

CRISIS IN AGRICULTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, in Kansas, combines and harvesting crews have just finished another annual wheat harvest. While many farmers have seen harvests come and go, this one will certainly be one to remember.

Unfortunately, it is the low wheat prices that will not be forgotten. Wheat prices recently closed in Goodland, Kansas at \$1.96 a bushel, the lowest price in over 30 years.

Let me put this disaster in perspective. In my State of Kansas alone, the loss in market value of the wheat crop will be over \$500 million below last year's dismal level. Let me restate that. In one State, in one crop, the lost value is a half a billion dollars when compared to last year's income. Nationwide, the losses will be tremendous. In Kansas, that is \$500 million less that farmers have to pay bills and to take care of their families.

I do not know exactly what disaster relief legislation this year will look like, but I must impress upon my fellow Members of Congress the seriousness of the circumstance and the ongoing damage to the agricultural economy.

This year, there will be no crop with higher prices that comes to the rescue of the wheat farmer. United States Department of Agriculture indicates that corn prices are at a 10-year low and soybean prices are at a 27-year low, with both prices to decline further by the time of their fall harvest.

This problem, however, is not about numbers, estimates, or projections. It is about people. It is about the future of rural America and the survival of a generation of our farmers and ranchers.

Mr. Speaker, I received a letter, for example, from my constituents that is pretty typical. "Dear sir: We are now beginning the 1999 wheat harvest in Kansas. The price of wheat here in Ness County is \$2.22," this is back in June, "as of close of markets on June 19, lower than we could sell wheat for in the troubled 80's.

"Prices of all our supplies, seeds, fertilizer, et cetera, have rose steadily since then and are still going up. Are farmers not supposed to have a decent living for all their hard work? We as farmers have every right to just as good a living as most blue collar workers in this country. Someone, Senators, Representatives, administration, and Agriculture Secretary need to spend a little more time and effort to improve our circumstances.

"Most farmers have land payments coming due in August. Interest on them went up again. Payments of harvest expenses, fuel, repairs and labor all have to be paid; \$2.22 a bushel of wheat does not go very far to pay an \$8,000 land payment and expect a living

expense the rest of the year. Farmers cannot be put on hold much longer. Something needs to be done now, not 6 months from now.

"I have farming interests in Ness and Hodgeman Counties in Kansas. My husband passed away in 1992 and my son is trying to hold things together. We are just a medium-sized family farm of which there are a great many here in the Midwest."

As the writer of this letter says, something needs to be done now, not 6 months from now.

Mr. Speaker, on July 1, I joined other Members interested in agriculture, Members of this Congress, in a letter to President Clinton. In that letter, we outlined our request to work with the President and the administration in providing assistance to agriculture producers this year.

Today, I rise to urge all my colleagues in Congress to join in the efforts as we work together to try to make certain that we do not lose another generation of the American farmer and rancher.

OLDER AMERICANS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. REYNOLDS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to talk about an issue that is critical to the older Americans in this country and especially to those in my home State of Florida, the Older Americans Act.

Since its enactment in 1965, the Older Americans Act has provided for the delivery and support of nutritious service to our elderly population. The support services and centers program provide funds to States for a wide variety of social services and activities including community service employment programs, home delivered meals, transportation assistance, home care, recreation activities, elderly rights protection, and research, training and demonstration programs.

The Title III Nutrition Program is the Older Americans Act's largest program representing 43 percent of the total funds. It provides 240 million meals to over 3 million elderly persons who are traditionally more likely to be poor, to live alone, and to be members of minority groups. They are also more likely to have health and functional limitations that place them at nutritional risk. For most of the participants in the program, these meals are the primary source of daily nutrition.

The Older Americans Act also authorizes the Senior Community Service Employment Program that provides opportunities for part-time employment in community service activities for unemployed, low-income older persons. This program is administered by elderly advocacy groups, including Green Thumb, National Center on Black Aged, and the American Association of Retired Persons.

This program has three goals: provide employment opportunities for older persons, create a pool to provide community service, and supplement the income of low-income older persons.

These programs are so vitally important to the health and well-being of our senior citizens, those who work all their lives to make America what it is today. We need to do the right thing for our seniors and reauthorize the Older Americans Act.

Mr. Speaker, this program is also one that I have visited in Jacksonville, Orlando, Daytona, Palatka in Florida. But I was recently in Millen, Georgia, and I would like to submit this article to the RECORD. It indicates "Meals on Wheels is about more than just food.

"The volunteers are great. They are nice as they can be and they help me get things if I need them."

I want to read one brief remark about the program. "Presently, the program cost \$7,000 a month to feed all of the clients." However, the funds is currently at a serious low point. In other words, these programs around the country are being shut down or terminated because we have not reauthorized this program, the Older Americans Act.

I do not understand what is more important than taking care of our seniors when they need us. I am hoping that this is one program that we will put on our agenda to fund and reauthorize before we leave for the August recess.

Mr. Speaker, the article I referred to is as follows:

MEALS ON WHEELS IS ABOUT MORE THAN FOOD

(By Karen Ludwig)

Monday through Friday, five days a week, 250 days per year. That's how often Houston County residents who qualify for Meals on Wheels can depend on the organization to deliver nutritious, hot and tasty noon meals with a smile.

Meals on Wheels, incorporated in the fall of 1974, is a private, nonprofit organization that provides programs and services to the elderly of Houston County, according to Donna James, executive director.

"Our highest bracket of clients are people who are 80 years old and above," said James.

Sixty-five volunteer drivers deliver meals to 143 clients. A wide variety of people, including retirees, a base squadron and even home-schooled children who deliver meals with their parents as an exercise in community service volunteer to deliver meals.

"Many of the drivers do more than just deliver meals," said James. "They are great with the clients. Some drivers presently and in the past have gone over to clients' houses and helped them with odd jobs around the house."

Velda Paquet, Warner Robins site aid, not only packs meals for the clients and does secretarial work, but she also bakes cookies and visits clients even when she's not working.

"Velda is my right-hand man," said James. "She's efficient, packs the meals, works at the office and keeps me hopping. It's hard to find people like her."

Many of the drivers also cheer up clients. James said. Marjorie Moore, a client for eight years, said she loves it when the home-schooled children deliver meals with their parents.