

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. WEBB).

AGRICULTURE REFORM, FOOD, AND JOBS ACT OF 2012

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 3240, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 3240) to reauthorize the agriculture programs through 2017, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (for Stabenow/Roberts) amendment No. 2389, of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2390 (to amendment No. 2389), to change the enactment date.

Reid motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, with instructions, Reid amendment No. 2391, of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 2406 (to (the instructions) amendment No. 2391), to eliminate certain working lands conservation programs.

Reid amendment No. 2407 (to amendment No. 2406), to convert all mandatory spending to discretionary spending subject to annual appropriations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to recommit and amendment No. 2390 are withdrawn and a Stabenow-Roberts amendment No. 2389 is agreed to.

The Senator from Michigan.

AMENDMENT NO. 2440

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we have 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to the vote on the first Akaka amendment, No. 2440.

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

The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in favor of amendment No. 2440 to the farm bill. This amendment would improve implementation of an existing program at USDA which provides loans to purchasers of highly fractionated Indian lands.

One unfortunate legacy of policies of the late 1800s is that many Indian lands are highly fractionated. This means that one parcel of land might have hundreds or even thousands of owners. Highly fractionated parcels make putting these Indian lands to viable use virtually impossible. This goes against any well-established Federal Indian policies encouraging the productive use of Indian lands.

As chair of the Committee on Indian Affairs, I have worked with the USDA and stakeholders to craft this amendment to improve agricultural land use for tribal governments and individual Indians. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. This is a technical amendment. I rise in support of it, and I yield back the remainder of my time.

Mr. AKAKA. Mr. President, I call up my amendment and speak in favor of amendment No. 2396, a bipartisan amendment Senator THUNE and I are offering to the farm bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, if I might take a moment, I believe we want to first dispose of the Akaka amendment No. 2440. Our ranking member has indicated no opposition, so at this point I would ask that we proceed, unless there is a reason not to do so.

On behalf of Senator AKAKA, I call up amendment No. 2440 and ask that we proceed with a voice vote.

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

The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Hawaii [Mr. AKAKA] proposes an amendment numbered 2440.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To improve a provision relating to loans to purchasers of highly fractionated land)

Strike section 5102 and insert the following:

SEC. 5102. LOANS TO PURCHASERS OF HIGHLY FRACTIONATED LAND.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The first sentence of Public Law 91-229 (25 U.S.C. 488) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), in the first sentence, by striking “loans from” and all that follows through “1929” and inserting “direct loans in a manner consistent with direct loans pursuant to chapter 4 of subtitle A of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act”;

(2) in subsection (b)(1)—

(A) by striking “pursuant to section 205(c) of the Indian Land Consolidation Act (25 U.S.C. 2204(c))”; and

(B) by inserting “or to intermediaries in order to establish revolving loan funds for the purchase of highly fractionated land under that section” before the period at the end; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(c) CONSULTATION REQUIRED.—In determining regulations and procedures to define eligible purchasers of highly fractionated land under this section, the Secretary of Agriculture shall consult with the Secretary of the Interior.”

(b) RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER AMENDMENT.—Section 6002 is amended by striking subsection (bb).

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that we proceed with a voice vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2440) was agreed to.

The Senator from Hawaii.

AMENDMENT NO. 2396

Mr. AKAKA. I rise today to speak in favor of amendment No. 2396, a bipartisan amendment Senator THUNE and I are offering to the farm bill. This amendment would make permanent the Office of Tribal Relations at the USDA.

This office was created to ensure that the USDA upholds Federal Indian policy and maintains its government-to-government relationship with tribes. Permanently establishing this office will ensure that tribal governments can develop their programs in parity with their neighbors in rural America. It will ensure that the USDA consults with tribal governments and that tribes can participate in programs related to agricultural, infrastructure, and economic development opportunities.

I encourage all my colleagues to support this bipartisan amendment to the farm bill.

I thank the Chair, I yield back the remainder of my time, and I call up amendment No. 2396.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The legislative clerk read as follows: The Senator from Hawaii [Mr. AKAKA] proposes an amendment numbered 2396.

Mr. AKAKA. I ask unanimous consent that further reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To establish the Office of Tribal Relations in the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture)

On page 1009, after line 11, add the following:

SEC. 12207. OFFICE OF TRIBAL RELATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Title III of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 is amended by adding after section 308 (7 U.S.C. 3125a note; Public Law 103-354) the following:

“SEC. 309. OFFICE OF TRIBAL RELATIONS.

“The Secretary shall establish in the Office of the Secretary an Office of Tribal Relations.”

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—Section 296(b) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 U.S.C. 7014(b)) (as amended by section 12201(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (8), by striking “or” at the end;

(2) in paragraph (9), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; or”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(10) the authority of the Secretary to establish in the Office of the Secretary the Office of Tribal Relations in accordance with section 309.”

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time in opposition?

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, this amendment makes permanent the current Office of Tribal Relations with the Department of Agriculture, and that is very important in terms of outreach for Native American farmers and ranchers.

We have no objection, and I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.