Boozman
Brown
Burr
Cantwell
Cardin
Carper
Casey
Chambliss
Coats
Coburn
Cochran
Collins
Coons
Corker
Cornyn
Cowan
Crapo
Cruz
Donnelly
Durbin
Enzi
Feinstein
Fischer
Franken
Gillibrand
Graham
Grassley
Hagan
Harkin
Hatch
Heinrich
Heitkamp
Heller
Hirono
Hoeven
Inhofe
Isakson
Johanns
Johnson (SD)
Johnson (WI)
Kaine
King
Kirk
Klobuchar
Landrieu
Leahy
Lee
Levin
Manchin
McCain
McCaskill
McConnell
Menendez
Merkley
Mikulski
Moran
Murkowski
Murphy
Murray
Nelson
Paul
Portman
Pryor
Reed
Reid
Risch
Roberts
Rockefeller
Rubio
Sanders
Schatz
Schumer
Scott
Sessions
Shaheen
Shelby
Stabenow
Tester
Thune
Toomey
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Vitter
Warner
Warren
Whitehouse
Wicker
Wyden

NOT VOTING—3

Boxer
Flake
Lautenberg

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume legislative session.

AGRICULTURAL REFORM, FOOD, AND JOBS ACT OF 2013—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

Mr. REID. I have spoken to the managers of the bill, and they have one vote scheduled right now. They expect—they hope—they can have a couple more today, maybe even three today, but they are not sure. It will have to be done by consent. They are confident they can get that done. We will have to wait and see.

When this vote is over, we should have in the near future an idea of what we are going to finish today. If we are here and we have a few more votes, it should not be past 5:00. We will see. We are going to finish today sometime—hopefully soon.

A decision is being made as to what we are going to do when we get back. The managers of this bill are trying to come up with a finite list of amendments. They hope to be able to do that today.

Then we will make a decision on whether we are going to move to immigration when we get back or wait a week. I have spoken to the Gang of 8 today, and they are going to give me some indication of what they want to do. I have also spoken to the chairman of the committee, and that decision should be made very soon. We will have a vote on the Monday we get back.

AMENDMENT NO. 923

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 923, offered by the Senator from California, Mrs. FEINSTEIN.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, this amendment is offered on behalf of Senator MCCAIN and myself.

Ladies and gentlemen, tobacco is not just another crop. It is the largest preventable cause of cancer deaths in this country. Exactly 443,000 people die every year. It costs Medicaid an additional $22 billion.

In 2004 a special assessment of $9.6 billion was authorized to buy out tobacco farms in the United States. That has 1 more year to run.

We subsidize tobacco crop insurance. We should not. This country should become tobacco-free. It will save lives.

I urge you to support this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. I speak in opposition to the amendment.

Let me say to my dear friend from California, whom I really respect, the tobacco buyout was not paid by taxpayers, it was paid by the tobacco companies. It happened several years ago. The only program tobacco farmers participate in today is crop insurance, like every other agricultural product in America. Without that safety net, those farmers can't go to the bank and get capital to plant their crops.

Although I think we can all agree that tobacco is not healthy for you, some Americans make the decision to do it because it is legal. Eliminate the American tobacco farmer and you will replace them with tobacco grown in Zimbabwe and Brazil—around the world. If we want to outlaw tobacco, let's have that vote, but don't walk away and believe that a vote eliminating crop insurance is going to change the health care of the American people as it relates to this product.

I urge my colleagues to vote against this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

Mrs. HAGAN. Madam President, I request 1 minute.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I request 1 minute to respond to Senator BURR, if I may.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request, as modified?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from North Carolina.

Mrs. HAGAN. Madam President, I too rise to express strong opposition to the amendment. This amendment would prevent our tobacco growers from being eligible for Federal crop insurance. This amendment would do significant harm to the small tobacco farmers in North Carolina and in other parts of the country. There are 2,000 farmers in North Carolina who would be affected, and it would be devastating to them and their families. Without access to crop insurance, they wouldn't be able to borrow money from the banks to receive financing.

It does nothing to alter the amount of tobacco used in our country. Demand will be filled by foreign imports, probably from Brazil and other countries. It would put our American farmers out of work.

For all of these reasons, I urge my colleagues to vote no on this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, we are not talking about eliminating crop insurance. There are plenty of crops that don't have crop insurance, but this crop does. We are talking about eliminating the Federal subsidy, which amounts to $30 million-plus a year for crop insurance.

With respect to my distinguished friend and colleague on the other side of the aisle, I misspoke once today. This is an assessment from the tobacco industry. I thought I straightened that out. But the assessment that paid for the buyout of $9.6 billion is what I am speaking of.

But this is a Federal subsidy on crop insurance. You can still get crop insurance, but it won't be federally subsidized.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) and the Senator from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 44, nays 52, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 137 Leg.]

YEAS—44

Ayotte
Baldwin
Blumenthal
Brown
Cantwell
Cardin
Carper
Casey
Coats
Collins
Crapo
Durbin
Feinstein
Franken
Gillibrand
Hatch
Heinrich
Heller
Johnson (SD)
Johnson (WI)
Kirk
Klobuchar
Lee
Manchin
McCain
McCaskill
Menendez
Merkley
Mikulski
Murkowski
Murray
Reed
Risch
Rockefeller
Sanders
Schatz
Schumer
Shaheen
Toomey
Udall (CO)
Udall (NM)
Warren
Whitehouse
Wyden

NAYS—52

Alexander	Fischer	Nelson
Barrasso	Graham	Paul
Baucus	Grassley	Portman
Begich	Hagan	Pryor
Bennet	Harkin	Reid
Blunt	Heitkamp	Roberts
Boozman	Hirono	Rubio
Burr	Hoeven	Scott
Chambliss	Inhofe	Sessions
Coburn	Isakson	Shelby
Cochran	Johanns	Stabenow
Coons	Kaine	Tester
Corker	King	Thune
Cornyn	Landrieu	Vitter
Cowan	Leahy	Warner
Cruz	McConnell	Wicker
Donnelly	Moran	
Enzi	Murphy	

NOT VOTING—4

Boxer	Lautenberg
Flake	Levin

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order requiring 60 votes for the adoption of this amendment, the amendment is rejected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, through no one's fault but my own, I got here a couple of minutes late for the last amendment, the vote on the Feinstein amendment. I would have voted aye had I gotten here in time.

The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the following first-degree amendments be in order to be called up: Hagan No. 1031, and Durbin-Coburn No. 953; that we have 5 minutes of debate on the Hagan amendment, that there be 10 minutes allotted to Senators Durbin and Coburn for their amendment, and I reserve 5 minutes I would control on their amendment; that we have a vote then at 3:15, and that when we vote in relation to the amendments we proceed to the votes in the order listed; that no second-degree amendments be in order to either amendment prior to the votes; that there will be 2 minutes equally divided between the votes; and then finally, upon disposition, Senator MERKLEY will be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, we have no objection.

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

The Senator from North Carolina is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 1031

Mrs. HAGAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to call up amendment No. 1031.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from North Carolina [Mrs. HAGAN] proposes an amendment numbered 1031.

Mrs. HAGAN. I ask unanimous consent the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To authorize the use of the insurance fund to reduce fraud and maintain program integrity in the crop insurance program)

On page 1076, between lines 17 and 18, insert the following:

SEC. 110___. CROP INSURANCE FRAUD.

Section 516(b)(2) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act (7 U.S.C. 1516(b)(2)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(C) REVIEWS, COMPLIANCE, AND PROGRAM INTEGRITY.—For each of the 2014 and subsequent reinsurance years, the Corporation may use the insurance fund established under subsection (c), but not to exceed $5,000,000 for each fiscal year, to pay the following:

''(i) Costs to reimburse expenses incurred for the review of policies, plans of insurance, and related materials and to assist the Corporation in maintaining program integrity.

''(ii) In addition to other available funds, costs incurred by the Risk Management Agency for compliance operations associated with activities authorized under this title.''.

