

continuous session period provided for in section 123 d. shall commence.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON,  
THE WHITE HOUSE, February 9, 1999.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair announces that he will postpone further proceedings today on each motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Such rollcall votes, if postponed, will be taken after debate has concluded on all motions to suspend the rules, but not before 5 p.m. today.

#### PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ACT AMENDMENTS

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 169) to amend the Packers and Stockyards Act, 1921, to expand the pilot investigation for the collection of information regarding prices paid for the procurement of cattle and sheep for slaughter and of muscle cuts of beef and lamb to include swine and muscle cuts of swine, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 169

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. EXPANSION OF MANDATORY DOMESTIC REPORTING PILOT INVESTIGATION UNDER THE PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS ACT, 1921.

(a) INCLUSION OF SWINE; REFERENCE TO FORWARD CONTRACTING.—Section 416 of the Packers and Stockyards Act, 1921 (7 U.S.C. 229a), as added by section 1127 of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999, (as contained in section 101(a) of division A of Public Law 105-277), is amended in both paragraphs (1) and (2):

(1) by striking “beef, or” and inserting “beef.”; and

(2) by inserting after “lamb,” the following: “or domestic or imported swine for immediate slaughter and fresh muscle cuts of swine.”

(b) TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS.—Such section is further amended by redesignating paragraphs (1), (2), and (3) as subsections (a), (b), and (c), respectively.

(c) DURATION OF SWINE PILOT INVESTIGATION.—Such section is further amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(d) POSSIBLE EXTENSION OF PILOT INVESTIGATION.—If the pilot investigation required by this section is implemented before the date on which the pilot investigation is expanded to include swine, the Secretary of Agriculture shall continue the pilot investigation beyond the 12-month period referred to in subsection (a) so that price information regarding the procurement of domestic or imported swine for immediate slaughter and fresh muscle cuts of swine is collected under the pilot investigation for 12 months.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST) and the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST).

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

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 169 is a simple bill and would simply add hogs and pork product to the pilot investigation on beef and lamb prices that was authorized last fall as a part of the omnibus appropriation.

I would like to thank and commend my colleague on the Committee on Appropriations and on the Subcommittee on Agriculture who is very instrumental in agriculture policy, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LATHAM), for introducing this legislation and for calling for its swift adoption.

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Many of our colleagues are aware that livestock prices, particularly those received by lamb and beef producers, have been distressingly low for some time. The pilot investigation that was included in last year's omnibus appropriations bill is a relatively non-intrusive way to shed some light on the workings of these complex markets.

Last fall, when the omnibus bill was being crafted, the pork producers declined to be included in the USDA pilot investigation. However, recent and drastic declines in live hog prices have led pork producers to reconsider and ultimately reverse that decision. Thus, H.R. 169 will simply include pork in the ongoing pilot investigation.

Tomorrow, the House Committee on Agriculture will conduct a hearing on livestock prices during which we will consider testimony outlining the current market conditions for beef, lamb and pork.

I hope that in this hearing we will be able to illuminate trends, dispel myths and come to a common understanding of how these livestock markets operate so that we can responsibly consider many proposals currently being discussed in the agricultural community. In the same way, I am hopeful that H.R. 169 will aid our deliberation of these issues by providing needed information and insight into the hog market.

I ask that Members support this legislation as a constructive step in this ongoing policy discussion.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, as ranking member of the Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry and a representative from northwestern Minnesota, I have been acutely aware of the downturn in many sectors of the farm economy. In particular, the U.S. livestock industry has been hard-hit with sustained low prices. Beef and lamb markets have been depressed for several years and, more recently, historically low prices have plagued the pork market.

The economic explanation for low prices is a complicated mix of supply,

demand and other factors such as trade. Legislative proposals have been pursued in an effort to return viability to the industry. However, I believe that we must be cautious in our approach. Whatever legislative actions are taken should not impede or wrongly dampen one aspect of the industry to benefit another. We need to ensure that we move carefully toward the combined goal of a stable and viable livestock industry.

To this end, I believe that H.R. 169 is a prudent use of our authority. Building on last fall's effort to initiate a pilot study of comprehensive mandatory price reporting for beef and lamb, the bill simply seeks to add pork to that study. One of the unknown factors in the low price story is the impact of price information. It is unclear whether or not a full and open price reporting system operated through the Federal Government would allow producers to operate more effectively to market their products. A complete study of the impacts of price reporting with a quick turnaround on the results would help direct any future action in this area.

Obviously, the passage of this bill and the resulting study will not cure the ills that are facing the livestock industry at this time. But it is a small piece that can answer an important question: Can greater price information aid livestock producers? The information obtained from the study should help us proceed in a logical and effective manner.

Therefore, I ask that my colleagues join me in support of our livestock producers and support H.R. 169.

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

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. LATHAM), the author of this proposal, and again, one of the strong advocates of American agriculture.

Mr. LATHAM. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to express my thanks to the chairman of the full committee. He has done such a great job working for American agriculture, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST) and his cooperation in working out a few technical difficulties we had, but I appreciate it very, very much. Also, I appreciate the comments of the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. PETERSON), who has worked so hard for all of agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, on January 6, I introduced H.R. 169 in an effort to level the playing field for embattled American pork producers. I think the Speaker is acutely aware of the problems that pork producers have experienced in recent months with the prices dipping down to under \$10 per hundred. Currently, they moved back up to close to \$28 per hundred, but certainly well below any level of profitability. We have experienced prices well below Depression Era prices, and it is so important that we do as much as possible