

made this agreement, and when they got the support they needed from the DFW Airport, from American Airlines, and from Southwest Airlines—because their rights were affected—everybody gave a little in order to do good for the populace.

I know in the coming years the traveling public in the North Texas area—in and out—are going to see the benefits of a great competitive atmosphere. The DFW Airport gives the greatest service. They are the mid-country airport that really is the stopping off point for so many travelers going to the rest of the world. That is going to increase, and it is going to increase with lower fares and more convenience. It is going to be more convenient even with the safety antiterrorism measures that are being taken, which we know can inconvenience the traveling public.

DFW Airport is going to be the long-haul service carrier that will be the window to the world for people who live in the middle part of our country. Love Field is going to be a dynamic, limited-use airport because it sits right in the middle of an area that is full of wonderful neighborhoods, schools, churches, and businesses. The right of the city of Dallas to protect the citizens who live in the area is well recognized in the law, and they are invoking it. The city is doing a great job of making sure we have more competition and better fares. Love Field, while a dynamic airport sitting in the middle of a neighborhood, also deserves the safety and the environmental protections of all of our citizens.

So, Mr. President, I thank you for the time. I am very pleased this bill has passed. I look forward to seeing the benefits.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THUNE). Under the previous order, the Senator from Oklahoma is recognized for 15 minutes.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, hopefully, I will not take all that time. I think the American people need to pay attention to what we have just done. The Energy bill, which was actually 41 bills wrapped into one, that we agreed to through unanimous consent, is going to cost the American taxpayer \$1.5 billion.

The real question is, in light of where we find ourselves—fighting the war, trying to help the people in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, and running in excess of a \$300 billion real deficit this year—should we be spending money on these priorities? A real problem in Washington is getting Congress to make tough decisions about what is a priority.

I will spend a few minutes outlining what is in the bill because the American people have no idea what was in the bill. The first thing is \$500,000 to study lighthouses in Michigan for tourism. Tourism is already a \$16 billion industry in Michigan. There is nothing in the Constitution that would say that is a Federal responsibility. We will do it anyway.

Indiana Dunes Visitor Center, \$1.2 million to establish a building, construct a theater and a bookstore. Is that a priority right now when we are spending our grandkids' money? We are going to build a bookstore and create a visitor center now when we cannot even pay for the war that we are fighting and we are charging that to our children?

There are new national heritage designations. We have a backlog of over \$4 billion in repairs to the National Parks we have today. We cannot even take care of the parks we have today, and we are going to create 10 new national heritage centers, spending over \$100 million to do so.

This bothers me on several fronts. Most important, it isn't a priority. It isn't something we ought to be spending money on right now. We are getting ready to do it. We already have 30 national heritage centers. We are going to delete the resources that are going to those by adding 10 more.

Finally, the problem with national heritage areas is they undermine property rights because the money is used to change zoning laws to back the people who have property rights around the national heritages. We are using Federal dollars to create national heritage areas that will undermine individual property rights. That is wrong.

The other thing that is in this bill is a study to assess creating four more national heritages.

The process is broken under which we bring bills such as this to the Senate, at a time when we cannot afford to pay what we are doing today. We spent a ton of our time on appropriations. After what I was told through all this process, after having written a letter raising objections, meeting with the committee, meeting with our leadership, we had a leadership meeting this week which basically said: If you don't let all of these packages of spending of low priority and no priority go through, the Senate will come to a standstill and we will see everything else blocked by the minority.

I believe we ought to be making choices about the right priorities for our country. It is not that heritage areas are wrong. It is that we cannot afford them. We are going to spend money on things we cannot afford and borrow the money from our children and our grandchildren to pay for things that we have to do.

It is cheating our children and our grandchildren. It also is beneath the dignity of this Senate.

This process has to be fixed. We cannot continue to authorize, authorize, and authorize more spending without doing the hard work, looking at what we have authorized that is not working, is inefficient, or is duplicated. But we continue to do it, and I will continue to stand up for the next 4 years and raise this issue every time.

This is not a Democratic or Republican issue. This is an American issue that this Senate does not want to ad-

dress. We seem to be blinded by the fact that we can just spend and authorize all the money we want and to have no impact. We do not authorize unless we expect it to get spent.

With this bill, through the chairman working with us, he agreed to deauthorize over \$150 million. That is a start. But other bills that come to the Senate that have new spending in the future ought to meet a test; that is, have we looked at everything else in that area? Is it working well? Are we spending the money wisely? Are we spending it efficiently? Are there programs that are not working that we ought to deauthorize so we can afford to authorize this as a better priority?

We are not doing that in this country. That is something the American people deserve to have done rather than to hang our children and grandchildren out to dry with debt.