Mrs. HAGAN. Madam President, I rise today to offer an amendment to make sure we are doing all we can to prevent fraud and abuse in the Federal Crop Insurance Program. The issue of fraud in this program hit home for me in March of this year when the Justice Department announced a $100 million crop insurance fraud case in eastern North Carolina, the largest ever of its kind. Forty-one defendants were found guilty and many are serving prison time for profiting from false claims for losses of soybeans, tobacco, wheat, and corn.

Following this incident I regularly have farmers coming up to me, telling me they are nervous, nervous that the actions of a few bad actors will lead the Federal Government to cease providing crop insurance assistance. In these difficult budget times, these are valid concerns. For Federal assistance to continue, the integrity of these programs must be rock solid. Crop insurance fraud not only harms the integrity of Federal safety net programs and increases the cost to taxpayers, it also drives up the cost of the insurance program for our honest, law-abiding farmers.

The amendment I am offering would provide additional tools to the Risk Management Agency to analyze and combat fraud, waste, and abuse. The Risk Management Agency can expand the sampling requirements to test for and address the concerns with these improper program payments. This is in accordance with the Federal Improper Payments Information Act and the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act, as recommended by the office of the inspector general. The Risk Management Agency can increase the number of reviews of the approved insurance providers conducted each year. Currently we are able to review only about one-third of these providers due to our resource constraints. It also will provide additional support for data-mining activities to detect the fraud and abuse in the program and develop proactive underwriting and loss adjustment applications to minimize the scope for such activities to occur.

The farm bill before us now includes extensive reforms to create a host of new safety net programs. As the complexity of these programs grows, the resources needed to oversee these programs are actually shrinking. This amendment will provide the resources necessary to proactively detect and combat fraud and abuse. Funding for this amendment will come out of the general savings contained in the underlying bill. The cost of this amendment is minimal and I believe this investment will generate substantial savings for taxpayers, expanding our efforts to tackle the fraud and abuse in the crop insurance program. Protecting the integrity of these programs is critical to ensuring the safety net programs are available for the vast majority of our farmers who are honest, and to avoid undermining public confidence in these programs.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, I support the amendment offered by the Senator from North Carolina. This amendment would provide additional support for data-mining activities to detect fraud. It would develop proactive underwriting and loss adjustment applications to minimize the scope for such activities to occur. It would help reduce improper payments through better controls and reviews of policies. All of these will result in saving taxpayer money and ensuring program integrity in the long run.

I urge approval of the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. WARREN). Who yields time?

The Senator from Illinois.

AMENDMENT NO. 953

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, how much time remains for the Durbin-Coburn amendment?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Ten minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. Please notify me when I have used 2 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes, the Chair will.

Mr. DURBIN. The Durbin-Coburn amendment says this: We have the Crop Insurance Program in America. Farmers buy crop insurance because they could have a drought, flood, lose their crop, or the market price could fall down to nothing, so they buy insurance to cover the loss. However, it isn't really insurance as we understand insurance. It is not like fire or auto insurance because farmers don't pay enough in premiums to cover the actual losses paid out by crop insurance.

In fact, the farmer's contribution to crop insurance is only 38 percent of the actual premium cost. Who pays the rest? Hold up your hand, America. All the taxpayers in this country subsidize crop insurance—62 percent. What did it cost us last year? Over $7 billion, and then an additional $1 billion to administer the program.

Here is what this amendment says: We stand behind crop insurance. We believe in crop insurance, but for that

tiny 1 percent of farmers across America making over $750,000 a year, their Federal subsidy will be cut from 62 percent, on average, to 47 percent. They can afford it, and over the span of 10 years we will save over $1 billion. That is money we can better spend either to reduce our debt or on critical programs for this country.

I want farmers to have crop insurance, but I want those who are doing so well in this system and getting hundreds of thousands of dollars of Federal subsidy to show a little bit of sacrifice on their part. Keep this program sound and keep it fair. The Durbin-Coburn amendment moves in that direction.

I urge my colleagues to vote for this amendment.

I yield the floor to my friend from Oklahoma.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, 4 percent of the farmers in this country receive 33 percent of the benefits from crop insurance. I don't think it could be said any better than Senator DURBIN has said it. The point is, what we ought do is make sure there is a safety net, and crop insurance is the way to do that. But like every other program, we eventually are going to ask those who have more to participate more.

I have the location and how much the top five farmers in this country actually get. The No. 1 farmer in the country gets $1.9 million worth of subsidies a year. All we are going to do is cut his subsidy to $1.6 million. His income is far in excess of $750,000.

The No. 2 farmer is from Washington State. We will cut his subsidy from $1.7 million to $1.4 million, and, of course, he made far more than that in the last year and in the previous years.

No. 3, located in Minnesota, we are going to cut from $1.6 million to $1.4 million. We are still going to subsidize $1.4 million a year for this one individual who is going to make in excess of $2 million this year.

All we are asking is to appropriately limit the benefits that are coming from borrowed money against our children's future for the very wealthy in this country.

I reserve the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, while I very much appreciate the amendment of Senator DURBIN and Senator COBURN, I urge my colleagues to oppose this amendment.

Crop insurance is insurance, and the farmer gets a bill not a check. They get a bill. The question is whether we are going to provide a discount so it is an affordable policy.

We ended subsidies through direct payments. We want them to move to a voluntary system of crop insurance. The bill they get has to be a bill they can afford to be able to provide the coverage, and then there is no payout unless they have a loss, such as a flood, drought, or whatever has happened. It is insurance.

There are several reasons this is not the same vote the Senate took last year on this amendment. With the historic agreement to attach conservation compliance to crop insurance—potentially reducing the acres and numbers of producers covered by crop insurance—will only reduce the environmental benefits and could lead to draining wetlands and plowing highly erodable land.

Let me say this another way: Of course most of the crop insurance goes to the largest farmers because they have the most land to insure. Just by definition, the larger the insurance policy, the more they are trying to cover. The question is—and the reason conservationists and environmentalists have come together—is because they want the large tracts to become conservation compliant.

There is even more environmental impact on the large tracts than on the small tracts, which is why we saw this historic agreement between 30-some different farm, environmental, and conservation groups to say: We will support crop insurance, but you have to do conservation compliance on all of the land.

Limiting crop insurance support to producers will cause producers with large pieces of land to leave the insurance system, losing the conservation benefits and possibly increasing the costs, again, to smaller providers. If everybody is not in, then the cost goes up for who is in.

In fact, we know if we take the largest purchasers out, it is estimated we could see premiums go up nearly 40 percent for those who are currently in the system, and we are more likely to go back to ad hoc disaster assistance.

In the drought of 2012, one of the worst on record for U.S. farmers, there were no calls for our crops to receive ad hoc disaster assistance. The corn, wheat, soybean growers, and others across the country were able to survive. Why? Because of crop insurance, and it worked.

I urge colleagues to take a second look at this. We are talking about preserving a historic agreement that came together around conservation compliance. We want to make sure all of the land that is in crop insurance is covered, and we are protecting our soil and water.

I ask for a ''no'' vote on the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. The No. 1 person who cares about the environmental quality of their land is the farmer. The bigger the farmer, the more they care.

The No. 4 farmer, as far as crop insurance in the country, farms 105,000 acres. The average farmer in Oklahoma has 160 acres. They will make an economic decision, and if a 15-percent bump in their premium will cause them to go out, they will go out. But they will not go out because it is too much of a sweetheart deal. We are still going to pay almost half of their crop insurance—50 percent.

Does anybody else have that kind of deal going? Nobody else has that kind of deal going.

What we are saying is, let's save some money and ask those who are more well endowed with benefits and profits to pay a fairer share of what they should be paying based on the benefits they get.

The one thing the chairwoman didn't say is these are the guys who collect the big bucks when there is one. They do pay a portion of it, but their payouts are hundreds of times higher than the average farmer.

They will make an economic decision, and they are not going to walk away from this because it is still—even at 48 percent—too sweet of a deal for any of them to walk away. There is no study that says they will walk away.

