

gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD) for their efforts in this regard.

For many people nationwide, I think Guam is synonymous with a number of things. One of them is certainly natural disasters. Guam's location as the "center arrow" of the Pacific Ocean's typhoon alley has made my island community prone to disasters, sometimes on an annual basis. In this decade alone, Guam has been subjected to at least a dozen typhoons. At one time, five had hit Guam in the span of 3 months.

As many may recall, the most recent storm, Typhoon Paka, devastated the island in December of 1997 and caused property damage of over \$100 million. On top of these storms, Guam also became a victim of an 8.2 earthquake in 1994, which has been one of the strongest recorded in the Pacific in this century.

H.R. 818 is good legislation. It is proactive, and it will prepare communities, and in particular small businesses, for recovery. SBA already assists my island community by giving SBA disaster loans, and along with FEMA, SBA provides a Federal team that almost every citizen in Guam knows about. I think very few communities could state that their citizens know of what FEMA and SBA disaster loans are all about.

This legislation will help small businesses prepare for disasters, perhaps reducing expenses at the other end of disasters, help communities recover quickly, because small businesses help generate economic activity, which will cause immediate recovery.

Reacting to a storm plagues many communities with confusion. This pilot program aims to empower the business community with information and mitigation activities which will prevent serious losses.

As the previous speaker noted, \$15 million is a very small amount, and we understand that this is a pilot project. We understand, too, that the territories are full partners in this program. We certainly hope that in coming years the amounts will be expanded, and we will do everything we can to make sure this pilot project is a success.

I thank both sides for their efforts in this regard.

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

Mr. Speaker, as the statements of my colleagues clearly indicated, the need for preventative, proactive, advanced measures to prevent the damages of natural disasters is clear.

I would like to commend the chairman of this committee for his foresight, his initiative, in moving this bill forward. I would like to thank him and thank the ranking member, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) for her support as well. This is a bill that has common sense, it will save the taxpayers money, and it has bipartisan support. I strongly urge my colleagues on both sides to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, I will close briefly. I appreciate very much the comments from my colleagues in support of this legislation.

I want to make a couple of points in closing, Mr. Speaker. One is that we certainly are given to understand that it is the intention of the administration to implement this legislation quickly, and I would hope that is the case.

It is just a pilot program. There is no reason why it should not be more than a pilot program. It makes perfect sense, and it is going to help a lot of people. That is what it comes down to. So we hope that the administration, the executive branch, will move quickly in implementing this, and the Committee on both sides of the aisle is going to assist in any way that we can.

The second point I wanted to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, is as we have all noted, we hope that this does save dollars for the Federal government, for the Federal Treasury. I am confident it will do that. But the human cost of disasters is what we really have to look at here.

On a very practical level, to the extent we can make this program a working program, it means that small business people on flood plains, small business people on coasts that are consistently battered by typhoons or hurricanes, will have the opportunity to prevent this damage from occurring. They can get glass windows replaced by plexiglass. If they are a small accounting firm in a building, they can get the building raised so that the flood does not affect them as much as it otherwise would.

Anybody, Mr. Speaker, who has talked to individuals whose lives have been devastated by natural disasters knows how important it is that we give them an opportunity to prevent that from occurring in the first place. That is what H.R. 818 does. I commend it to all the Members of the House.

I thank, once again, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, and in particular, the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. VELÁZQUEZ) for her assistance.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. STEARNS). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. TALENT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 818.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TALENT. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous matter on H.R. 818.

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

There was no objection.

EXPORT APPLE ACT

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 609) to amend the Export Apple and Pear Act to limit the applicability of the Act to apples.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 609

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

SECTION 1. SCOPE OF EXPORT APPLE AND PEAR ACT.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—The Act of June 10, 1933 (7 U.S.C. 581 et seq.; commonly known as the Export Apple and Pear Act), is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

"SEC. 11. This Act may be cited as the 'Export Apple Act'."

(b) DEFINITION OF APPLES.—Section 9 of such Act (7 U.S.C. 589) is amended by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following new paragraph:

"(4) The term 'apples' means fresh whole apples, whether or not the apples have been in storage."

(c) ELIMINATION OF REFERENCES TO PEARS.—Such Act is further amended—

(1) by striking "and/or pears" each place it appears in the first section and sections 5 and 6; and

(2) by striking "or pears" each place it appears in the first section and sections 2, 3, and 4.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) 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, the Export Apple Act replaces the Export Apple and Pear Act, which was enacted on June 10, 1933. Currently, this 66-year-old legislation requires that apples and pears meet certain standards prior to export in order to ensure only high-quality U.S. fruit moves into foreign commerce.

H.R. 609 amends the 1933 act by removing pears from the language, and it will be permitting the means to increase the export of pears.

H.R. 609, which is sponsored by the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) removes pears from the act, thereby allowing U.S. exporters greater flexibility in the changing international marketplace and the opportunity to increase exports by gaining a foothold in emerging markets.