This year, 8 percent of our budget is for interest. In 2035, 29 years from now, 25 percent of our budget is going to be interest. That is \$1 trillion. We spent \$200 billion this year on interest because we will not be frugal with the American taxpayers' money. There is over \$200 billion worth of fraud, waste, and abuse in the Government programs we have today, and we will not go and fix it. Instead, we will spend another \$1.5 million because that is easy to do. It sounds good at home, but we will not do what is necessary to secure the financial future of this country.

The notice I am placing today is there is a precedent established with this bill. If you want to authorize new programs and you want this Senator not to object or to debate them on the floor, there better be deauthorizations of programs of that committee's jurisdiction before they can expect my vote on a unanimous consent agreement to spend into the future and to undermine the future of the next generation of Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from Georgia is recognized for 10 minutes.

H-2A PROGRAM

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I take a few minutes to respond to some of the comments made this afternoon by my colleagues from Idaho, from California, and Massachusetts. First of all, they are correct in stating the H-2A program, which is the existing temporary nonimmigrant worker program for agriculture, does not work the way it should.

However, what Senator CRAIG, Senator FEINSTEIN, Senator BOXER, and Senator KENNEDY propose to do, rather than make many of the necessary changes to make the H-2A program viable nationwide is, first of all, to grant an amnesty to virtually everyone who has passed through agricultural occupations in the past 2 years.

We all know that agriculture has been the traditional gateway occupation for illegal immigrants in the

United States. I strongly disagree to large-scale adjustment of status for illegal aliens philosophically, particularly in the area of agriculture, but my objection has practical roots.

Agricultural work is the hardest, most backbreaking work in the United States today. As soon as we give illegal aliens who are currently working in agriculture lawful, permanent resident status, as the AgJOBS bill will do, they will no longer choose to work in the fields, packing sheds, groves, or processing facilities.

I come from the heart of agriculture country in the southeastern part of the United States. I have talked to farmers in my area not just for the 12 years I have been privileged to serve in Congress but even before that. Labor has been the most critical issue they have had to deal with year in and year out in addition to disasters, to too much rain, to not enough rain, to high gas prices.

The immigration issue has the potential to be the answer if we do the right thing. We know these folks will leave agriculture and move into the private sector because this is what happened in 1986 after Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act. Included in that legislation was the special agricultural worker program that gave temporary legal status to illegal aliens who had worked a certain number of years in agriculture. Two years after obtaining a temporary status—and in some cases 1 year—those illegal workers were given permanent status. They soon left the fields and moved into the private sector in so many other areas where we find them today.

My position as chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee has provided me the opportunity to travel across the United States and talk with farmers and ranchers. Recently, I have concluded eight field hearings from one end of the country to the other, from the east coast to the west coast. In every single hearing we held with farmers and ranchers across America I had any number of farmers who came up to me during the process of those hearings to talk about immigration. It is an issue on the west coast. It is an issue on the east coast and all parts in between. And to a farmer, the one thing I heard from him was: Senator, whatever you do, don't let the AgJOBS provision that grants amnesty to folks who come to this country to work in agriculture get passed because if you let that provision in, I assure you, the pool of agricultural workers that we need will not be there after they gain that permanent status in the United States.

Why should we expect this adjustment status to be any different than what we saw in 1986? It won't. I don't think it will be, and the folks who are involved in agriculture don't think it will be. All that would be left to our farmers and ranchers will be the H-2A program, and the revisions that Senators CRAIG, FEINSTEIN, BOXER, and

KENNEDY make to the H-2A program are actually detrimental to the future success of that program.

I have talked to farmers, as late as the day before yesterday. I had a group of farmers from all over the country who were in my office, and every single one of them uses the H-2A program. What they tell me is the program, as they have used it, is cumbersome. It is expensive. But it works. And in the areas of the country where farmers have used the H-2A program, the labor shortage issues are not as acute as in those areas apparently such as in California and Idaho, where they use illegals crossing the border, and where now the border is being tightened up and they are feeling a pinch because they do not use legal workers.

In my part of the country, I went to our farmers who complained about not having a quality pool of workers from which to choose. And when they used illegal workers, and they had the INS come in and check on them, the illegals scattered from one end to the other, all of a sudden, and they were left naked and unable to harvest their crops. I said: What you have to do is get in compliance with the law. You have to use H-2A, irrespective of how inconvenient it is, irrespective of how bureaucratic it is, and irrespective of how expensive it is, if you want to be legal and if you want to have that quality pool of workers from which to choose.