Wait and see. If they walk away, Senator DURBIN and I will walk down and offer mea culpas on the Senate floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. I appreciate the confidence my friend from Oklahoma has about what business decisions will be made. Let's assume they don't walk away from crop insurance; they will be walking away from conservation compliance if they are not required to do that.

If this agreement falls apart—and it is an agreement that was delicately put together with over 30 different farm organizations, as well as conservation and environmental folks, to work together to support crop insurance. But to require environmental compliance—they may or may not make decisions about crop insurance. I do know if they do leave, the folks in the program, which are small- and medium-sized programs—as a matter of economics, like any other kind of insurance—will see their costs go up. We do know that.

We also have this broader question that relates to the large farmers the Senators are talking about where the benefit to having comprehensive conservation compliance for our country is a benefit we want to make sure we keep intact. It would be undermined with the passage of this amendment.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, how much time remains?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Senators DURBIN and COBURN have 5 minutes remaining, Senator HAGAN has 1 minute remaining, and Senator STABENOW has 1 minute remaining.

Mr. COBURN. Let me just make the point. The large farmers I know in Oklahoma really don't want the government telling them what kind of agreement they are going to have with their crop insurance and environmental things. We already have a ton of rules.

What I do know is there is nobody in Oklahoma who cares more about the environment than our farmers. I disagree there is a disconnect if we limit

the crop insurance subsidy to the very large farmers in Oklahoma and that they are not going to do what is in the best interests of the environment since it is a benefit to their own economic well-being.

We understand a deal was cut to get us to where we are on the bill, and we are not trying to disturb that. We don't want to disturb that, but we cannot continue to subsidize the very well heeled in this country to the same level that we try to protect those who are marginal. We just cannot do it.

We could have made this a whole lot different. We could have lowered it even lower. We didn't do that. The average median family income in this country is less than $60,000. We are talking about almost 15 times more than the average family in this country makes, and saying: If you make more than that, maybe you could take a little trim off the subsidy of your crop insurance. That is not an unfair question.

I yield to my colleague from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Senator from Oklahoma.

Let's get it straight: Every farmer buying crop insurance gets a subsidy. The question is, How big is the subsidy? Is it 62 percent of the actual premium cost—that is what they are all receiving now—or will it be 47 or 48 percent, which is what we are suggesting, for 1 percent of the farmers, of the wealthiest farmers.

How many farmers are we talking about? There are roughly 2 million farmers in America. The people we are talking about number 20,000. There are 20,000 farmers who would be affected by our amendment. One would think we are about to destroy agriculture in America. There are 2 million farmers, and all of them get a subsidy.

Senator COBURN and I are saying: Let's nix the subsidy for the wealthiest. What we hear is that is too much to ask—it is too much sacrifice. I don't think so.

One example in Illinois—and I will not read the examples from other Midwestern States—a corn and soybean grower received $740,000 in premium subsidies to cover the crops he planted in my State in 18 counties. There are 102 counties in Illinois. We would cut his subsidy from $740,000 to $639,000. Does anyone think he will notice? Does anyone think he will stop buying crop insurance on what he has planted in 18 counties? I don't think so.

At a time when we are asking people in the Head Start Program to make a sacrifice across America, can we at least ask for a little bit of a sacrifice from the 20,000 of the wealthiest farmers out of 2 million? I don't think it is asking too much.

Madam President, I ask that the amendment be called up for consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Illinois, [Mr. DURBIN], for himself and Mr. COBURN, proposes an amendment numbered 953.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To limit the amount of premium subsidy provided by the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation on behalf of any person or legal entity with an average adjusted gross income in excess of $750,000, with a delayed application of the limitation until completion of a study on the effects of the limitation)

On page 1101, between lines 5 and 6, insert the following:

SEC. 11_____. LIMITATION ON PREMIUM SUBSIDY BASED ON AVERAGE ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME.

Section 508(e) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act (7 U.S.C. 1508(e)) (as amended by section 11030(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

''(9) LIMITATION ON PREMIUM SUBSIDY BASED ON AVERAGE ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME.—

''(A) DEFINITION OF AVERAGE ADJUSTED GROSS INCOME.—In this paragraph, the term 'average adjusted gross income' has the meaning given the term in section 1001D(a) of the Food Security Act of 1985 (7 U.S.C. 1308–3a(a)).

''(B) LIMITATION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of this subtitle and beginning with the 2014 reinsurance year, in the case of any producer that is a person or legal entity that has an average adjusted gross income in excess of $750,000 based on the most recent data available from the Farm Service Agency as of the beginning of the reinsurance year, the total amount of premium subsidy provided with respect to additional coverage under subsection (c), section 508B, or section 508C issued on behalf of the producer for a reinsurance year shall be 15 percentage points less than the premium subsidy provided in accordance with this subsection that would otherwise be available for the applicable policy, plan of insurance, and coverage level selected by the producer.

''(C) APPLICATION.—

''(i) STUDY.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary, in consultation with the Government Accountability Office, shall carry out a study to determine the effects of the limitation described in subparagraph (B) on—

''(I) the overall operations of the Federal crop insurance program;

''(II) the number of producers participating in the Federal crop insurance program;

''(III) the level of coverage purchased by participating producers;

''(IV) the amount of premiums paid by participating producers and the Federal Government;

''(V) any potential liability for participating producers, approved insurance providers, and the Federal Government;

''(VI) different crops or growing regions;

''(VII) program rating structures;

''(VIII) creation of schemes or devices to evade the impact of the limitation; and

''(IX) administrative and operating expenses paid to approved insurance providers and underwriting gains and loss for the Federal government and approved insurance providers.

''(ii) EFFECTIVENESS.—The limitation described in subparagraph (B) shall not take effect unless the Secretary determines, through the study described in clause (i), that the limitation would not—

''(I) significantly increase the premium amount paid by producers with an average adjusted gross income of less than $750,000;

''(II) result in a decline in the crop insurance coverage available to producers; and

''(III) increase the total cost of the Federal crop insurance program.''.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, it was my understanding that the consent was for the Hagan amendment and then the Durbin-Coburn amendment. So if we could proceed in that order—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is the order in which they will be voted.

Mr. COBURN. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays on our amendment and yield back our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 1031

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays on the Hagan amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are so ordered.

Ms. STABENOW. We yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If all time is yielded back, the question is on agreeing to amendment No. 1031.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG), and the Senator from Nevada (Mr. REID) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 94, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 138 Leg.]

YEAS—94

Alexander	Franken	Murphy
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murray
Baldwin	Graham	Nelson
Barrasso	Grassley	Paul
Baucus	Hagan	Portman
Begich	Harkin	Pryor
Bennet	Hatch	Reed
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Risch
Blunt	Heitkamp	Roberts
Boozman	Hirono	Rockefeller
Brown	Hoeven	Rubio
Burr	Isakson	Sanders
Cantwell	Johanns	Schatz
Cardin	Johnson (SD)	Schumer
Carper	Johnson (WI)	Scott
Casey	Kaine	Sessions
Chambliss	King	Shaheen
Coats	Kirk	Shelby
Coburn	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Cochran	Landrieu	Tester
Collins	Leahy	Thune
Coons	Lee	Toomey
Corker	Levin	Udall (CO)
Cornyn	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Cowan	McCain	Vitter
Crapo	McCaskill	Warner
Cruz	McConnell	Warren
Donnelly	Menendez	Whitehouse
Durbin	Merkley	Wicker
Enzi	Mikulski	Wyden
Feinstein	Moran	
Fischer	Murkowski	

NOT VOTING—6

Boxer	Heller	Lautenberg
Flake	Inhofe	Reid

The amendment (No. 1031) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 953

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote in relation to amendment No. 953, offered by the Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I am cosponsoring this amendment that says the wealthiest 20,000 farmers in America will pay slightly more for their crop insurance so the program will be a sound program for all farmers.

