

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

House Meets At...	Votes Predicted At...
10:00 a.m. Legislative Business	Last Vote: Late Evening
Fifteen "One-minutes" Per Side	

Any anticipated Member absences for votes this week should be reported to the Office of the Majority Whip at 226-3210.

Floor Schedule and Procedure

- H. Res. 1189-Rule to provide for consideration of the Conference Report to accompany H.R. 2419 - The Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act of 2007 (Rep. Cardoza-Rules):** The rule waives all points of order against the conference report and against its consideration. The rule provides that the conference report shall be considered as read. The rule provides one hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on Agriculture. The rule provides one motion to recommit. Debate on the rule will be managed by Rep. Cardoza, and consideration will proceed as follows:

 - One hour of debate on the rule.
 - Possible vote on a Democratic Motion ordering the previous question. **Democrats are urged to vote yes.**
 - Vote on adoption of the rule. **Democrats are urged to vote yes.**
- Conference Report to accompany H.R. 2419 - The Farm, Nutrition, and Bioenergy Act of 2007 (Rep. Peterson-Agriculture):** Pursuant to the rule, debate on the conference report will be managed by Agriculture Committee Chair Rep. Colin Peterson, and will proceed as follows:

 - One hour of debate on the Conference Report.
 - Possible debate and vote on a Republican motion to recommit the Conference Report.
 - Vote on adoption of the Conference Report.
- H. Res. 1190-Rule Providing for the adoption of the concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 70) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2009 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2008 and 2010 through 2013 (Rep. McGovern-Rules):** The rule takes from the Speaker's table S. Con. Res. 70. The rule adopts an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of H. Con. Res. 312 as

adopted by the House. The rule adopts S. Con. Res. 70 as amended. The rule provides that the House insists on its amendment and requests a conference with the Senate. Debate on the rule will be managed by Rep. McGovern, and consideration will proceed as follows:

- One hour of debate on the rule.
 - Possible vote on a Democratic Motion ordering the previous question. **Democrats are urged to vote yes.**
 - Vote on adoption of the rule. **Democrats are urged to vote yes.**
- **Possible Motion to go to Conference on H.R. 4040** - The Consumer Product Safety Modernization Act of 2007 (Rep. Rush – Energy and Commerce).
 - **Motion to Instruct Conferees:** Debate on the Motion to Instruct will proceed as follows:
 - One hour of debate on the Motion to Instruct Conferees.
 - Vote on agreeing to the Motion to Instruct Conferees.
 - **Suspension Bill:** Today, the House will consider one bill on the Suspension calendar. Bills considered on the Suspension calendar are debatable for 40 minutes; may not be amended; and require a two-thirds vote for passage. If a recorded vote is requested, it will be postponed.
 1. **H.Con.Res. 331** - Supporting the goals and ideals of National Women's Health Week (Rep. Hinchey – Energy and Commerce)
 - **Possible Postponed Suspension Votes:**
 - 1) **H.Res. 1134** - Supporting the goals and ideals of Mental Health Month (Rep. Napolitano – Energy and Commerce)
 - 2) **H. Res. 1176** - Supporting the goals and ideals of National Train Day (Rep. Brown (FL) – Transportation and Infrastructure)
 - 3) **H. Res. 1133** - Congratulating Winona State University on winning the 2008 Division II men's basketball championships (Rep. Walz – Education and Labor)
 - 4) **H. Res. 1173** - Recognizing AmeriCorps Week (Rep. Matsui – Education and Labor)
 - 5) **H. Res. 789** - Honoring public child welfare agencies, nonprofit organizations and private entities providing services for foster children (Rep. Bachmann – Education and Labor)
 - 6) **H.R. 5872** - Boy Scouts of America Centennial Commemorative Coin Act (Rep. Sessions - Financial Services)
 - 7) **H.R. 5614** - Original Saint-Gaudens Double Eagle Ultra-High Relief Bullion Coin Act (Rep. Castle – Financial Services)
 - 8) **H.R. 406** - Alice Paul Women's Suffrage Congressional Gold Medal Act (Rep. Baca – Financial Services)
 - 9) **H.R. 2894** - Star-Spangled Banner and War of 1812 Bicentennial Commemorative Coin Act (Rep. Ruppertsberger – Financial Services)

