

Conferees should also be made aware that their colleagues in the House agree that the intent of the provision was to allow the Secretary of Agriculture and the States appropriate flexibility in using the resources of existing agricultural conservation and forestry programs. In supporting this program during the farm bill, it was not our intent, nor is it today, to require new or earmarked funding. The USDA has not yet implemented this program because of what I believe is a misunderstanding regarding the concept of the program and the congressional intent contained within the farm bill. This confusion should be resolved so that this example of effective conservation policy can be realized.

Mr. KOHL. I thank my colleagues for their interest in this program, and I want you to know that I understand the importance the Delmarva Conservation Corridor Demonstration Program has to the State of Delaware and the entire Delmarva Peninsula. I can assure you both that I will support this project in conference and do all I can to see that it becomes a reality.

VITICULTURE ASSISTANCE FOR THE STATE OF IOWA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the State of Iowa has a blossoming viticulture industry, but the demand for technical assistance far exceeds the State's current resources. I have discussed this problem with the Senator from Utah and I appreciate his interest in the issue.

Mr. BENNETT. The Senator from Iowa has explained to me that his State is in need of specialized assistance through funding for a viticulture technician to provide on-site technical assistance.

Mr. GRASSLEY. A viticulture technician would help new producers with the basic knowledge needed about the industry. Such assistance will enable growers to benefit from increased production, and in turn, produce more successful vineyard businesses in Iowa.

This proposal has tremendous support from the Iowa Grape Growers Association, the Mississippi Valley Grape Growers Association, the Western Iowa Grape Growers Association, and the Iowa Wine and Grape Development Commission.

STUDY ON NORTH CAROLINA HORTICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mrs. DOLE. Mr. President, the horticulture industry in North Carolina is a fast growing industry contributing significantly to the State's economy. Though local, State and Federal officials know that the industry is important, there has been no analysis done to quantify the impact of this industry on North Carolina's economy.

Perhaps a possible remedy might be to direct the USDA Economic Research Service to coordinate with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and NC State University to collect the economic data and do the statistical analysis necessary to conduct this study.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, let me say to the Senator from North Carolina that I appreciate the suggestion particularly in light of the budget constraints that we face. I will be happy to look into this matter to see if there is a workable solution that will achieve the desired result.

Mrs. DOLE. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for his consideration on this matter.

NATIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President I would like to engage in a colloquy with the distinguished Chairman and Ranking Member of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee regarding funding for the National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) for federal fiscal year 2004.

Last year, Congress included in the Farm Bill the provisions of the National Rural Development Partnership Act, which I sponsored along with the Senior Senator from North Dakota and 43 of our colleagues. The Farm Bill's NRDP language authorizes annual appropriations of up to \$10 million. This authorization was included because of a recognition that the funding arrangement for the Partnership, which has been in place since its establishment a dozen years ago, has failed to provide adequate resources for the NRDP and the state rural development councils (SRDCs). That funding arrangement has depended on voluntary contributions of discretionary funds from USDA and four other federal agencies, as well as matching funds from the states and others.

The work of the NRDP and SRDCs is more important than ever. The current economic downturn has hit rural America hard. Drought and low prices have had a devastating impact on production agriculture, which continues to be the economic foundation of many rural communities. Other rural communities that depend on logging or mining have seen employment and economic activity diminish in those important industries. The nationwide decline in manufacturing has resulted in the closure of thousands of factories in rural areas, eliminating the sole or principal source of good-paying jobs in many rural communities. This situation has been aggravated by the fiscal challenges facing most State governments. As States slash budgets, the level of vital services upon which rural residents depend—from education and health care to transportation and libraries—has been greatly diminished. At this dire time in rural America, we must support organizations like the SRDCs which can help our citizens respond to the many challenges they face.

This year's committee report accompanying the fiscal year 2004 Agriculture Appropriations Bill includes language encouraging the USDA to continue its support of the NRDP and SRDCs by providing stable funding, technical support, and guidance practices as they have done over past years.

Similar language was included in the Senate subcommittee's report on the fiscal year 2003 Agricultural Appropriations bill.

I appreciate the support the Chairman and Ranking Member have shown for the NRDP and SRDCs. Besides continuing current USDA involvement, it is important to continue and intensify its efforts to secure support for the NRDP and SRDCs from other federal agencies and with rural responsibilities as it has done successfully in the past. This is consistent with the intention of Congress in the Conference Committee Report of the 2002 Farm Bill.

The committee report has spoken to the importance of the Department continuing to support the continued development and increased involvement of the NRDP and SRDCs. I would also appreciate the Committee's continued emphasis on importance of multi-agency cooperation with USDA to strengthen this vital effort to spur and strengthen our rural economies.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I concur with my colleague's sentiments on the importance of multi-agency involvement in rural development. I appreciate the Senator's comments and look forward to our continuing to work together to support this effort when this bill goes to conference.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, our subcommittee has a consistent history of supporting this rural development effort and promoting this kind of multidisciplinary approach. That was the intent of our committee report and, I am sure, will continue to be an important focus of the subcommittee.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BENNETT. I ask that there now be a period of morning business with Senators speaking for up to 10 minutes each.

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

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

Mr. BAYH. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart and deep sense of gratitude to honor the live of a brave young man from Fort Wayne, IN. Specialist Brian H. Penisten, 28 years old, died in Al Fallujah on November 2, 2003, after the Chinook helicopter he was traveling in made a crash landing. Brian joined the Army with his entire life before him. He chose to risk everything to fight for the values Americans hold close to our hearts, in a land halfway around the world.

Brian was the seventeenth Hoosier soldier to be killed while serving his country in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Brian leaves behind his father, John Penisten, his mother, Mona, his