

"We urge the United States Congress not to take any action that would have the effect of undermining or undoing the legislative and administrative moratoria that have protected our shore from the risk of drilling for 25 years."—Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell (R).

"Any pollution associated with offshore drilling incidents could easily spread from one state to adjacent states that have chosen to ban exploration and production. This would expose Maine's coastal ecosystem and economy to unacceptable levels of risk from potential drilling and associated accidents over which we would have no control."—Maine Governor John E. Baldacci (D).

"New Jersey and its elected officials—at the federal, state and local levels—have demonstrated their leadership on coastal protection, whether by enacting land use laws to preserve our shoreline, working for sustainable management of our fishery resources, protecting endangered marine and other species, or leading the fight to end ocean dumping of human and other wastes. We must, once again, stand united against this latest threat to our shore ecosystem."—New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine (D).

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I wish to add 5 minutes to the time I was allocated, so it would be 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I say to my colleague, Senator LANDRIEU—

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, if I could ask unanimous consent that following the Senator from Idaho—I believe right now the Senator from California is to be followed by the Senator from Idaho—I ask unanimous consent that following the Senator from Massachusetts be allocated 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. Thank you, Mr. President. I trust my 15 minutes will start at this point.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mrs. BOXER. Thank you so much.

Mr. President, I say to my colleague Senator LANDRIEU, I think she made a very clear statement about where we stand on oil drilling in this country. And she is so right. A narrow bill passed here that is going to help her State. It is going to help the country. It stays away from the hot-button issues. It stays away from the California coastline, which Republicans and Democrats in our State are united in saying we need that coastline protected for our economy. It is quite different than my friend's. We respect each other, and we understand it.

So what she is simply saying to the House is: We want to do something. We do not want to be a do-nothing Congress. Let's do something. Let's do the bill the Senate crafted, which again, I say to the Presiding Officer, you were involved in.

Just before she left the Chamber, I wanted to say how strongly I appreciate her explanation of where we are.

AGRICULTURAL EMERGENCY

Mrs. BOXER. Well, Mr. President, we have a very narrow bill before us, the border fence bill, which we cannot broaden; and that is why I opposed cloture on that bill. I do not oppose building a fence where you need to do it, where the border is porous. I do not have a problem with that. What I have a problem with is this narrow approach to the immigration issue which precludes us from truly fixing our problems.

We are ignoring a lot of problems in this Congress, but I will tell you what is emerging as an enormous problem, and that is, the problem that farms are having all across this country because we have neglected to take care of the issue of farm labor.

In California, our farm community is in serious trouble. I sat with my dairy folks, my ranchers, my farmers. We grow over 80 crops in our State. Senator FEINSTEIN was eloquent in laying out how huge an industry it is. These are folks who never come to me with fear in their eyes. They are frightened because their crops are dying on the vine and in the fields across the State of California, and from what I have heard, in other States as well.

This is tragic for us. We could lose these farmers. We could lose agriculture. And we have a chance—Senator CRAIG, Senator FEINSTEIN, and I, and others, have teamed up and said: Let's use this opportunity to broaden our approach. Senator KENNEDY, of course, was the first to craft a comprehensive piece of legislation, which we voted out of here.

Now, I do not understand—I spoke with Senator FRIST, and he seemed to acknowledge there is a problem—why we cannot permit as part of this fence bill a very simple emergency piece of legislation that will sunset but just says let's make sure our agriculture community can survive, can continue.

Let me show you a photograph of one of my constituents looking at her crop of pears, which is rotting on the ground. You look at her face, and you see what this means to her.

Let me tell you what it means to the people of our Nation. We export these fruits and vegetables all throughout the Nation and, of course, throughout the world. It is going to mean higher prices, that decreased availability of products. But this Congress will not let us address this issue.

To the Republican leadership, I beg you one more time—and even some in your own party are begging you—we have to do more than one thing at a time. You have to take the problem and solve it. So this whole notion of we will take care of the fence first, and in a few years we will take care of something else—let me tell you, these farmers cannot last. They are facing economic disaster.