I urge my colleagues, in the name of deficit reduction and making this a good program, to vote yes on the Durbin-Coburn amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I would urge a ''no'' vote for a number of reasons, but let me simply say the problem with increasing crop insurance premiums by about 40 percent, which is what this does, is we are going to reduce participation in crop insurance, reduce coverage, and drive up premiums. Most important for me, we have a historic agreement to tie crop insurance to conservation compliance, and this would undermine that effort.

I would urge a ''no'' vote.

Before proceeding, I wish to thank everyone for their good work up to this point and announce there will be no further votes. The next vote will be at 5:30 p.m. on the Monday we return, and we will proceed and complete the bill.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to amendment No. 953.

The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG), and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Arizona (Mr. FLAKE), the Senator from Nevada (Mr. HELLER), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), and the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. VITTER).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted ''nay.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COONS). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 59, nays 33, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 139 Leg.]

YEAS—59

Ayotte	Franken	Murray
Baldwin	Graham	Nelson
Begich	Grassley	Paul
Bennet	Hatch	Portman
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Reed
Brown	Johnson (SD)	Reid
Burr	Johnson (WI)	Rubio
Cantwell	King	Schatz
Cardin	Kirk	Schumer
Carper	Klobuchar	Scott
Casey	Lee	Sessions
Coats	Levin	Shaheen
Coburn	Manchin	Tester
Collins	McCain	Toomey
Coons	McCaskill	Udall (CO)
Corker	Menendez	Udall (NM)
Cornyn	Merkley	Warren
Cruz	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murkowski	Wyden
Feinstein	Murphy	

NAYS—33

Barrasso	Gillibrand	McConnell
Baucus	Hagan	Moran
Blunt	Harkin	Pryor
Boozman	Heitkamp	Risch
Chambliss	Hirono	Roberts
Cochran	Hoeven	Sanders
Cowan	Isakson	Shelby
Crapo	Johanns	Stabenow
Donnelly	Kaine	Thune
Enzi	Landrieu	Warner
Fischer	Leahy	Wicker

NOT VOTING—8

Alexander	Heller	Rockefeller
Boxer	Inhofe	Vitter
Flake	Lautenberg	

The amendment (No. 953) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

AMENDMENT NO. 978

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and that my amendment No. 978 be called up.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I object to the request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I regret that we have heard an objection to pulling up this amendment. Many may not understand that to pull up an amendment and to have it considered in the Senate takes unanimous consent. All 100 have to agree.

My colleague has objected, making it impossible to consider an amendment that should be debated here on the floor of the Senate because this amendment is about good policy and good process.

Not so long ago, in the continuing resolution, a provision was slipped in by the House of Representatives. Because this was a must-pass bill under tight time constraints, it also slipped through the Senate with no debate. And what did this legislation do, the Monsanto protection act? This legislation does something that I think most would find astounding. It allows the unrestricted sale and planting of new variants of genetically modified seeds that a court has ruled have not been properly examined for their effect on other farmers, the environment, and human health.

Obviously, this raises a lot of concerns about the impact on farmers and the impact on human health, but there is even more. The fact that the act instructs the seed producers to ignore a ruling of the court is equally troubling. It raises profound questions about the constitutional separation of powers and the ability of our courts to hold agencies accountable to the law and their responsibilities.

I can tell my colleagues that this process and this policy has provoked outrage across the country. When I held townhalls in Oregon after this happened, at every townhall it was raised by farmers concerned that this would endanger the crops they were growing and hoped to export overseas. I have received over 2,200 letters on this topic.

I am very hopeful that when we come back next week, we can have a full debate on this amendment, that it won't be objected to, and that certainly there will be no opportunity of any kind for this policy to be extended because it hurts a process of holding our departments accountable for enforcing the law, and it provides a policy of overriding the court order designed to protect other farmers, to protect the environment, and to protect human health, and that is absolutely unacceptable.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, I would like to respond to my friend Mr. MERKLEY.

This act, which I would think would more properly be called the farmer assurance act, was passed by both the House and the Senate and signed into law by President Obama in March of 2013, March of this year.

Many have claimed it was never publicly debated and it was slipped into the bill by the House of Representatives, as my good friend said on the floor a minute ago, and passed the Senate without debate. Now, this was a big bill, I will admit that, and there was a lot of debate.

While that would certainly be, I am sure, what Mr. MERKLEY believes happened, I don't think the facts would bear that out. In fact, this language originated, as he said, and was passed by the House after it was debated in committee, and it was posted for several months. This was not mystery language.

In fact, on June 6, 2012, the House publicly posted their resolution that included this in the Agriculture appropriations bill. It was available on the House Web site from that point on. Section 733 of the House bill is identical to the farmer assurance language included in the final fiscal year 2013 appropriations bill that was passed by the Congress.

On June 19, 2012, the House Agriculture appropriations bill was passed out of committee. That bill included this exact language. That was June 19, 2012.

The continuing resolution, actually, on the AG/FDA—the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration—bill included a coming together of these two bills.

The CR—the continuing resolution—included items in the Senate bill that dealt principally with agricultural research that the House didn't have, and there were provisions in the House version like this one that the Senate accepted.

The language was publicly available and posted as part of the agreed-to appropriations bill for 9 days before the vote.

A week before the vote, Senator TESTER filed an amendment which is exactly like the amendment we just heard about today because it would have struck this provision. On that same day, Senator TESTER spoke at length on the floor about his amendment. This was a week before the continuing resolution was passed.

I don't mind having a debate about the provisions. I do mind the idea that somehow nobody knew about this. Now, I can't watch the debate for every Member of the Senate and say: Here is what you should have been paying attention to that one of our colleagues said, but it was fairly substantial and took some time, and it was a week before we voted.

By the way, nobody in the Senate proposed this provision. Nobody put it in the House bill, as some have contended. But I do think this provision, as it turns out, this policy, protects farm families. That is why it was supported by the American Farm Bureau Federation, the American Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the American Soybean Association, the National Association of Wheat Growers, the Congressional Hunger Center, the National Corn Growers Association, and others.

Many have incorrectly claimed that this language gives priority to the needs of a small number of businesses over the rights and needs of the American consumers. I don't think that is true either. This provision doesn't protect any seed company—Monsanto or Pioneer Seed—or even the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It would help the family who planted a crop that was legal to plant.

My mom and dad were dairy farmers. The one thing I do know about the farming cycle is that once you have made a decision to plant a crop, it is usually too late to plant another one, and there are times when it is absolutely too late to plant another crop. So what does your family do that year when the crop the government told you you could plant, some Federal judge decides you can't plant it, only to have maybe another—in the few cases where this has happened—other Federal judges later say that the first Federal judge was wrong and that those crops were legal to be planted and legal to be harvested.

Both challenges, by the way, were about what environmental impact this might have if something happened from one property to another. There was never a question in those two cases about the safety of the food.

This provision allows the Secretary of Agriculture to create a way for those farm families to sell that crop, but it doesn't require the Secretary do that.

Remember, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has already said: This is a crop that we have deregulated. It has heavily regulated these kinds of crops until the Secretary of Agriculture says it is not, and when the Secretary of Agriculture says it is not, then anybody who wants to can plant these crops. This gives the farmers and their families the assurance that a legally planted crop is likely to be able to be harvested.

In addition, the authority granted to the USDA in this language was only temporary. It was in the House bill, and it lasts until September 30 of this year. The Secretary of Agriculture said he already had the authority. It didn't seem to me that the return for ag research and other things we had in our bill—that repeating the authority the Secretary of Agriculture said he had and had used was a bad thing.

It basically tells the Secretary of Agriculture: If you agree with the court, by the way, and don't think you did your job and you don't intend to appeal the case, you don't have to do anything that allows a crop to be harvested. But if you still think you were right and you are going to appeal that case, you have the authority, if you want to use it, to figure out how to let that crop be harvested for that year and that time.

USDA can determine at any time that a biocrop should not be approved, and USDA can pull its approval on a crop that it has approved. FDA also has to approve the food value of these things before they can go into food.

This language doesn't require USDA to approve biotech crops. It doesn't prevent individuals from suing the government over a biotech crop approval. Ultimately, this language simply codifies the authority the Secretary believes he had.

