

MR. COCHRAN. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. COCHRAN and Mr. HUTCHINSON pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 169 are located in today's RECORD under "Submission of Concurrent and Senate Resolutions.")

#### WETLANDS RESERVE PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, earlier this week I introduced the Hutchinson-Lincoln Wetlands Reserve Program Enhancement Act to help strengthen the popular Wetlands Reserve Program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Simply put, this legislation will act to strengthen the current WRP which provides financial incentives to farmers and private landowners who voluntarily set aside marginal lands and restore them to optimal wetland wildlife habitat.

These restored wildlife areas are some of the best wildlife conservation habitat in America and are critical to the future of waterfowl throughout our Nation. Established by the 1990 farm bill as a long-term conservation option for farmers, the WRP protects farm wetlands using 10-year, 30-year, and permanent easements. Land which is eligible for WRP is characterized by wetlands that are farmed, lands adjacent to protected wetlands, and croplands and pastures which are naturally prone to flooding.

If eligible, the landowner voluntarily limits the use of the lands while retaining private ownership and access to the land. In addition, they may also lease the land for hunting, fishing, and other undeveloped recreational activities. The NRCS, in conjunction with the landowner, then develops a plan for the restoration and the maintenance of the wetland.

Once restored, wetlands act to: No. 1, improve water quality by filtering sediments; No. 2, reduce flooding; No. 3, recharge ground water; No. 4, promote biological diversity; and No. 5, furnish educational, recreational, and aesthetic benefits. These benefits, as a result of the WRP, have helped landowners throughout the 46 States where farmers have currently enrolled in what has become a very successful program.

At the local level, I want to mention three farmers in Arkansas who are benefiting from the WRP. Hattie Neely of Moro, AR, in Lee County, grows soybeans and has enrolled 31 acres in this very important program. Then there is Donald Wallace of Gillett, AR, in Arkansas County, who grows soybeans, and he has enrolled 30 acres in the WRP. And Dick Carmichael of Monticello, AR, in Drew County, grows soybeans and rice and has enrolled 115 acres in the WRP.

In each case, these farmers are using the WRP to restore bottom land hardwood forests and a natural wildlife habitat. Other farmers in Arkansas are using WRP to retire agricultural lands

unsuited for crop production because of elevated levels of salt from irrigation water. In this case, WRP lands filter runoff, keeping salts and sediments in the wetlands and out of the natural waterways.

Despite the benefits to farmers across America, the WRP will soon become a victim of its own success. The current WRP is authorized to enroll up to 975,000 acres nationally through the year 2002. WRP is in such high demand from America's farmers that it will reach its acreage cap next year. The top 10 States—Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, California, Missouri, Iowa, Texas, Florida, Oklahoma, and Illinois—have a combined enrollment of almost 427,000 acres in these States alone.

In response to the success of WRP, my bill seeks to expand the acreage cap from the proposed 180,000 acres in fiscal year 2000 to a newly authorized maximum of 250,000 acres per year through the year 2005. This will help to ensure that farmers who want to enroll in the program will have the option to do so.

There is no doubt that the American farmer faces an industry that is in crisis. In the race to find solutions for the many challenges facing farmers, I want to ensure that my colleagues in the Senate do not overlook the importance of conservation to family farmers, both as a way to protect valuable wildlife resources and as a source of additional income.

In the Mississippi Delta, family farmers are using the WRP to move frequently flooded farmland away from high-risk, high-cost farming back to original hardwood timberlands.

Mr. President, I thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of family farmers who care about protecting the natural resources with which they are entrusted. I ask my colleagues to consider the importance of wildlife conservation in the life of family farmers. Join me in the support of what I think is very good, very important, bipartisan conservation legislation.

#### MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 3:20 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. Berry, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bill, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 2587. An act making appropriations for the government of the District of Columbia and other activities chargeable in whole or in part against revenues of said District for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2000, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 9355(a), the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House to the Board of Visitors to the United States Air Force Academy: Mr. THOMPSON of California and Mr. DICKS of Washington.

The message further announced that pursuant to section 5(b) of Public Law

93-642 (20 U.S.C. 2004(b)), the Speaker appoints the following Members of the House as Members of the Board of Trustees of the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation: Mrs. EMERSON of Missouri and Mr. SKELTON of Missouri.

The message also announced that the House insists upon its amendments to the bill (S. 900) to enhance competition in the financial services industry by providing a prudential framework for the affiliation of banks, securities firms, insurance companies, and other financial service providers, and for other purposes, disagreed to by the Senate, and agree to the conference asked by the Senate on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon; and appoints the following Members as the managers of the conference on the part of the House:

From the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, for consideration of the Senate bill, and the House amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Mr. LEACH, Mr. MCCOLLUM, Mrs. ROUKEMA, Mr. BEREUTER, Mr. BAKER, Mr. LAZIO, Mr. BACHUS, Mr. CASTLE, Mr. LAFALCE, and Mr. VENTO.

As additional conferees from the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, for consideration of titles I, III (except section 304) IV, and VII of the Senate bill, and title I of the House amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, Mr. KANJORSKI, Ms. WATERS, and Mrs. MALONEY of New York.

As additional conferees from the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, for consideration of title V of the Senate bill, and title II of the House amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Mr. KANJORSKI, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Mr. WATT of North Carolina, and Mr. MALONEY of Connecticut.

As additional conferees from the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, for consideration of title II of the Senate bill, and title III of the House amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Mr. KANJORSKI, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, and Ms. HOOLEY of Oregon.

As additional conferees from the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, for consideration of title VI of the Senate bill, and title IV of the House amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Ms. WATERS, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Mr. GUTIERREZ, and Mr. BENTSEN.

As additional conferees from the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, for consideration of section 304 of the Senate bill, and title V of the House amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Mr. FRANKS of Massachusetts, Mr. KANJORSKI, Ms. WATERS, and Mr. ACKERMAN.

From the Committee on Commerce, for consideration of the Senate bill, and the House amendment, and modifications committed to conference: Mr.