By and large, farmers in my part of the world are now using H-2A, and they are finding that exactly what we thought would happen is happening. They do not have to look over their shoulder every year to see if ICE—now it is ICE—is coming in to check their workers. They know they are here legally. They know they are going to have to pay them a good wage. They know they are going to have to provide them with housing—all the things that H-2A provides. And they are willing to do that because they do have a quality pool from which to choose.

Now, finally, I point out that even though H-2A is not perfect—it is cumbersome, it is costly, it subjects employees who use it to lawsuits—in those areas where H-2A is used, they are not experiencing the shortage that others have found. So I think, rather than grant a large adjustment of status to illegal workers, we ought to sit down at the table and talk about ways we can make the H-2A program more workable for our farmers.

I am happy to sit down with my friends from California and Idaho and see if we cannot work through this. But let me say there are some fundamental problems with AgJOBS in addition to the adjustment of status provision, which does grant a pathway to becoming legal, a pathway to citizenship for those people who work in agriculture in this country under that program for a period of 2 years. We have to work through that. I do not think that is in the benefit of the American people,

whether it is the American farmer or whether it is those people who are here legally trying to become citizens in the right way.

Secondly, there is an issue relative to the wage rate. Now we have the adverse effect wage rate under the H-2A program, which is not fair. It is not equitable to farmers in North Dakota versus farmers in Georgia, versus farmers in California and Idaho. In the recent immigration reform package we had on the floor, we sought to amend that bill to include what is known as a prevailing wage, "prevailing wage" being a wage that is determined by the Department of Labor to be applicable to agricultural workers in certain regions within a State, rather than in regions of the country. It is fair. It is equitable. We need to have that prevailing wage provision put into whatever amendment we make to the H-2A program.

Also, the AgJOBS bill does not eliminate what we call the 50-percent rule. Every farmer who uses H-2A knows and understands exactly what I am talking about and knows what a hindrance this is to them because, under AgJOBS, they would be forced to hire what is called a blue card worker who is treated like a U.S. worker for hiring purposes. If he shows up at the farm before 50 percent of the work is complete, then even though the farmer has an H-2A worker here, he has to send that individual back to wherever he came from and hire that domestic person or that blue card person under the AgJOBS program.

It gets complicated, but those folks who have been involved in this know exactly what I am talking about. What we should make sure of is that at the end of the day we have a program that is fair to farmers, that is fair to Americans—whether they are folks who are here looking for work in agriculture or whether they are folks who are trying to become citizens of this country in a lawful way, in the way that is set forth in our Constitution—that we should make sure we provide our farmers with a quality pool of workers from which to choose, and that we make sure our farmers are required to pay those individuals a fair wage and are required to either provide them housing or provide them a housing allowance, so while they are here working on their farms we do not have to worry about where they are out in the communities, and that they are able to take care of themselves while they are here.

All of these issues are critically important parts of any immigration reform package we take up. So I simply urge again my friends who want to give these folks who come to work in agriculture a pathway to citizenship that we sit down at the table and work out these differences. Let's amend H-2A and accomplish the goal we all have in common.

Mr. President, I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from

North Dakota is recognized for 30 minutes.

AGRICULTURE DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I rise today on behalf of myself, Senator NELSON of Nebraska, Senator HAGEL, Senator DORGAN, Senator SALAZAR, Senator COLEMAN, Senator BAUCUS, Senator JOHNSON, Senator BURNS, Senator HARKIN, Senator CANTWELL, Senator CLINTON, Senator SCHUMER, Senator INOUE, Senator THUNE, Senator DURBIN, Senator OBAMA, Senator REID of Nevada, Senator DAYTON, Senator MURRAY, Senator JEFFORDS, and Senator ENZI.

Mr. President, 21 Senators, on a fully bipartisan basis, have cosponsored this legislation to provide disaster relief for our Nation's farmers.

In North Dakota, last year, we faced what was then extraordinary flooding. As shown here, these were pictures all across eastern North Dakota. We had a million acres that were prevented from even being planted, hundreds of thousands of additional acres that were planted and then drowned out. There was no disaster assistance for those people.

This year—the irony of ironies—we have now had extraordinary drought. This is a picture from my home county, Burleigh County, in the center of North Dakota. This is a corn crop with absolutely nothing growing. This drought is now the third worst drought in our Nation's history.

This chart shows the U.S. drought monitor. It shows the severity of the drought across the entire midsection of the country. This shows, in the darkest colors, exceptional drought. You can see the exceptional areas of drought are these. North Dakota and South Dakota are the epicenter of this drought. It has been devastating. If assistance is not granted, thousands of farm families will be forced off the land. That is a fact.

I have had the independent bankers of my State say to the White House representative who was in my office: If assistance does not come, 5 to 10 percent of their clients in North Dakota will be forced out of business.