As recently as May 9 of this year, Secretary Vilsack testified before the Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee and said this language "doesn't necessarily do anything I can't already do. We're going to make these decisions based on the science and based on the law, which is the way they ought to be made."

Unfortunately, if you took a quick search of the Internet, you wouldn't find out these facts. But we have the advantage that we can search actually what the law said, not what somebody else said it might have said.

These provisions protect farm families and their livelihoods, and that is why they are supported by some groups I have already mentioned and some I haven't: the American Farm Bureau Federation, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, National Soybean Association, National Association of Wheat Growers, the Congressional Hunger Center, National Corn Growers Association, National Cotton Council, American Sugarbeet Growers Association, the Agriculture Retailers Association, the Biotechnology Industry Organization, the American Seed Trade Association, and many other groups.

Facts are stubborn, and the law here is easy to find and read, and it doesn't say anything about protecting anybody because, frankly, you can't sue these companies anyway. They sold you a legal product. The only people protected here are the people who have put the seeds in the ground. A farmer can't put those seeds in the ground in August or September and expect to harvest a crop that year.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I would like to take a few moments to thank colleagues for their work this week, to thank my partner Senator COCHRAN and both of our staffs, who have been working very hard to complete the process of this very important jobs bill called the farm bill.

Let me take a moment to remind everyone that we are talking about 16 million jobs in America that come because of agriculture, because of what we do in the food industry altogether. It is incredibly important we complete this work. I am very confident when we come back into session in another week that we will complete our process.

I thank our majority leader and the Republican leader for their support in our moving through this process, and certainly our majority leader, Senator REID, who has been incredibly supportive in working with us and giving us the time to come directly from committee to the floor of the Senate and to work with colleagues through amendments on both sides of the aisle to get this done. We are doing this the way we have always done it, which is in a bipartisan fashion, working through both Democratic and Republican amendments. At the end we will have produced what I believe is the most reform-minded farm bill in decades.

Let me also remind my colleagues we have before us a bill that is different than anything I can think of actually in terms of deficit reduction. We have a bill that has over $24 billion in spending cuts put forward by our committee and supported by the communities that are affected—$24 billion in deficit reduction, which is much more than we would be required to do if we went with the across-the-board cuts that have been so debated with the sequester. The Agriculture Department and the farm bill are responsible for $6 billion in deficit reduction through the sequester. We have added four times to that amount in deficit reduction, but we are doing it in a smart, focused way, making tough decisions, setting priorities, eliminating subsidies that don't make sense anymore, and strengthening risk management, market-oriented programs.

We have debated, and will debate more, something called crop insurance, which I will remind my colleagues does

not allow for someone getting a check. They get a bill. They pay for crop insurance. We do it in a partnership between the Federal Government and farmers to help them have affordable risk management. That is what we strengthen in this bill. We have been told by farmers all across the country that the most important risk management tool for them is insurance—crop insurance that is affordable.

We have also in this legislation done something that is historic, which is as we have moved from subsidies to insurance, we are tying conservation compliance to the purchase of insurance. This is a very important policy, and we have many groups—over 30 groups—that have come together, and I want to commend all the commodity groups and the Farm Bureau and the Farmers Union and all those that came together, along with environmentalists and conservation organizations, to put a real priority on both a strong risk management system called crop insurance and a strong conservation policy called conservation compliance. This is a very important part of our bill as we look to savings.

Frankly, we have looked at savings in every single part of this bill. We have 12 different bills all put together called titles in this thing we call a farm bill, and we have looked at savings in each area of the bill. We have, for instance, taken a hard look at our conservation programs and decided that instead of 23 different kinds of programs, we actually could consolidate and streamline down to 13. We put them in four different buckets of activities, with a lot of flexibility, working with community groups and grassroots groups on conservation, and saw that we could save money, which we have done.

We listened to mayors and rural communities around Michigan and around the country—those who represent townships and counties—who said make sure you continue to have a strong rural economic development presence. Because once you get outside the cities in Michigan or around the country every community is partnering with rural development for business loans, water and sewer projects, transportation, firetrucks, police cars, housing, and all those efforts working through rural development. But we heard from our local officials that it was complicated. We currently, in law, have 11 different definitions of ''rural.'' That made no sense. They said: Could you please give us one? We looked through all the different programs and streamlined it and now we have one definition, so it is easier to work with, less paperwork, and it makes much more sense.

We have continued to strengthen the part of our agricultural economy called ''specialty crops.'' This is near and dear to me in Michigan—fresh fruits and vegetables and other areas that are very important to many States, including mine. The organic community is a fast-growing part of agriculture, and so we strengthen that as well.

We have looked from Mississippi to Michigan, California to Delaware, and everything in between, to make sure this is a bill that works for all parts of agriculture, and I am pleased to say we have been able to do that.

We have also made sure the energy title is strong, both in supporting farmers and ranchers who want to be focused on energy efficiency on the farm or the ranch, and also in expanding efforts beyond our traditional biofuel efforts to something that is near and dear to my heart which is called bio-based manufacturing.

We have very exciting opportunities in America. I know our Presiding Officer is as passionate about manufacturing as I am, and we now have the opportunity, working with our agricultural groups, to create ways to replace petroleum in plastics and other types of materials that we have today—synthetic fibers and so on—with agricultural by-products.

If you buy many of our great American automobiles today, you might find you are sitting on foam that is actually made from soybean oil instead of petroleum oil. So you might be sitting on soybeans in the seats. Many parts of the interior of the automobiles that folks are now buying actually have some kind of agricultural by-product, whether it is wheat chaff or corn husks or soybean oil. So we know we can use these new opportunities to not only create markets but create situations that are much better for our environment and that create jobs. This is a new and exciting part of what we are doing to expand opportunities through the energy title as well.

We also are very pleased and proud of the efforts around nutrition for folks in this country who, through no fault of their own, have found themselves hit hard by the economy. We want to make sure they continue to have the support they need around food assistance. That is absolutely critical, and I am pleased we have stood together in opposing very damaging amendments to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Because just as crop insurance is important for our farmers when they have a disaster, food assistance is important for our families when they have a disaster. I think it reflects the best about us as Americans that we want to make sure we are providing that assistance.

We also are making sure we are doing more around farmers markets, and fresh fruits and vegetables in schools, making local food hubs a possibility so we have local farmers being able to come together to market their products as well.

There are many pieces in this farm bill that all relate back to jobs, all relate back to reforms we have put in place, and relate to making sure we have a continuation of the safest, most affordable food supply in the world here in America. When you go home tonight, if you sit down to have supper, thank a farmer. We all understand this is the riskiest business in the world, and the job of the farm bill is to provide support and risk management tools for our growers when they need them, but also to be great stewards of taxpayer dollars and to do what is right for rural communities across America and for families that need some temporary help as well.

There are many pieces, and I haven't even mentioned all of them. But I did want to remind people why we take the time on the floor to work through these issues and these amendments. We have more work to do, but we see the light at the end of the tunnel. We will be putting together a list for final votes on amendments when we come back into session, and we are looking forward to doing that and to completing this effort.

Again, I would remind colleagues, we did this last year. The House did not do their job. They did in committee, on a bipartisan basis, but not on the floor. We did our job. Last time around I remember doing 73 different votes on this particular bill. We wrapped in almost every single one of those amendments that were passed into the bill we presented to the Senate this time, and we are continuing to work together on other amendments as well. But it will be time, when we get back, to bring this to closure and to once again demonstrate the Senate can work together on a bipartisan basis to do the right thing for the families and the businesses and the farmers and the ranchers we represent. Sixteen million people in this country are counting on us to get our job done, and I am sure we will.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my distinguished colleague from Michigan in predicting that we are moving in the right direction. We have covered a lot of important issues during the debate over the last couple of days and taken up a good many amendments. We have had recorded votes and free and full discussion of a lot of issues that are affected by this legislation, and I must say it has been a remarkable performance in terms of the subjects that have been covered and amendments disposed of. True progress has been made in developing what I think can be a very important contribution toward a legal framework and support structure to help enable American farmers to compete in the international marketplace and to sustain the jobs that flow from these important activities throughout the United States.

