

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**August 2, 1999**

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LAST WEEK -

MORE ROADBLOCKS ON AGRICULTURE SPENDING - The fiscal 2000 spending bill for the Department of Agriculture continues to face new roadblocks because of last week's Senate vote prohibiting the chamber from attaching policy amendments to spending bills. Senate Democrats have forwarded farm relief initiatives totaling about \$10 billion in emergency funding. Midwest farm-state senators have promised to use every procedural maneuver available to block the extension of a dairy pricing program set to expire later this year.

The members who support dairy compacts, are threatening to block the bill because new restrictions on policy riders threatens to block their amendment. The Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-MS) supports the dairy issue also, but said he would try to invoke cloture and move the bill forward despite his personal views.

CONVERSION OF CROPS TO FUELS - On Thursday, the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee approved S. 935, which would authorize \$49 million per year for six years for a national effort to convert crops, such as corn and wheat, into fuels, chemicals and electricity. The Energy and Agriculture departments would be in charge of this effort.

Agricultural crops and other biomass materials, such as plants, trees and animal waste, can be converted into energy which is good for the environment, according to supporters. Rep. Peter Fitzgerald, R-Ill, offered an amendment to earmark \$14 million of the authorized funds to go to a corn-to-ethanol pilot program. The panel gave voice approval to an amendment by Senator Tom Harkin, D-IA, which would establish a pilot program to produce biomass crops on environmentally sensitive land. Harkin's amendment would allow farmers to use CRP land to grow crops that could be sold for biomass energy production. Senator Harkin said his amendment would allow even more farmers to benefit financially from the biomass energy initiative established by the bill.

CONGRESSIONAL ACTION TO ADDRESS CRISIS IN AGRICULTURE – Last week, members of both the House and Senate spoke out about the crisis in agriculture prices and the state of rural America. On Monday, Senate Agriculture Committee chairman, Richard Lugar (R-IN) held a press conference to discuss the troubled state of the agriculture economy. He promised to hold hearings before the August recess to look at short-term assistance that can be provided, and also discuss long-term solutions that could be developed. Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) and several Senate Democrats also held a press conference on the issue. Sen. Daschle blamed the Freedom to Farm Bill as the source of the problem and stated that the Majority Leader has committed to consider legislation to deal with the problem before the August recess. At this stage, it is unclear which proposals will be forwarded. Several members on both sides of the aisle have expressed interest in passing an emergency supplemental bill or attaching emergency measures to the FY'2000 agriculture appropriations legislation.

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LEGISLATION OF NOTE

The following Bills of significance to NRCS and conservation have been introduced.

BILL	MEMBER	PURPOSE
H.R. 2449	Norwood, (GA)	To amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act relating to Federal facilities pollution control.
H.R. 2497	Pitts, (PA)	To amend the Internal Revenue code of 1986 to exclude from gross income gain on the sale or exchange of farmland which by covenant is restricted to use as farmland and to exclude the value of such farmland from estate taxes..
H.R. 2530	Barrett, (NE)	To amend the Food Security Act of 1985 to increase the maximum amount of marketing loan gains and loan deficiency payments that an agricultural producer may receive during the 1999 crop.
H.R. 2578	Ehlers, (MI)	To amend the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to allow business and industry guaranteed loans to be made for farmer-owned projects that add value to or process agricultural products.

THIS WEEK

FARM INCOME CRISIS - The Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Chairman Lugar, R-IN) will hold hearings on the farm income crisis.

August 3,4,5 9:30 am 328A Russell Building

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION MARKUP- The House Resources and Recreation Committee (Chairman Young, R-AK) will markup H.R. 701, which would amend the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 and the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Act of 1978. The Committee will also markup H.R. 798, which would provide permanent protection of the resources of the United States in the year 2000 and beyond.

August 4 11:00 am 1324 Longworth Building

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LOOKING AHEAD

COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP - The Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans Subcommittee (Chairman Saxton, R-N.J.) of the House Resources Committee will mark up H.R. 1110, a bill to reauthorize and amend the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972.

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After completing legislative business, Congress will adjourn for the summer recess August 7 - September 7.

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