As I said before, this is not a Democratic or Republican issue. I can assure you that the people who have come to see me are part of the Republican base. They are perplexed. They do not understand it. They are the owners, entrepreneurs, the family farmers, the large farmers, and they have come together with labor. It was intense to get the two sides together. It started in the late nineties.

I remember when Senators CRAIG and KENNEDY came with great excitement and said that we have a deal between labor and management, everyone supports AgJobs. We went out to the floor and we have more than 60 votes for this. Yet because of the maneuvers on the floor by the Republican leadership, we cannot offer the AgJobs bill. No one can explain it to me.

Republicans are facing the charge of being a do-nothing Congress. We want to do something for our farmers. We want to help you. Let's please take care of our farmers. Take care of this woman who is looking at her whole life disappear in front of her because she doesn't have enough labor to pick these pears.

The United Fresh Produce Association wrote Senator FRIST a letter. It has a headline that I have never seen in a letter:

Farmers to Congress: Support a Safe and Secure American Food Supply, Pass an Immigration Fix Before the Election of 2006.

These are people who don't really get that involved in politics, but they get it. They know an election is coming, and they are sending us a message to fix this. Further, they say:

A safe and domestic food supply is a national priority at risk. With real labor shortages emerging, agriculture needs legislative relief now. The choice is simple: Import needed labor, or import our food.

What they are saying is, at the end of the day, we will not have a safe, secure, and healthy food supply. This is not the time, it seems to me, that we want to lose that. With all of the talk about terrorism—and we all fear it—we want a safe food supply. We don't want to have to depend on food coming in from other places. We want to depend on our farmers and their great history and their great legacy.

We also will lose three to four American jobs for every farm worker job. Mr. President, I will say that again. We will lose three to four American jobs for every farm worker job.

They say:

Any solution must recognize agriculture's uniqueness—perishable crops and products, rural nature, significant seasonality, and nature of the work.

Building a fence is not going to help our people. I am not against it; I voted for it. It is not a problem to me to build a fence. But don't come out here and say: Aren't we great and doing something; we are building a fence and now everything is fine. That is hogwash.

We must pass an AgJOBS bill, and we can do it today. Our farmers and our

ranchers are begging us to do it. They need a solution. Our farm economy in some areas is becoming paralyzed. I showed you Toni Skully. They were unable to harvest 35 percent of their crop. This is what is happening all over California. I have been told it is also happening to my lemon growers in San Diego. They are experiencing a 15- to 20-percent harvest loss. Avocado farmers in Ventura County are worried about workers for the December planting season. Tree fruit growers in Fresno County have seen the labor force decrease by as much as 50 percent. In Sonoma, as many as 17,000 seasonal farm workers have not returned to work in the fields.

Again, I don't have a problem with the fence. We need to build it where we have a porous border. But that doesn't help our people.

Agriculture is a \$239 billion-a-year industry, and if we refuse to provide a solution to labor shortages now, we are jeopardizing our domestic economy and our foreign export market. We are driving up production costs that get passed on to consumers. Our consumers are already having trouble with health care costs, with gasoline costs, with college tuition—oh, and now they are going to have problems putting food on the table.

This is not the time to turn away from our farmers. All of this is happening for absolutely no reason. There is no problem in allowing us to proceed with this amendment to offer AgJOBS. I have been on the AgJOBS bill, probably since 2000, 2001, and we continue to have strong support for it. But, again, because this Republican Congress can, apparently, only do one thing at a time, when it comes to immigration, we are precluded from offering this amendment.

Mr. President, my farmers are proud, as are yours. My ranchers and my dairy families are proud. They don't ask for much. But when they came to meet with me—and they have come several times—and I saw the look on their faces.

I said: What is it?

They finally said: You have to act.

I said: The fence bill is coming up.

They said: Maybe that is a chance now. We can get AgJOBS attached to it.

I went to Senator KENNEDY, and I said to him at a caucus luncheon: They are bringing up the fence bill, so why don't we move forward?

He said: I am working on it, and I hope we can have a comprehensive approach. A lot of people care about this.