- 10) **H.R. 5916** - Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Reform Act of 2008 as amended (Rep. Berman – Foreign Affairs)
- 11) **H.R. 5834** - North Korean Human Rights Reauthorization Act of 2008 as amended (Rep. Ros-Lehtinen – Foreign Affairs)

Bill Summary and Key Issues

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2419 - FOOD AND ENERGY SECURITY ACT OF 2007 *(Agriculture – Rep. Peterson)*

H.R. 2419 – The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008

Nutrition Programs

Addresses rising food prices by investing an additional \$10.361 billion in nutrition programs

The 2008 Farm Bill supports programs that address the needs of food banks to combat food insecurity

- Increases funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) by \$1.26 billion. This program provides commodities and other resources to states to help stock food banks
- Includes \$50 million for 2008 to immediately address shortages at food pantries

Reforms benefit rules to adequately cover food expenses and sustain participants in the Food Stamp Program for the entire month

- Raises and indexes the minimum standard deduction
- Increases the minimum benefit for food stamp recipients, which is especially important for senior citizens in need
- Indexes asset limits and excludes retirement and education accounts as assets
- Lifts dependent care cap, allowing participants to deduct the full cost of dependent care
- Excludes special combat pay as income

Ends benefit erosion to ensure that the food dollar remains strong

Updates the Food Stamp Program to reflect technological advances and decrease abuse

- Renames the Food Stamp Program the “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program”
- Expands USDA’s ability to eliminate fraud in the program
- Ends the use of Food Stamp Coupons and requires the use of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)
- Expands the use of EBT cards at Senior Farmers Markets

Ensures that Senior Citizens have ample access to food that is healthy and fresh

- Extends the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) which helps many low-income elderly individuals in need of additional assistance or who are reluctant to apply for food stamps
- Expands the authority of the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program which provides senior citizens with vouchers to buy fresh produce at markets and roadside stands and provides \$20 million in new funding over 10 years

Promotes the health and well-being of children and low-income families

- Increases funding by \$1.02 billion for the USDA Snack Program, which helps schools provide healthy snacks to students during after-school activities and expands the program to all 50 states

- Creates a demonstration project that will evaluate strategies to address obesity among low-income communities
- Provides \$5 million per year for Community Food Projects for grants to innovative community projects
- Reasserts the importance of USDA nutrition monitoring, which works with the USDA dietary guidelines and provides the most accurate picture of American dietary habits

Improves assistance through the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations

- Studies the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations to determine if the food packages meet changing dietary guidelines and needs
- Authorizes \$5 million per year for a fund to purchase native and locally grown food

Increases cooperation between farmers and organizations in urban areas

- Establishes the Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development Center and provides \$3 million to help bring fresh foods into urban food deserts

Works to improve national health and fight obesity

- Increases attention to nutrition education through the U.S. Department of Agriculture
- Creates a pilot program to encourage the purchase of more fresh fruits and vegetables in food stamp households

Commodity Programs

Extends the strong safety net for farmers

- Maintains programs authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill with minor changes
- Preserves the non-recourse marketing loan program, a fundamental piece of the farm safety net
- Continues the price-based counter-cyclical program, which provides assistance when prices decline

Offers producers the option of enrolling in a new revenue-based counter-cyclical program

- Creates the new Average Crop Revenue Election (ACRE) program beginning in crop year 2009
- ACRE is a state-based revenue guarantee for participants based on the 5-year state average yield and the 2-year national average price
- ACRE provides producers with payments for a commodity when the actual state revenue for the commodity is less than the revenue guarantee

