to the use of methyl bromide, PM–10 particulate air quality research, sustainable agriculture practices, and alternatives to rice straw burning. Certainly our future success in agriculture, especially market-oriented agriculture as envisioned by the 1996 farm bill, will require an on-going commitment to research if we are to maintain the U.S. lead.

In summary, this is a fair bill given the many needs and many issues within the committee's jurisdiction. I commend Chairman JOE SKEEN and Ranking Member MARCY KAPTUR for their leadership in support of American agriculture, and I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 2160, the Agriculture appropriations bill for fiscal year 1998.

The CHAIRMAN. All time for general debate has expired.

Mr. SKEEN. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SHIMKUS) having assumed the chair, Mr. LINDER, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2160) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

TAX RELIEF FOR MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to talk to my colleagues tonight about taxes. I think it is very, very important to understand why the working middle class families of America need tax relief. Here is a chart that I hope everyone can see that shows in the 1950's the average American family, of average income, paid about 6 percent Federal income tax. In 1994, it was 23 percent Federal tax burden. Today, the Federal tax burden, 1995, is 39 percent. As my colleagues can see, the working middle class families are paying higher taxes than ever before in history.

We need tax relief. Because the less taxes people pay, the less taxes families pay, the more time they can spend with each other. One of the key benefits of that is so that moms and dads can spend time with their children and impart information and help raise them.

□ 2115

Now what does our tax relief bill do? Our tax relief bill gives 76 percent of the tax relief to middle-income families making between 20 and $75,000. That is this big chunk right here. That is who is getting the tax relief. That is who needs tax relief. I think that we should get over class envy, but it is very important to point out that most of the tax relief, 76 percent, goes to people earning or families earning between 20 and $75,000.

Now over a 10-year period of time, if you look at the tax relief, you can see that 90 percent of the tax relief goes to family and education or families for educational purposes. Seventy-five billion dollars in tax relief for educational uses over a 10-year period, and $150 billion over 10 years for the $500 per child tax credit; that is a huge tax reduction, and it all goes for the right purposes.

Now we got a big debate going on that you may hear about, about the tax bill, and that is why I invite Members of Congress and members of the public to look this up on the Internet. Find out what the family tax relief plan could mean to your family.

I am going to say what the Internet number is. It is http://hillsource.house.gov, and there is also a Senate page that you can get too, but today you can look up on the web page exactly what this tax relief bill could mean to you for your $500 per child tax credit, HOPE scholarship, for your children to enter an education, your IRA dream savings account expansion.

There is a lot to it, and I would urge members of the public to look it up on the Internet.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to yield to my friend from Pennsylvania.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. I understand the gentleman yields.

Mr. KINGSTON. Yes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I think the fact is that this has widespread support among the public and also Congress. Was this not the agreement that the President has made with Congress to move forward with this family tax plan?

Mr. KINGSTON. Yes, and it is very interesting that the gentleman will point out that the President is working with the Republican Party on a bipartisan basis to give this middle class tax relief.

There are Members, liberal extremists, on one fringe element of his party who is against tax relief for the middle class, but for the most part this is a bipartisan middle class tax relief bill.

I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Not only will it help seniors with the estate tax assistance and also helps with the capital gains tax to grow jobs and the economy, but the education tax credits will help families send students to college.

I know my own district, 108,000 families will benefit from the $500 per child tax credit.

So this is an idea whose time has arrived.

Mr. KINGSTON. Absolutely, and I know in my First District that I represent of Georgia it will give tax relief, we figure, to about 300,000 people in the coastal Georgia area alone.

But you know the more money you have as a wage earner, the more money you have in your pocket, because we as a confiscatory government take less of it, that means you are going to spend more. You are going to buy more shoes, more shirts, more records, you are going to go out to eat more. When you do, businesses will expand because of the demand. When they expand, they create more jobs. When they create more jobs, more people are working, more people are paying taxes, fewer people are on welfare, and cutting taxes, therefore, is very consistent with the goal of deficit reduction.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. You are absolutely right.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Guam [Mr. UNDERWOOD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. UNDERWOOD addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

REPUBLICANS ON THE SIDE OF THE WEALTHY WHILE DEMOCRATS ARE FIGHTING FOR MIDDLE-CLASS FAMILIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, yesterday Speaker Gingrich stood in the well of this House and he invited, as my colleagues just did, the American people to visit the House Republican web site, calculate their estimated tax savings under the Republican plan. So I thought let us see how the average working taxpaying mother with two kids would fare under the Republican plan.

So I entered in an income of approximately $25,000. I received an error message saying that they could not calculate her savings. Perhaps that is because this family would get a big fat zero, no tax break at all under the Republican tax plan.

Then I entered in the data for someone making $1 million a year, half of that in capital gains. The Republican calculator had no problem figuring out their tax break, $40,000.

That is right, a millionaire gets $40,000 back, and the average working taxpaying mother gets nothing, gets zero.

The Washington Post editorial this morning hit it right on the nose, and I quote: ''The Republicans have written a tax bill tilted heavily toward the better off.''

If anything, this was an understatement. The Post labels their editorial, and I quote again, ''Tax Trash,'' which perfectly describes the Republican tax bill. In fact, there are so many bad things in this bill it is hard to know where to begin.

But let me tell you the story of three young people which drives home the point of how unfair this Republican tax proposal really is.

Today I received a visit from three students: Anthony Dugdale, Scott Saul and Lori Brooks. They are all graduate students at Yale University in my hometown of New Haven. These young people took the train all night from Connecticut for the express purpose of protesting the fact that in this bill the Republicans actually raised taxes on graduate students in this country, and they brought with them the signatures of 600 other graduate students protesting this provision in the Republican tax plan.