

ranks 5th in exports of fruits and 8th in exports of vegetables nationally. This bill creates a brand new section dedicated to fruit and vegetable producers and allocates a total of \$1.3 billion for new specialty crop programs including \$466 million over ten years for the specialty crop block grant program, which provides grants to states to support projects in research, marketing, education, pest and disease management, production and food safety.

The conference agreement will also create a pilot Farm Flex project that will allow farmers to switch base acres to specified fruits or vegetables for processing for 2009 through 2012 crop years. This pilot project is limited to seven Midwestern States, including Michigan which is allocated 9,000 acres. This planting flexibility pilot program provides an important opportunity for specialty crop producers and I am pleased Michigan is included. More importantly, this will help the 1.26 million Michiganders that are currently using food stamps.

Given Michigan's economic situation, I have advocated that a second economic stimulus package include an increase in food stamp benefits, and I am pleased that the Farm Bill has increased funding commitments for the Food Stamp Program and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). The conference agreement includes \$7.8 billion for the Food Stamp program and would raise and index inflation for the program's standard deduction and minimum benefit. This is the first time since the program was created 40 years ago that the Food Stamp Program would fully account for annual inflation. According to the Congressional Budget Office, this will help 11 million low income people.

TEFAP, a program that has provided assistance to approximately one million people in Michigan, will see \$1.26 billion in funding that will benefit food banks and food pantries across the country. More importantly, this bill will increase annual funding for commodity purchases from \$140 million to \$250 million allowing organizations to meet the increasing demand for food services and the rising food prices. The CBO estimates that Michigan alone will receive \$45 million in additional TEFAP funding from fiscal year 2008 to 2017. This is critical to organizations in Southeastern Michigan such as Gleaners Community Food Bank, who just over the last holiday season provided over 34,000 meals using the TEFAP program.

Now while this conference agreement contains many benefits for my home state, as a lifetime conservationist I am extremely disappointed in the conservation title. I was displeased to see that the cap for the Conservation Reserve Program was lowered to 32 million acres. Both the Senate and the House had reauthorized the current enrollment level of 39.2 million acres. Lowering the cap would result in a cut of almost 7 million acres. Each year this program helps produce 13.5 million pheasants and 2.2 million ducks. As the largest land retirement program, lowering the cap will be devastating.

And while the Wetlands Reserve Program is continued through 2012, it is done so at a lower level than in the 2002 Farm Bill. This is extremely disappointing because 50 percent of Michigan's threatened or endangered species require healthy and functional wetlands. Michigan currently has enrolled 125 easements of

over 16,000 acres and has a backlog of close to 25,000 acres. This reduction will be extremely detrimental as it is the only conservation program solely dedicated to restoring wetland habitat.

In addition, I have real concerns about the wisdom and merit of the agricultural chemicals tax credit provided in Section 15343 that allows a tax credit up to \$2,000,000 per year until 2012 for eligible agricultural businesses to pay for and offset the costs of security measures taken to protect pesticides and fertilizers used in agricultural operations. Fortune 500 companies that manufacture or retail agricultural pesticides and fertilizers should not need the taxpayer to help offset the costs of employee security training, installation of security lighting, computer security measures, locks and fences to protect their facilities, and other such security measures.

Finally, Section 7524 amends current law to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to issue a permit to the Department of Homeland Security to transfer live foot-and-mouth disease virus from Plum Island, New York, to the mainland United States. The majority of the research at Plum Island is concentrated on foot-and-mouth disease, which is very highly contagious, and which Federal law has for more than 50 years restricted to Plum Island. An accidental release of this infectious virus could have grave implications for the livestock industry and for the national economy. This issue is highly controversial, yet it has not been the subject of hearings nor open debate. I believe that it is a mistake to proceed with this until Congress has fully examined whether USDA and DHS have adequately assessed the health and economic risks, environmental impacts, and cost-benefit of this proposal.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is not a perfect one, however, it has bipartisan support. I know from my years in this institution that compromise is necessary in order to be successful, and I know the conferees worked night and day to come to this agreement. I feel confident Michigan farmers and producers will benefit from this final bill, as will the folks in Michigan who have fallen on hard times, which is why I stand today to lend my support.

#### IN HONOR OF ARMED FORCES DAY

### HON. NANCY E. BOYDA

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor all branches of the military this Armed Forces Day. I speak for Kansas and for the United States when I say that the men and women who make our country safe have earned our respect and our appreciation.

Many are called upon to protect our towns, our businesses and our homes in times of crisis. When Mother Nature strikes, the National Guard absorbs the blow and ensures that life will go on as usual. Each of our military personnel has been tasked with the defense of our Nation. When terrorism, tyranny and injustice strike, the National Guard, the Army, the Navy, the Marines, the Air Force, and the Coast Guard absorb the blow so that we can remain free. Free to enjoy our values, to pursue our hopes and dreams.

These service men and women have been asked to travel to Iraq or Afghanistan, to be

away from their spouses, their children, their jobs—that's a lot to ask of anyone. Yet they go and they fulfill their responsibilities to their State and our country. Today we recognize these brave men and women. Every day we recognize those who serve. I want to thank them for their vital role in making this Nation the land of the brave and the home of the free.

#### TRIBUTE TO BOB REGNIER

### HON. DENNIS MOORE

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Mr. MOORE of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Bob Regnier, who recently was named Philanthropist of the Year by the Kansas City Council on Philanthropy. I was honored to attend a luncheon on May 9th at which he received this very well-deserved honor, which prompted me to consider Bob Regnier's lifetime of service to Johnson County and the entire Kansas City metropolitan area. Bob is the living embodiment of the anonymous saying, "Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer."

I have been privileged to know Bob Regnier for many years. He embodies the observation of leadership consultant Don Blohowiak: "A balanced life is the centered intersection of your values, time and action. That's where integrity resides." Starting in 1970 as a safe deposit clerk and teller at Baltimore Bank in Johnson County, he rose within the Boatmen's Bank organization and, in 1989, he left that organization following a merger and founded the Bank of Blue Valley, meeting with his first customers in a doublewide mobile home. The Bank of Blue Valley developed from its initial asset base of \$2,150,000 to an organization with total assets in excess of \$700 million total loans in excess of \$550 million and total deposits in excess of \$550 million.

Just as importantly, however, Bob Regnier has been a tireless volunteer and source of strength for the Kansas City metropolitan area. As he said in a 2006 column in the Kansas City Business Journal, "There is no question that Kansas City is a good place to live and raise a family. The question for all of us is, will this be a 'great' place to live? The choice is up to each one of us." Phrased differently by Dr. Seuss, the keystone of Bob Regnier's service to our community is based upon this idea: "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

Madam Speaker, a cursory review of the many, many ways Bob Regnier has served our Kansas City community as a dedicated volunteer simply would not do him justice. Below I've listed his past civic commitments and current civic activities, as well as the numerous other public recognitions he has earned over the years for his good works. I thank you and the U.S. House of Representatives for joining me in taking note of this distinguished history.

#### CIVIC—PAST COMMITMENTS

Heart of American United Way, 1977–1988, Member of Campaign Cabinet in 1987–1988; UMKC Banking Advisory Panel, 1986–2000; UMKC Bloch School Alumni Board, 1990–1996; Blue Valley Educational Foundation, 1993–