Reforms program eligibility criteria and strengthens payment limitations

- Imposes a cap on average adjusted gross income (AGI) for eligibility to receive farm program payments
 - Puts a hard cap on non-farm income at \$500,000
 - Applies a cap on farm income at \$750,000, after which a producer will no longer be eligible for direct payments
- Establishes the total payment cap for direct and counter-cyclical payments for a single farmer to \$40,000 and \$65,000 respectively
- Creates a total payment cap for ACRE participants of \$32,000 for direct payments and \$73,000 for counter-cyclical payments

Increases government efficiency and reduces waste

- Suspends payments for farms with an aggregate base of 10 acres or fewer (except for socially disadvantaged and limited resource producers)

- This provision eliminates payments in situations where the amount paid is less than the cost of printing the check

Rebalances farm programs to improve equity among commodities and reflect changes in the marketplace

- Increases target prices for wheat, sorghum, barley, oats, and soybeans which increases producers' opportunity to receive counter-cyclical payments when prices are low, but makes no payments when prices are high
- Rebalances loan rates on wheat, barley, oats, oilseeds, graded wool and honey, enhancing the basic safety net for these commodities

Modifies and extends the current sugar program, preserving American jobs

- Raises the loan rate for sugar a quarter cent a year for three years (to 18.75 cents for cane sugar and 24 cents for beet sugar) and changes overall allotment quota to be a minimum of 85% of domestic consumption
- Continues to support U.S. sugar producers with the successful marketing allotment program, while ensuring that domestic sugar cane and beet producers provide most of the sugar demanded by U.S. consumers

Strengthens the American dairy industry

- Extends the Milk Income Loss Contract Program until 2012
- Supports the price of cheddar cheese, butter, and nonfat dry milk by government purchase of such products
- Reestablishes the Dairy Forward Pricing Program, which allows dairy farmers to voluntarily enter into forward contracts with milk handlers. Other commodity producers also use forward contracts to manage risk
- A forward contract is an agreement to sell a stated quantity of milk, for a stated period, at a stated price. This voluntary risk management tool will allow producers and handlers to "lock in" prices, reducing risk associated with changes in price and income and enhancing the ability to obtain financing
- Amends the Federal Milk Marketing Order System to increase efficiency and be more responsive to the market
- Extends the Dairy Export Incentive Program (DEIP), which helps U.S. dairy product exporters market their products overseas in countries where U.S. products must compete with subsidized products provided by other governments

Conservation Programs

Increases total spending on conservation programs by \$7.7 billion

Extends the Popular Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

- Authorizes 32 million acres to be enrolled in the program from 2010-2012
- Includes a new provision to allow retired landowners participating in CRP to modify their contracts if the land is being transferred to a beginning, limited resource, or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher. This would allow eligible producers to return some of this land to grazing or crop production

Expands the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

- Provides funding to reestablish a baseline of \$1.4 billion and extends the program through 2012
- Increases the maximum enrollment to 3,041,200 acres
- Creates a Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program and updates the appraisal process

Strengthens the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- Increases funding for EQIP by \$3.3 billion.
- Makes conservation practices related to organic certification and transition eligible for payments
- Improves the evaluation process for applications
- Establishes the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) to help producers achieve water quality goals and address water quantity concerns

Extends the Conservation Security Program (CSP)

- Provides \$1.1 billion in new funding to enroll nearly 13 million acres per year
- Expands eligible lands to include private forests
- Restructures the program to provide conservation stewardship payments that encourage producers to implement additional conservation practices
- Emphasizes attainment of new conservation benefits

Provides new resources to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay Region

- Provides \$438 million in new funding
- Helps farmers and ranchers meet stringent regulatory requirements and better contribute to the success of the Bay restoration

Extends and Increases Funding for Farm Protection Program (FPP)

- Doubles funding for FPP to \$773 million
- Establishes a more user-friendly certification process that will determine eligibility for program funds
- Reduces pressure for development on farmland

Continues and Expands the Grassland Reserve Program

- Adds an additional 1.22 million acres to the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), which helps landowners protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property
- Allows for short term contracts and easements, and for cooperative agreements