At a time when, in some places, jobs are hard to find, this is a job creator and it is a step toward strengthening our economy not just in rural America but throughout the country—in municipalities as well.

I hope everybody recognizes what a strong leader our committee chairman

has become, as she has demonstrated in her performance as chairman of our committee. She has done an excellent job. I commend her and all of our colleagues on the committee for helping shape this product so it can be adopted by the Senate and signed into law by the President. I look forward to that day and to celebrating and helping salute those who have been responsible for this good work.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in condemning the Internal Revenue Service for intentionally singling out dozens of nonprofit organizations for no cause other than their political leanings. This is not an issue of Democrat versus Republican. Indeed, the actions of the IRS have brought rare bipartisan accord. There are lessons for us all in this scandal.

One is that a government that is too big, too powerful, and too all-encompassing is prone to overstep its bounds. It becomes unwieldy and inefficient. And sometimes, it tramples upon the rights of the people it is supposed to serve. We have seen those maxims in action over these last few weeks.

We have an IRS that targeted groups of American citizens, threatening them with the force of law and imprisonment, for no other reason than they had certain political affiliations. We know now the IRS selected these groups by zeroing in on certain words and phrases.

And what were these words and phrases that elicited such concern in the halls of the Internal Revenue Service? Words like ''patriot'' and ''we the people.''

It seems to me that we can draw only one of two conclusions from the actions of the IRS. Either some in the administration intentionally attempted to use the power of the Federal Government to target and cripple their political enemies, or they lack the competence to oversee a bureaucracy that has grown too big not to fail.

One thing is for sure, though. The reputation of the IRS has been tarnished in ways that will take years to repair, and it is imperative that we restore the trust that has been lost between the American people and our government. That work begins with getting to the bottom of this scandal.

We have many questions that need answers. Did these IRS officials act on their own, or did they have direction from their superiors? How high up does this scandal go? What did the White House know, and when did they know it?

This scandal comes as Washington is preparing to hand over even more power and authority to the IRS. It will be the IRS that enforces the mandates of the new health care law. It will be the IRS that will have control over some of our most private, personal decisions.

It is not too late to change course. But if we insist on placing the blame for the IRS's actions on a few low-level staffers without looking at the root cause of the abuse—corruption, or a government that, as the President's former Senior Advisor David Axelrod recently admitted, has become too vast to manage and oversee—then we will continue to witness scandals like this.

Big government comes with bigger problems, bigger scandals, and bigger dangers for our liberties. The Tea Party and organizations like it have been arguing that position since they were founded. And while I know there are some in this chamber that will hate to hear this, it turns out the Tea Party's fears were justified.

We need more than just an audit of what happened at the IRS. We have given the IRS every opportunity to deal with this issue internally. More than a year ago, Senator HATCH and I sent a letter to the IRS expressing our concerns about the targeting of conservative groups. We received a response assuring us that our concerns were unfounded.

We now know that this response was false, and perhaps intentionally misleading. Tuesday, former-Commissioner Steven Miller appeared before the Homeland Security and Government Affairs committee on which I serve. During that hearing, Mr. Miller claimed that while he had dispatched a team to investigate our concerns a month before he responded to our letter, the response was sent without input from that team. He claims he did learn that targeting had occurred, but not until a week after misinforming the Senate that all was fine. He said he was ''outraged.'' And yet he never corrected the record, choosing instead to allow his false response to stand. At the very least we have a situation where the IRS, knowing what had happened a week after they sent a response saying everything was fine, refused to correct the Record. I believed them at the time. Unfortunately, we were misinformed. And yesterday, Lois Lerner, the head of the IRS's tax-exempt organizations division, declined to answer questions regarding this scandal, deciding instead to invoke her Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination.

Despite all this, the IRS asks us to trust them when they tell us that this scandal was simply the result of a few misguided, low-level employees, and that no senior officials were involved. With all due respect, I am done taking the IRS's word for it. We need an in-depth investigation, one that fully documents the what, when, and who of this scandal. Only when we get to the bottom of this incident can we begin to rebuild the bridge of trust between us as citizens and our Federal Government here in Washington, DC.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I come to the floor to talk a little bit about the farm bill which is before the Senate. Notwithstanding all the rhetoric we have had around the budget over the last 4 years or so around here, last year the Senate Agriculture Committee was the only committee, to my knowledge in either House, the Senate or the House, that passed a bipartisan deficit reduction plan. We did it together, Democrats and Republicans, working together on the committee with the various constituencies around the United States of America. That bill ultimately passed the Senate in a broad bipartisan vote right here on this floor.

The House of Representatives was unable, for whatever reason, to enact a version of the farm bill over there, which was an incredible disservice to rural America. Farmers in my State, ranchers in my State, the State of Colorado, faced an unprecedented drought throughout this entire period. Throughout the summer of 2012, when I was traveling the State, no one was talking about the Presidential election—particularly in these rural areas, which was on the mind of everybody in Washington. What they wanted to know was why a farm bill had not been passed and for good reason—because the Senate had passed a bill that was supported by both Republicans and Democrats, by producers of all types across the country, and it was a good piece of legislation.

Fast forward to this week, when the Senate Agriculture Committee has once again passed a bipartisan bill with meaningful deficit reduction. I thank Chairwoman STABENOW from Michigan and the ranking member Senator THAD COCHRAN for their leadership on this bill. This bill now has gone through two different ranking members on the Republican side and has been supported in a bipartisan way, as I said earlier. This farm bill, similar to the last version we passed, reflects the values and the process we want to see in other areas of our budget. We identify priorities in this bill. We streamline duplication in this bill. We break away from old, inefficient ways of doing business in this farm bill.

We eliminate direct payments in one of the most significant reforms we have seen in a farm bill in a very long time. These payments are issued to farmers regardless of economic need or market signals. We do away with that abuse. This bill prioritizes what is working for producers and it strengthens crop insurance as a result, which is what my farmers have said is most important to them.

I have spoken on this floor before about Colorado's battle against historic drought conditions. Some farmers

lost over half their corn yields in 2012 alone. It is hard to imagine, when you think about it, any business losing half of its production in 1 year, but that is what happened to Colorado's corn growers. Crop insurance is what is keeping farmers and rural economies in business and that is why this should be a priority. That is why this bill should have been passed 2 years ago when it first came to the floor of the Senate. It is why we should pass it next month.

Beyond crop insurance, another key highlight of this bill for those of us from Colorado is conservation. The title carries over the reforms from last year's bill, and this year's bill includes a provision to ensure that recipients of government-supported crop insurance comply with basic conservation requirements. This measure is the result of a historic agreement between the commodity groups and the conservation groups in this country. It is supported by a wide variety of stakeholders—from the Farm Bureau to the National Wildlife Federation.

This revamped conservation title is huge for rural America and for my State. It is critical for farming and ranching families looking to keep their land in agriculture generation to generation. It is incredibly important for our hunters and sportsmen. It is important for anybody—which is most of us—who cares about the long-term health of our soil, our air, and our water. These conservation measures help us improve the efficiency of production agriculture and improve the quality of the environment in farm country. We recognize that keeping these landscapes in their historical, undeveloped state is an economic driver for our entire State and for our entire region—for tourism, for wildlife habitat.

As I have traveled Colorado over the last several years, farmers and ranchers constantly were talking to me about the importance of conservation. They highlighted, in particular, conservation easements which provide Department of Agriculture assistance to help landowners who are interested in voluntarily conserving the farming and ranching heritage of their land.

I wish to spend a few minutes sharing stories that Coloradans have shared with me. This is a photo—you don't have this as much in Delaware. I know you have other things. Here is a photo of a ranch in Colorado, the Music Meadows Ranch. It is outside of Westcliffe, CO, elevation 9,000 feet.

