

Farmers and ranchers, able to eke out a living from the land in past years, now find it almost impossible to break even. Most are losing money and fighting to stay in the farming business. And, the crisis line is busy.

We are all aware of the problems tobacco is having.

But, in North Carolina, according to a recent news report, the state's top farm commodity, hogs, have experienced a fifty percent drop in prices since 1996. Wheat is down forty-two percent. Soybeans are down thirty-six percent. Corn—thirty-one percent; peanuts—twenty-eight percent.

Turkey and cotton prices are down twenty-three percent, since 1996.

In fact, my friends, at the time I made my remarks, there was no commodity in North Carolina that makes money for farmers. And, the crisis line is busy. In 1862, the year the Department of Agriculture was created, ninety percent of the population farmed for a living.

Today, American producers represent less than 3 percent of the population.

By 1992, there were only 1.1 million small farms left in the United States, a 45 percent decline from 1959! North Carolina had only a little over 39,000 farms left in 1992, a 23 percent decline. In 1920, there were over 6 million farms in the United States and close to a sixth—926,000 were operated by African-Americans. In 1992, the landscape was very, very different.

Only 1 percent of the farms in the United States are operated by African-Americans.

One percent—18,816, is a paltry sum when African-Americans comprise 13 percent of the total American population.

In my home state of North Carolina, there has been a 64 percent decline in minority farmers, just over the last 15 years, from 6,996 farms in 1978 to 2,498 farms in 1992.

All farmers are suffering under this severe economic downturn.

Just before I made my remarks on the Floor, I spoke with a farmer who was working off the farm—not to earn extra money—but, to earn enough money to save his small farm.

He made no money from the farm, in fact he lost money.

Taking a job off the farm was the only thing he could do to save his farm and pass it on to his children.

The man is seventy years old.

And, the crisis line is busy.

Mr. Speaker, when next you drive through a state where the food and fiber for America is produced—the least expensive and best quality food and fiber in the world—take note of the farm, and the people who are trying to make their living from the land.

It will take us, Congress, to relieve the pressure on the national crisis lines.

Farmers and farm families deserve a chance—a chance for the dwindling number of farmers and ranchers who feed and help clothe us at prices that are unmatched around the world.

I am reminded of the story that the former Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Kika De LeGarza, would tell.

While touring a nuclear submarine, he asked the Commander how long could it stay submerged.

After some reluctance in responding to what the Commander considered top secret information, he finally told the Chairman, "As long as the food lasts."

Food, my friends, is vital to America's defense and national security.

And, the crisis line is busy.

Before the "Freedom to Farm" Bill of 1996, the farm price safety net was shield against uncertain and fluctuating commodity prices.

When that Bill was being considered, we referred to it as "Freedom to Fail." I am sad to report that our admonitions have been far too accurate. We must now correct that error.

If we do nothing about the real problems facing these hard-working citizens, they may not be there at a later time.

And, that will hurt all of us, because we too, as human beings, can stay only as long as the food lasts.

That is why we need a Rural Caucus, and that is why we are here today.

#### A TRIBUTE—LOUIS BRACH WAS TRULY A HERO

### HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 14, 2000*

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, I want to ask that we all pause for a moment to remember a man who we have lost, Louis Brach. Though he is gone, he will live on in the hearts of all who knew him and be remembered for long years by many who didn't.

Mr. Brach was a former mayor, city councilman, as well as, an entrepreneur in Grand Junction. He was known as a wonderful businessman and had the gift of recognizing opportunity well ahead of others. As the owner of Brach's Market, he would go out of his way to tend to all of his customers. When he moved to Grand Junction at the age of 5, he knew that he was destined to make a difference.

Louis Brach is someone who will be missed by many. His friends and family will miss the man that they all enjoyed spending time with. The rest of us will miss the man who exemplified the selflessness that so few truly possess. But, when we lose a man such as Mr. Brach, being missed is certainly no precursor to being forgotten. And, everyone who ever knew him, will walk through life differently for it.

#### RECOGNITION OF JO-ANNE F. WILKIE

### HON. DAVID E. BONIOR

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 14, 2000*

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Jo-Anne Wilkie of St. Clair, Michigan for her inexhaustible efforts to further her community's appreciation of the arts.

For the past fifteen years, Jo-Anne has served as the Executive Director of The Art Center in Mount Clemens, Michigan. She has worked relentlessly to expose our community to the fine arts, as well as to preserve the historic center for generations to come. Under Jo-Anne's direction the center has truly prospered, and her work on the "Art in Public Places" program has made a tangible contribution to the lives of thousands by bringing fine art out of the confines of museums and into the streets and parks of our community.

Jo-Anne's work in Mount Clemens is only one chapter in a life that has been devoted to serving her community. Before coming to Mount Clemens, Jo-Anne was an elementary school vocal music teacher, the Founding Executive Director of the Downriver Council for the Arts, and the General Supervisor of Arts and Special Programs for the City of Indianapolis Department of Parks and Recreation. For her extraordinary commitment and hard work, Jo-Anne was awarded the key to the City of Indianapolis.

Jo-Anne is now being honored by the Daughters of Isabella Queen of the Skies Circle No. 683, and I ask that you join with me in commending Jo-Anne Wilkie for her inspiring devotion to the improvement of our community through the arts.

#### HONORING THE LATE WALTER HALL

### HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 14, 2000*

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today with great sadness to honor Walter Hall, who passed away on Sunday afternoon at age 92. Walter Hall, known by many as "Mr. Democrat" was a man who not only talked the talk, but walked the walk. He was a true visionary with a vision of a better life for all Americans.

He spent his life fighting for equality, justice, and opportunity. Walter was at the forefront of the civil rights movement, he spoke out eloquently about his belief that all men were created equal. He led the charge to abolish the poll tax, supported equal rights for women, and worked for the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

He was a community activist who believed in opportunity for all, and was always looking to the future of the Southeast Texas-Gulf Coast area. He negotiated with the city of Houston to supply clean drinking water to Galveston County cities, and helped build the first water and sewer facilities in League City, Hitchcock, La Marque, Dickinson, Alta Loma, Kemah and Friendswood. He is credited with bringing NASA to the Clear Lake area, for the location of the Mainland Medical Center, and for the expansion of the seawalls of Texas City and Galveston. Throughout his long and successful career as a banker he provided opportunity to many through small business loans.

He was a man of humble beginnings who became a man of great fortune and power. He served as a mentor for many young people interested in politics, and was a close friend of President Lyndon B. Johnson and Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn. "Mr. Democrat" was a liberal Democrat and proud of it. Walter was a tremendous influence on the political community in Texas, and those in the political arena often sought his advice. He was actively involved with Lyndon Johnson, Ralph Yarborough, Jack Brooks, myself, and numerous other national, state, and local public officials.

Walter was a family man. He married his high school sweetheart Helen, had three sons, 8 grandchildren, and 5 great grandchildren. In 1999 he donated Helen's Garden to the City of League City, a park in the Historical section