

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:**December 21, 2000**

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LAST WEEK

CONGRESS ADJOURNED-Congress adjourned sine die on Friday, December 15, 2000 thus ending the second session of the 106th Congress. Completion of Omnibus bill signals the end of the 106th congress. H.R. 4577 is built on the Labor, Health and Human Service appropriations bill including the Treasury-Postal and legislative branch appropriations bills. The conference report was adopted by a 292-60 vote in the House and cleared by the Senate by voice vote. The 21st continuing resolution, H.J. Res. 133 was passed to keep the government opened until Thursday and provide time for the President to sign the omnibus measure. Negotiations between Senate appropriators and the White House delayed the completion of the omnibus conference report until Friday.

PROVISIONS OF NOTE-Provisions of the FY2001 Labor, Health and Human Service Omnibus Appropriations Bill of note to NRCS include the following:

Section 778 provides an additional \$26 million for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

Establishes a study of ethanol, biodiesel, and other bio-based fuels by the Secretary of Agriculture. The study is to be completed by February 15, 2001.

Section 107 and Section 820(b) adds the Farmland Protection program (FPP) as an eligible recipient of funding provided under Section 211(b) of the Crop Insurance Bill (\$40 million).

Establishes a new program under Title V, dealing with the Lower Mississippi River Delta Region. The bill amends the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 1921) to establish new initiatives for the Mississippi Delta Region.

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LOOKING AHEAD

ANN VENEMAN CONFIRMATION HEARING -On Wednesday, December 20, 2000 Ann Veneman was nominated to become Agriculture Secretary designee in President-Elect Bush's administration. Ms. Veneman served as USDA-Deputy Secretary for International Affairs and Commodities and Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Ms. Veneman received a B.A. degree in Political Science, UC Davis, a Master's in Public Policy, UC Berkeley and a Law Degree from Hastings College of Law, California.

The 107TH Congress convenes on Wednesday, January 3, 2001.

WEEKLY SUMMARY STATUS – The NRCS Weekly Legislative Summary will resume when Congress reconvenes in January, 2001.

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