I have a version of this picture in my office here in Washington. It is 4,000 acres. The rancher's name is Elin Ganschow. It is some of the finest grass-fed beef in the country, raised by Elin and her family at this ranch. Thanks to the Grassland Reserve Program, Elin's ranch now has a permanent conservation easement. It provides wildlife habitat for elk, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, black bear, and mountain lions, species prized by Colorado sportsmen. They contribute millions of dollars to our State's economy, and she has been able to continue having her family ranch.

Thanks to an amendment adopted by the Agriculture Committee this year, we will see even more of these easements happen on high-priority landscapes such as the Music Meadows Ranch. I thank Chairwoman STABENOW and Senator COCHRAN for working so hard with me to get that amendment approved.

Private lands conservation such as this, the type aided by the farm bill, is absolutely critical for so many reasons. It is poorly understood in the East, but it is an incredibly important tool for those of us in the West to keep our family farms and ranches family farms and ranches and provide the habitat needed for our sportsmen and for tourism.

Here is another example of why this bill is so crucial for our sportsmen and outdoor recreation economy. This is a photo taken of a friend, John Gale, hunting pheasants in Yuma County, CO. The Conservation Reserve Program, CRP, provides important habitat for pheasants and other upland birds all across the country. The land surrounding this is all CRP land—everything you can see and far beyond that—and it has enabled this pheasant hunting to happen in our State.

The CRP program protects habitats in addition to holding in place highly erodable soil—something we have a lot of history with in Colorado. For instance, the soil in Baca County, CO, has over 250,000 acres enrolled in CRP. Baca County was absolutely devastated by the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, as chronicled in Tim Egan's ''The Worst Hard Time,'' and other books. Thanks to CRP, Baca County has weathered recent droughts much better than it otherwise would have.

Healthy grasslands, open landscapes, and abundant wildlife are a fundamental part of what it is to be in the West. We need to preserve those grasslands, those open spaces, and those species, and that is what the conservation title of the farm bill does.

I strongly support this new conservation title as reported out of the committee in a bipartisan vote. I know some are going to try to amend this bipartisan consensus.

One of the great things about serving on the Agriculture Committee is there is so little partisanship. The differences we have are not Republican versus Democrat. We have some differences, but they tend to be regional and understandable. We have a way, a process, and the leadership to actually work through issues together. It would be nice if we did more of that around here.

I am worried there will be some amendments that will come forward, among other things, in the name of deficit reduction, which, as I mentioned earlier, is already reflected by this committee's work, unlike every other committee in the Congress.

As far as Lee amendment No. 1017 and No. 1018, I appreciate my neighbor's effort on deficit reduction. These programs repeal the important programs I talked about here on which our farmers and ranchers rely, and they keep our soil on the ground, not in our wind and air.

Lee amendment No. 1017 repeals the CRP program I spoke about earlier. I have been on this floor many times to talk about cutting our deficit. I am glad we have been part of a process which has actually led to deficit reduction. We need to put the entire budget under a microscope, including agriculture, to cut waste and eliminate redundancies.

Let me say again, including agriculture, the bill we have on this floor makes those cuts—$24 billion in all. Some $6 billion of these cuts come from conservation. Not all of those cuts are cuts I like, but I agreed to them in the package we were moving forward. We made difficult compromises at the committee level, and now we have a more efficient conservation title as a result that won support from both sides of the aisle. Over 650 conservation groups support the conservation title before us, and I urge my colleagues to support it and oppose amendments which would weaken the title and undermine the good work of Republicans and Democrats on the committee.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss some of the amendments I offered to the 2013 farm bill. First of all, let me start by thanking the chairwoman and the ranking member for their leadership and listening to the voices of the members of the Agriculture Committee when it comes to reauthorizing the farm bill which is set to expire at the end of September. We have not been able to agree on all aspects of the farm bill, but our chairwoman and ranking member should, however, be recognized for their tireless work in getting a farm bill done this year.

One way or another, we need to move this process forward. We came close when the Senate passed a farm bill, but we were unable to get the House to move it. I hope this year we can complete the process and get a bill we can put on the President's desk so we are able to give the producers around this country the certainty they need when it comes to planting and making decisions about the future of their farming operations.

While this bill is commonly called the farm bill, the majority of spending is not for the agricultural producers. The nutrition title of this bill, which is primarily food stamps, or what we refer to as SNAP, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, accounts for 77 percent of the spending in the farm bill programs over the next 10 years. Let me repeat that: Seventy-seven percent of all spending in this farm bill

doesn't have anything to do with production agriculture, but is in what we refer to as the nutrition title of the farm bill.

It is important we subject all areas of Federal spending to close examination, and that includes the nutrition title of the farm bill. There should be no exceptions.

I recently introduced legislation that will reform several components of the nutrition title and save more than $30 billion from the $760 billion nutrition title, and that is a 10-year number.

These commonsense reforms to SNAP generate significant savings without altering benefits to needy families. The SNAP is exceedingly complex. We should be vigilant to ensure that taxpayers' money is indeed going to help lift those in need out of poverty instead of going to ineffective programs that are mired in bureaucracy.

I have offered several parts of the amendments of this reform package to the farm bill currently on the floor. My amendment No. 991, which I hope to have an opportunity to get voted on after we return following next week, reforms the nutrition, education, and obesity prevention grant program. While well-intended, the current structure of this program funnels 52 percent of the funding to only four States. This is an inequitable use of funds which should be spent more equitably among program participants.

My amendment restructure of these grants will allow the States to receive up to $5 per SNAP enrollee indexed for inflation. Five dollars is the median value of what is currently spent on this education program per capita across all the States.

This amendment in no way limits the capacity of the States to leverage those dollars with their own funding to deliver more nutrition education services. By reforming these grants, all recipients of SNAP benefits will have more equal access to nutrition education and obesity prevention resources that will help them make healthy choices when shopping on a budget.

This amendment will save $2 billion over the next 10 years without impacting SNAP's benefits for those in need. Again, I want to stress this: Reforming this program does not affect the true mission of SNAP, which is providing food assistance to needy families. There is nothing in this amendment that changes eligibility requirements for SNAP benefits. Even after this nutrition education program is reformed, approximately $250 million a year will still be available to the States for these education programs.

The priority of the SNAP should be providing food assistance to needy families while they work to get back on their feet. Unfortunately, the nutrition, education and obesity grant program has become so partial to just a few large States that these States are expanding the use of these grants to fund lobbying campaigns instead of reaching out to educate SNAP families on making healthy choices while shopping on a budget.

Clearly, this program is in need of reform. Making commonsense changes to the SNAP shows the American people we are holding each Federal program up to the light and making sure the taxpayers' money is being spent for the public good.

Again, these are largely administrative changes to the SNAP that do not impact SNAP benefits for those who are truly in need of food assistance. A $2 billion cut represents less than ½ of 1 percent of what the Federal Government will spend on SNAP over the next 10 years.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me today in telling the American people we are committed to program integrity and quality among SNAP beneficiaries.

In the course of the next few weeks when we get back on this bill, I look forward to engaging my colleagues in a fair and open debate about how we can improve all farm bill programs that strengthen the stability and safety of our Nation's food supply for the next 5 years and beyond.

This is a commonsense amendment that saves us a couple of billion dollars which we can add to the savings in this bill in a time when we have rising deficits and debt and budgetary constraints we are operating with.

I hope we will be able to come together in the interest of reform—reform that actually targets the administrative costs of a program and does not impact benefits that are so needed for people who truly do need food assistance. I hope to get that amendment voted on when we return to the bill.

The second amendment I want to mention today is another one I have filed, and that deals with the commodity title of the farm bill.

Last year this body passed a farm bill by a vote of 64 to 35. This was a farm bill that most of us believed offered a level of reform we could support and defend to the American taxpayer.

Several of my colleagues and I pointed out in the Agriculture Committee debate that we have deep concerns regarding what we believe is a step backward in the commodity title of this bill with the creation of the Adverse Market Payments, or what we now call the AMP Program.

This program takes us a step backward from last year's farm bill by recreating a program with countercyclical payments and fixed target prices which the Senate farm bill completely eliminated last year.