The USDA has advised the committee that mandatory Federal quality

standards for pears are no longer needed to assure the high quality of exporting pears. The USDA supports enactment of H.R. 609. As world economies improve and areas of trade continue to decrease, new market opportunities for fresh pears arise. In order to provide the flexibility to meet the requirements of these new opportunities, H.R. 609 should be passed, and I would urge that my colleagues support this legislation.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 609, which updates the Apple and Pear Export Act. For many years, the Apple and Pear Export Act served pear growers well by ensuring a quality product to consumers overseas. The pear industry is now seeking greater flexibility to sell its product in emerging markets around the world.

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Recently, the sale of 200,000 cartons of pears to Russia was made possible by a January, 1997, amendment to the act that allowed for the shipment of a more competitive grade of pears to that country. Our farmers are increasingly dependent on foreign markets. It is therefore essential that regulations governing the agricultural industry be designed to help producers compete in those markets.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this regulatory improvement that will give pear growers greater flexibility to market their product.

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 Oregon (Mr. WALDEN), the gentleman who sponsored this bill and has done a great job in just a few weeks of getting this bill moved forward. We appreciate and commend his work.

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Texas (Chairman COMBEST) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) for their support of this legislation, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this measure.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 609 will help expand export markets for our Nation's pear growers. The Export Apple and Pear Act passed in 1933 required that apples and pears meet certain standards prior to export to ensure that only the top quality pears and apples were exported.

The United States Department of Agriculture has stated that, because of private contractual arrangements between buyers and sellers, increasingly those arrangements are controlling the quality of U.S. pear exports. The USDA believes that mandatory Federal quality standards, as currently established under the act, are no longer needed to assure the high quality of exported pears.

As new markets have opened up in the last decade, opportunities for sale of lower grade and less expensive pears have arisen. Because of the 1933 act, U.S. producers and exporters of pears have been unable to meet the demand for lower grade pears in other countries without receiving a waiver of the act from USDA.

The pear industry has on two occasions over the past decade petitioned and received a waiver from the USDA to sell non-U.S. Grade Number One and Fancy Grade winter pears in the emerging markets of Central and South America and Russia. The waiver for Russia allowed the industry to sell 200,000 cartons of pears to that Nation in 1997. Past experience indicates that when these markets can afford it, they will move on to purchase our higher grade fruit.

As world economies improve and barriers to trade continue to decrease, new market opportunities for fresh pears arise. This legislation will allow our pear growers to get a foothold in emerging foreign markets. In order to provide the flexibility to meet the requirements of these two opportunities without having to seek new exemptions, the fresh pear industry is seeking to be removed from the 1933 Export Apple and Pear Act.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, as I mentioned, has the support of the USDA, pear industry and is not opposed by the apple industry. Furthermore, the Congressional Budget Office has determined that this legislation would not impose any costs on the Federal Government. H.R. 609 is sound policy that allows U.S. pear growers and exporters the flexibility to compete in emerging foreign markets.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this important legislation to our pear growers, especially those of the Northwest, and I commend and thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) of the House Committee on Agriculture for passage of this measure to the floor.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 609.

The question was taken.

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. COMBEST. 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 just considered.

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

There was no objection.

NULLIFYING RESERVATION OF FUNDS FOR GUARANTEED LOANS UNDER CONSOLIDATED FARM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACT

Mr. COMBEST. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 882) to nullify any reservation of funds during fiscal year 1999 for guaranteed loans under the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act for qualified beginning farmers or ranchers, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 882

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

SECTION 1. NULLIFICATION OF RESERVATION OF FUNDS DURING FISCAL YEAR 1999 FOR GUARANTEED LOANS UNDER THE CONSOLIDATED FARM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACT FOR QUALIFIED BEGINNING FARMERS OR RANCHERS.

Amounts shall be made available pursuant to section 346(b)(1)(D) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act for guaranteed loans, without regard to any reservation under section 346(b)(2)(B) of such Act.

SEC. 2. QUALIFIED BEGINNING FARMERS AND RANCHERS TO BE GIVEN PRIORITY IN MAKING GUARANTEED LOANS UNDER THE CONSOLIDATED FARM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACT FROM SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1999.

In making guaranteed loans under the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act from funds made available pursuant to any Act making supplemental appropriations for fiscal year 1999, the Secretary of Agriculture shall, to the extent practicable, give priority to making such loans to qualified beginning farmers and ranchers (as defined in section 343(a)(11) of such Act).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. COMBEST) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) 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, I bring to the floor a bill, H.R. 882. This bill costs nothing but will provide immediate relief to the Nation's farmers and ranchers who are today experiencing a serious credit crunch brought on by natural disasters and low commodity prices.

I am pleased to be joined by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM), the ranking Democrat on the Committee on Agriculture, as well as the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. BARRETT), the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. MINGE), and a number of other Members in introducing this measure.

Our bill is simple and straightforward. Currently, funds for guaranteed ownership loans are exhausted in