Thirty-four farm organizations—34 farm organizations—have now spoken and told the Congress of the United States: Take action on disaster assistance and take it now.

In addition, we have this letter from the State Commissioners of Agriculture from all across the country, saying that emergency agricultural disaster assistance is a high priority requiring action by Congress this year. It could not be more clear that assistance is needed, and it is needed now.

Last May, the Senate approved bipartisan emergency agricultural disaster assistance for the 2005 crop year. The President threatened to veto the bill if the farm assistance provisions were included. During the conference with the House, the majority leadership de-

manded the assistance provisions be removed.

In June, the Senate Appropriations Committee once again approved emergency disaster assistance as part of the agriculture appropriations bill for 2007. Again, the majority leadership has failed to bring that measure to the Senate floor for debate and vote.

Since that time, much of rural America has suffered from what USDA meteorologists have described as the third worst drought since records have been kept. Only the 1930s and 1950s exceed the severity of this drought.

In early September, I introduced a new bipartisan farm disaster relief bill to provide help for both 2005 and 2006. Senator NELSON and I offered that legislation as an amendment to include during the port security bill consideration. A vote on that amendment was denied by the Senate leadership.

Last week, I once again tried to get the Senate to adopt disaster relief legislation. Again, the efforts were thwarted by the majority leadership.

Today, as we are about to recess the Senate, I will offer a revised version of the important disaster legislation. Let me make clear to my colleagues, these are the disaster provisions that have already been approved by the Senate, but we have made a modification because the administration has said there are two provisions they object to. Those provisions—the economic assistance provisions to help offset the rising cost of energy, and the additional grants to the States to deal with the livestock losses—we have removed those two provisions the administration has objected to.

We retain the crop and livestock production loss provisions of the original legislation. Crop producers will still need to demonstrate a 35-percent loss before they get anything. Payments for the livestock compensation program will only be made to producers whose operations are in counties designated as disaster areas by the Secretary, and who can demonstrate they suffered a material loss.

It also contains additional funding for conservation programs to help restore and rehabilitate drought and wildlife losses on grazing lands.

As I have indicated, my new legislation eliminates the emergency economic assistance for program crop and dairy producers, and it strikes the supplemental grants to the States to assist other livestock and specialty crop producers.

These provisions were included in the original bill, but because the administration has objected, we have removed them. By making these changes, the Secretary's opposition no longer has any basis.

The cost of providing emergency disaster assistance for losses in 2005 and 2006 is reduced from \$6.7 billion in my original bill to \$4.9 billion in this legislation.

Farmers and ranchers need assistance for 2005 and 2006 natural disasters,

and they need it now. If these emergencies are not dealt with, tens of thousands of farm families and main street businesses will suffer, some of them irretrievably. It is time for Congress to act and to allow this legislation to be voted on. Let's give our colleagues a chance to vote. We have removed the reasons for the objection from the administration.

I urge my colleagues to act.

Mr. President, I ask the Presiding Officer, how much time do I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CHAMBLISS). The Senator has 22 minutes remaining.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, I ask the Senator from South Dakota if he could take 4 minutes? I yield 4 minutes to the Senator from South Dakota; and to the Senator from North Dakota, if I could give 4 minutes; and the Senator from Montana 4 minutes; and then the Senator from Nebraska 4 minutes as well.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I am glad to join my colleague from North Dakota today and support him and the other 20 Senators who are on this bill in moving disaster assistance through the Senate.

As the Senator from North Dakota has noted—you saw the drought chart he put up earlier—the Dakotas were the epicenter when it comes to drought this year. We had the bull's-eye, the area where the most severe drought hit.

I visited in South Dakota in June. At that point, we had no wheat crop. In all of central South Dakota, both winter wheat and spring wheat were all wiped out.

I went back in July to central South Dakota and looked at other parts of the State. By then, we could tell we were not going to have a corn crop. I went to western South Dakota in August with my colleague Senator JOHNSON. We traveled to areas west of the Missouri River and again to the central part of the State. We looked at corn that rivaled what the Senator from North Dakota showed that was about this tall—or about this tall—when it ought to have been in full bloom.

The livestock producers in western South Dakota had no hay crop. As a consequence, many of them had to liquidate their herds. What that means is that effect is felt not only directly by them and those families, but by the entire rural area, the entire farm economy in my State and States such as North Dakota.

It would be one thing if it were a 1-year deal. But this is successive years of drought, 6 years in a row, 1999, 2000, on through 2005. We have had these types of weather conditions in our States. The month of July was the hottest July on record in my State. In the months of May and June we normally would get precipitation. We had less precipitation than the average during