Our concerns are not crop specific, but they are policy specific. Most Agriculture Committee members were told by our producers that they don't need an additional commodity title program, and that a sound crop insurance program is a much higher priority.

My amendment No. 1092 is a response to the wishes of most of the farmers in the United States. It simply strikes the newly created and unneeded Adverse Market Payments or AMP Program and places peanuts and rice back into the ARC Program. To put it simply, this amendment restores the reform-minded, market-oriented commodity title included in the farm bill we passed in the Senate last year.

This amendment also saves taxpayers more than $3 billion relative to the bill that is on the floor today.

High target prices are an outdated concept from past farm bills. They distort planning decisions, raise trade compliance issues, and they are not an effective use of limited taxpayer dollars.

While I appreciate the work our chairwoman and ranking member have put into this farm bill, I believe the inclusion of target prices is a step backward from a market-oriented farm policy that is anchored by a strong crop insurance program.

I urge my colleagues to support this amendment that recaptures the level of reform we achieved in last year's farm bill, and at the same time saves more than $3 billion over the bill that is on the floor today.

Both of these amendments have been filed. I hope as the debate moves forward we can get these amendments up and voted on.

If we are serious about moving farm policy in this country in a direction of reform that is market oriented and is about the future and not the past, then this commodity title amendment makes all the sense in the world and, again, saves $3 billion over the bill that is on the floor today.

I simply say with regard to the nutrition title amendment that too saves a couple of billion dollars. It makes reforms that I think create greater efficiency in the food stamp program and helps to address what I think is a very serious need which I think we all need to be aware and conscious of in the times we are in, and that is the out-of-control spending and out-of-control debt we are passing on to our children, grandchildren, and future generations. Passing a farm bill to achieve the highest level possible of additional savings, to me, seems to be a very high priority, and both of these amendments address those particular objectives.

I look forward to getting these amendments hopefully voted on when we return.

With that, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COWAN). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

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

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

Ms. STABENOW. I ask unanimous consent that the following amendments be in order: Moran No. 987 and

Coons-Johanns No. 1079; that at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, June 3, the Senate proceed to votes in relation to the two amendments in the order listed; that there be no second-degree amendments in order to either amendment prior to the votes, and that there be 2 minutes equally divided between the votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, in recent years the farm bill has changed and become more about welfare than providing a safety net for America's agriculture producers. Because this is so frustrating to me, I offered an amendment that would have restored the integrity of the farm bill. It would have cut the food stamp program by about $250 billion over ten years and converted it into a discretionary block grant. I am disappointed the Senate rejected my amendment by a vote of 36–60.

But the crop insurance program remains the heart of the farm bill. Many of my colleagues believe it is appropriate to reduce the program's effectiveness by imposing means testing and other limitations on participation. These restrictions are counterproductive and result in crop insurance becoming more expensive for family farmers. I agree there are many issues that should be addressed to make the farm bill more about farming, but I am opposed to efforts to limit the effectiveness of the crop insurance program.

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I was unable to attend four roll call votes that occurred on May 23, 2013. Had I been present, I would have voted yea on the confirmation of Srikanth Srinivasan to be U.S. Circuit Judge, yea on Feinstein amendment No. 923 to end the Federal crop insurance subsidy for tobacco, yea on Hagan amendment No. 1031 to reduce fraud in the crop insurance program, and yea on Durbin amendment No. 953 to reduce crop insurance premium subsidies for those earning over $750,000 annually in adjusted gross income.•

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The Senator from Michigan.

SEQUESTRATION

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I wish to start by thanking Senator WHITEHOUSE who has shown such strong leadership on the issue we are going to be discussing this afternoon, which is how do we get out of the sequestration box we are now in. I also wish to thank him for joining with me in sponsoring the Cut Unjustified Tax Loopholes Act, which could do so much to address the problems we will be discussing today, including the need to move forward on solutions to our budget deficit and to ending sequestration.

I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks, the Senator from Rhode Island be recognized for his remarks on this subject.

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

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, at the beginning of March, when Congress's failure to reach a compromise on deficit reduction triggered sequestration, some in Congress were ready to declare victory. ''Sequestration will take place . . . [and] I am excited,'' said one Member of the House of Representatives. ''It's going to be a home run,'' said another Member of the House of Representatives. ''This will be the first significant tea party victory,'' said a third Member of the House of Representatives.

Well, sequestration may be a victory for the tea party, but it isn't a victory for the American people. It is not a victory for the men and women of our military and their families.

Over the past 2 months, the Senate Armed Services Committee has heard testimony from our highest ranking military leaders, including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Army Chief of Staff, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Air Force Chief of Staff, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Combatant Commanders who are responsible for our forces in Afghanistan and Korea and around the world. Each of these military leaders told us that continued sequestration will damage our security and harm the troops they lead.

General Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of staff, warned us:

> If sequestration occurs, it will severely limit our ability to implement our defense strategy. It will put the Nation at greater risk of coercion, and it will break faith with men and women in uniform.

He warned us that continued sequestration would ''destroy'' military readiness. General Amos, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, told us: ''Sequestration will leave ships in ports, aircraft grounded for want of necessary maintenance and flying hours, units only partially trained and reset after 12 years of continuous combat, and modernization programs canceled.'' The result, he stated, would be ''a lapse in American leadership.''

General Odierno, the Chief of Staff of the Army, told us:

> Sequestration will result in delays to every one of our 10 major modernization programs, the inability to re-set our equipment after 12 years of war, and unacceptable reductions in unit and individual training. . . . It will place an unreasonable burden on the shoulders of our soldiers and civilians. . . . If we do not have the resources to train and equip the force, our soldiers, our young men and women, are the ones who will pay the price, potentially with their lives.

The Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force warned:

> Lost flight hours will cause unit stand-downs which will result in severe, rapid, and long-term unit combat readiness degradation. We have already ceased operations for one-third of our fighter and bomber force. Within 60 days of a stand down, the affected units will be unable to meet emergent or operations plans requirements.

The Vice Chief of Naval Operations told us:

> In FY13, we will reduce intermediate-level ship maintenance, defer an additional 84 aircraft and 184 engines for depot maintenance, and defer eight of 33 planned depot-level surface ship maintenance availabilities. At our shore bases, we have deferred about 16% of our planned FY13 shore facility sustainment and upgrades, about $1 billion worth of work. . . . By the end of FY13 . . . nearly two thirds of the fleet . . . will be less than fully mission capable and not certified for Major Combat Operations.

We rely on the men and women of our military to keep us safe and to help us meet the U.S. national security objectives around the world. We expect our men and women in uniform to put their lives on the line every day, but in return what we tell them is that we will stand by them, we will stand by their families, we will provide them the best training, the best equipment, and the best support available to any military anywhere in the world. Sequestration in fiscal year 2013 is already undermining that commitment to the men and women in the military and their families.

There may be a few people who, hearing all of this, might still consider sequestration a ''victory.'' But members of the Armed Services Committee who have heard the testimony—Democrats and Republicans—believe the continued sequestration is a grave mistake.

These cuts will damage our military readiness, restrict our ability to respond when crisis erupts, and restrict our flexibility in confronting national security threats from Iran to North Korea to international terrorism. These cuts will cost taxpayers in the long run because maintaining our military readiness today is far less expensive than rebuilding our military readiness tomorrow after it has been squandered.

The devastating effects of sequestration are also felt in other of our agencies and departments. These effects are going to harm students and seniors and farmers and families across this Nation. Continued sequestration will set back our slow climb out of recession, as well as education and medical research and health care and public safety.

As former Defense Secretary Panetta told our committee in February:

> It's not just defense, it's education, loss of teachers, it's childcare. . . . It's about food safety, it's about law enforcement, it's about airport safety.

The desire to avoid this outcome is, I believe, bipartisan. That is why it is so baffling to me that some of our Republican colleagues still refuse to allow us to take the necessary next step to avert this continued damage. By refusing to allow a House-Senate conference