Creates an Open Fields Program to provide incentives to state governments and Indian tribes to provide public access to private land for hunting and fishing

- Provides \$50 million in funding for 2009 through 2012

Establishes payment limitations for conservation programs

- Limits EQIP payments to \$300,000 over 6 years, but allows the Secretary to grant waivers to \$450,000 in particular cases
- Clarifies the pay-out rate for WRP contracts
 - Easements of less than \$500,000 paid over 1 to 30 years
 - Easements of greater than \$500,000 paid over 5 to 30 years
 - Allows Secretary to grant a waiver and provide lump sum payment on easements over \$500,000

Improves cooperation between USDA and outside organizations

- Creates the Cooperative Conservation Program Initiative (CCPI) to better provide assistance to producers
- Allows State/local governments, producer groups, and Indian tribes to deliver financial assistance to producers instead of USDA

Reauthorizes the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)

- Increases cost-share assistance on long-term agreements and provides technical assistance and cost-share assistance to establish and improve wildlife habitat

Extends the Small Watershed Rehabilitation Program through 2012

- Reauthorizes the program and includes \$100 million in funding
- Provides technical and financial assistance for the rehabilitation of existing small watershed projects that may include upgrading or removing the dams

Trade Programs

Helps fight hunger and provides food assistance around the world

- Increases ability of the Agency for International Development to pre-position food around the world to get food aid to people faster
- Increases oversight and monitoring of food aid programs to increase efficiency and ensure effectiveness

Establishes a \$60 million pilot program for local or regional purchases of food aid

- Provides the opportunity for local purchases of food aid commodities while ensuring that the purchases do not cause dramatic price increases or exacerbate shortages overseas

Provides funding for the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program

- Provides \$84 million in mandatory funding for the program, which provides nutritious meals in schools for hungry children in needy areas of the world
- Since the program started in 2000, the McGovern-Dole program has fed 26 million children in 41 countries

Increases the availability and viability of American products in foreign markets

- Maintains funding for the Market Access Program at \$200 million per year
- Extends the Foreign Market Development Program which works to expand US export opportunities
- Increases funding by \$27 million over 5 years for the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program, which helps US organizations address sanitary, phytosanitary and other technical barriers that keep them from exporting to certain other countries
 - Total funding for the program is \$37 million

Reforms the Export Credit Guarantee Programs to bring them into compliance with World Trade Organization agreements

- Lifts the fee cap of 1% on the GSM-102 program
- Eliminates long term export credit (the GSM-103 program)

Rural Development Programs

Makes critical investments in our rural communities

- Renews successful programs that provide vital infrastructure needs to underserved areas
- Adds innovative projects to promote economic development in the technology-driven 21st Century
- Provides \$120 million for critical water and wastewater projects in rural areas

Addresses health care, emergency, and first responder needs of rural areas

- Authorizes the Rural Firefighters and Emergency Medical Service Assistance Program to provide improved emergency medical services in rural areas
- Expands 9-1-1 access in rural areas by making telephone loans to public entities for facilities and equipment
- Provides grants for weather radio transmitters to increase coverage of rural areas by the emergency weather broadcast system

Connects rural America

- Improves access to broadband telecommunications services in rural areas with a greater focus on the rural communities of greatest need
- Extends and makes major changes to the broadband program to focus loans on underserved rural areas

Expands opportunities for locally grown, organic and small producers

- Provides \$15 million for the Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grant program, which offers planning and working capital for marketing value-added products
- Creates a 10% set-aside for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers
- Creates a 10% set-aside for strategic marketing alliances between small to mid-sized farms and ranches and other supply chain partners

Attracting new businesses, improving access to technology, and capturing new markets