Apparently, there are not enough Republican leaders who care about it because we are being told there won't be an amendment for AgJOBS. This is certainly a place where Democrats and Republicans should come together. I simply don't understand why they allow our farmers to suffer, to worry, to wonder, to lose money, and then they have to come to us and ask for emergency help. They don't want emergency help.

AgJOBS is supported by United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association, the Agricultural Coalition for Immigration Reform, the National Council of Agricultural Employers, the Western United Dairymen, the California Grape and Tree Fruit League, California Citrus Mutual, the California Strawberry Commission, the California Association of Wine-Grape Growers, and the California Canning Peach Association.

The AgJOBS bill has pulled together both the owners and the workers. I thank Senators CRAIG and KENNEDY for doing that. All they need is for us to do our job. The Senate is choosing to neglect a major sector of our Nation's economy—a bill supported by 62 Senators.

Again, the farm community has been a traditional Republican stronghold. So this isn't even good politics. I say to my friends it is bad politics, and it is bad policy. At the end of the day, we can still insist that Senator FRIST allow us to offer the Craig-Kennedy-Feinstein-Boxer measure, and all of us who care about this bill have a chance to do it. We don't want lip-service. We don't want calming talk. We want action. We want action now. We want to help the farmers, the consumers, the workers.

We don't want to see another industry fall apart right beneath our noses. We have enough problems going on with people losing their health care, they cannot afford college, and the housing market is in a precarious situation. Why would we not come together and take care of this important constituency?

In closing, a headline from last Friday's New York Times reads:

Pickers Are Few, and Growers Blame Congress

And they should blame Congress. Pretty soon it will be consumers blaming Congress, and they should. So let's get our act together. Let's get it done. Thank you very much.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, under the unanimous consent, the Senator from Idaho is next, but he is not on the Senate floor. I ask unanimous consent that I may proceed next in line.

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

APPROPRIATIONS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon as we go into the last hours of this session, before we are apparently going to adjourn for an entire 5 or 6 weeks, until after the election, to join with my leader on the Appropriations Committee, Senator BYRD, who spoke earlier today, and explain how the Republicans' failure to act on the annual funding bills is going to hurt all of our communities.

As Senators, we have a job to do in passing the annual spending bills that fund essentially all of our Government.

It is one of the most basic responsibilities we have. On the Appropriations Committee, under the leadership of Chairman COCHRAN and Ranking Member BYRD, we have done our job. But on the Senate floor, the Senate Republican leadership has blocked our progress.

American families are going to pay the price. When I go home and talk to constituents in my State of Washington, they tell me they want our country to be strong again. The way that we can be strong again is to invest at home. That is what I have been fighting to do on the Appropriations Committee. But now the Republican leadership is refusing to allow us to move forward on the investments that we have agreed on in a bipartisan way in the Appropriations Committee. In fact, they are not even allowing us to debate making those investments. That is how wrong I see the priorities by this leadership.

Some people may suggest that if we pass this continuing resolution, everything is going to be fine. I hear the claims that there is no real difference between passing the bills we have worked so hard to put together and just putting our Government on autopilot for a couple of months. Nobody should believe that. It is simply not true.

There is a real cost to failing to act on the appropriations bills. This country is going to pay a price in airline safety. We are not going to be able to rapidly hire the air traffic controllers or safety inspectors we need. We are going to pay a price in highway safety because we are not going to be able to rapidly reverse the high increase in traffic fatalities. We are going to pay a price in the fight against terrorism. We are not going to be able to fund the Treasury Department's efforts to stop terrorist financing. We are going to pay a price in educating our kids, improving our communities, and training our workforce.

Almost everywhere you look, we are going to pay a price if the Republican leadership succeeds in blocking action on the annual appropriations bills.

I want to share some specific examples. First, I will say a word about why this is happening. It is not because of partisan gridlock or because we have not had enough time to act. All of our bills have been ready to go since August. It is because this Republican leadership does not want to have a public debate about America's priorities just weeks before an election. I suspect it is because they realize their priorities are out of step with the American people.

There may be another reason to stall these bills. It hides the true cost of their wrong priorities. When we bring these bills up on the floor, we have a chance—all of us in America—to see what is funded and what is not. We have a chance to offer amendments and debate about priorities that deserve more support. By blocking that debate,