

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SPECTER). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCY PROGRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now proceed to the consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 4461, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee on conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill, H.R. 4461, making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, the Food and Drug Administration, and related agency programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement of the Senate amendment, and the Senate agree to the same, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of the House.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the RECORD of Friday, October 6, 2000.)

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my prepared remarks describing the provisions of this conference report be printed at this point in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am very pleased to announce to the Senate that we successfully completed action in our conference committee and brought back to the Senate a bill that has already been approved by the other body by a substantial vote of support, and indications are that the President is prepared to sign this conference report.

I am pleased to make that announcement because during the development of this legislation and the markup sessions that we held here in the Senate, and discussions of the bill on the floor of the Senate, there were some very contentious and controversial issues that were debated and considered. We didn't achieve all of the successes that Senators wanted to achieve, as is usually the case in the situation where you are negotiating compromise with the other body and dealing with views and opinions reflected in the policies of the administration. But, taken together, given the expressions of support and interest in the Senate for the provisions that are in the bill, I am confident that most Senators will be very pleased with this result.

This is a good bill. It deserves the support of the Senate.

It provides a restrained approach to funding the activities of the Agencies

and Departments of Government that are funded in this bill.

The total dollar amount for new budget authority, for example, is less than the fiscal year 2000 enacted level. It is less than the level requested by the President. It is less than the House-passed bill level, and it is less than the Senate-passed bill level.

The fact is, every effort was made during consideration of this bill to be restrained and responsible in the allocation of funds that are available to this subcommittee under the budget resolution.

The conference agreement provides total new budget authority of \$74.5 billion for programs and activities of the United States Department of Agriculture (except for the Forest Service which is funded by the Interior Appropriations bill), the Food and Drug Administration, and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. This is approximately \$1.1 billion less than the fiscal year 2000 enacted level and \$2.3 billion less than the level requested by the President. It is \$651 million less than the House-passed bill level, and \$859 million less than the Senate-passed bill level.

This conference report also includes an additional \$3.6 billion in emergency appropriations to compensate agricultural producers for losses suffered due to drought, fires, and other natural disasters; to meet conservation needs; and to provide relief to rural communities.

Including Congressional budget scorekeeping adjustments and prior-year spending actions, this conference agreement provides total non-emergency discretionary spending for fiscal year 2001 of just over \$15 billion in budget authority and outlays.

I am pleased to report that this conference report provides funding at the President's request level, an increase of nearly \$58 million from the fiscal year 2000 level, for activities and programs in this bill which are part of the Administration's "Food Safety Initiative."

The conference report provides adequate funding in our view for the Food Safety and Inspection Service, which has the responsibility of conducting inspections and monitoring the safety of our Nation's food supply to ensure that the food that is consumed by Americans and produced and processed here is fit for human consumption, and free from contamination.

This is a big challenge. It is a big worry all over the country because there have been instances where there have been problems in this area. We think this conference report responds to those concerns and that will have a very positive influence in helping to solve problems in this area of food safety.

Let me also point out the emphasis in this conference report on agricultural research and education programs. We have to maintain a high level of technological sophistication in order to continue to produce an adequate

amount of food and fiber for our country at reasonable prices, and to do so in a way that permits a level of profit for those engaged in farming operations to stay in business. It is very difficult in many areas of the country now for farmers and ranchers to make ends meet. They are confronted with a wide range of difficulties.

We have to invest in research to try to find new ways of improving yields for the crops that are produced in our country, and to do so in a way that is not threatening to the environment or to the citizens of our country. We have a heightened awareness of problems that can occur in this area.

There is almost a near hysteria in Europe over this issue. We are confronting difficulties in trade because we are having problems getting licenses for commodities and foods that are produced in the United States because they have genetically modified organisms—GMOs—which is a big issue in the U.K. particularly. The tabloids have been fanning the flames of the hysteria that has taken hold there. The European Union has been very hesitant and difficult to deal with in approving licenses from exporters who would like to sell what they are producing in the European market. In my view, many of these practices are unfair and not based on sound science.

But we need to have a regiment of research and development that is beyond question in terms of its impact on human health and our environment. That is why it is as important this year, more important than ever before, to have a robust research and education program that is supported by the Department of Agriculture. In colleges and universities and in Agricultural Research Service laboratories all around the country, there are funds that will be made available to help achieve the goals in this area.

This conference agreement provides increased appropriations for agriculture research and education programs. Total appropriations of nearly \$2 billion are provided for the Agriculture Research Service and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, \$126 million more than the fiscal year 2000 level and \$62 million more than the Senate-passed bill level. In addition, as requested by the President and provided in the Senate bill, \$120 million in fiscal year 2000 funding will be available in fiscal year 2001 to fund the Initiative for Future Agriculture and Food Systems.

Approximately \$34 billion, close to 46 percent of the total new budget authority provided by this conference report, is for domestic food programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These include food stamps; commodity assistance; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); the school lunch and breakfast programs; and the school breakfast pilot program, which is funded at \$6 million. Included in this amount is the Senate-