- Provides information and resources related to sustainable and organic farming practices to farmers through a technology transfer program
- Includes \$15 million for a new Rural Entrepreneur and Microenterprise Assistance Program that will provide technical and financial assistance to micro-enterprises and small businesses in rural areas with fewer than 10 employees
- Extends Rural Business Opportunity Grants for job training in rural areas
- Extends Rural Cooperative Development Grants, a competitive program that establishes and operates centers for rural cooperative development
- Extends the Agriculture Innovation Center Demonstration Program, which provides technical assistance, outreach, and business and marketing planning to increase the viability, growth, and sustainability of value-added agricultural businesses
- Sets aside specific funds within the Business and Industry Program for loans and loan guarantees for rural food enterprise entrepreneurs that process and distribute food locally and regionally

Renews critical rural infrastructure

- Renews Water and Waste Disposal Grants and Rural Water and Wastewater Circuit Rider Programs to help reduce water and waste disposal operating costs for rural areas and towns

- Renews the Emergency and Imminent Community Water Assistance Grant Program to provide technical assistance to communities that have had a significant decline in quantity or quality of drinking water
- Provides grants to qualified non-profit organizations for the construction of household water well systems in low-income areas

Strengthens successful regional partnerships

- Extends the Delta Regional Authority, a federal-state partnership that has funded 334 projects in its first five years and led to the investment of more than \$750 million in the region
- Extends and enhances the Northern Great Plains Regional Authority by enhancing flexibility for the Authority as well as including renewable energy projects among the target funding areas
- Additional regional partnership authorities in the bill are included in Title XIV (Miscellaneous Title)

Research Programs

Streamlines agricultural research by establishing a National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

- Maximizes efficiency and coordination throughout USDA's research agencies
- Reorganizes the USDA offices in charge of fundamental and applied research, extension and education programs
- Creates 6 Program Offices to formulate programs, develop planning and priorities, and coordinate and track activities related to agriculture research

Six Program Offices:

- Renewable Energy, Natural Resources & Environment
- Food Safety, Nutrition, and Health
- Plant Health and Production & Plant Products
- Animal Health and Production & Animal Products
- Agriculture Systems and Technology
- Agriculture Economics and Rural Communities

Reinvigorates national investment in agricultural research by creating NIFA

- Improves visibility of competitive research grants
- Raises the profile of agricultural research, extension and education
- Establishes the new agency with a stature equal to other Federal grant-making agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health

Addresses the growing list of needs in agricultural research, extension and education for food and agricultural sciences

- Creates a premier research program called the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)
 - Stimulates entrepreneurship, supports business development, expands access to capital, and builds entrepreneurial networks across Rural America
 - Provides competitive grants to colleges and universities, agricultural experiment stations, and other organizations conducting research in priority areas

Increases research for renewable fuels, feedstocks and energy efficiency

- Creates the Energy Research Program to improve research on the production and sustainability of biofuels and their feedstocks
- Awards competitive grants for projects with a focus on:
 - supporting on-farm biomass crop research
 - disseminating results to enhance the production of energy crops

- integrating biomass and bioenergy production
- Improves the energy efficiency of agricultural operations
 - Authorizes competitive grants for on-farm energy efficiency research and extension projects

Consolidates funding requests to better track the amount of federal investment in agricultural research

- Requires the President to submit to Congress a single line item reflecting the total amount requested for agriculture research programs

Increases opportunities for minority researchers

- Encourages prioritization of additional funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (the 1890 institutions), Native American Colleges and Universities (the 1994 institutions), and small land grant universities.
- Expands access to funding, authority and eligibility for research and extension dollars for Hispanic Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities.
 - Creates an endowment fund, institutional capacity building program to promote agriculture and sciences, and competitive grant proposal for Hispanic Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities
 - Expands extension capabilities for Hispanic Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities
 - Amends existing authorities to ensure that Hispanic Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities are eligible for such programs as the International Ag Research and Extension Program

Prioritizes initiatives for research related to specialty crop and organic production

- Dedicates \$78 million for organic research priorities
- Provides \$230 million for Specialty Crop Research Initiative and \$25 million for fresh produce safety grants

Energy Programs

Provides an overall \$1 billion to fund programs in the energy title that will leverage renewable energy industry investments in new technologies and new feedstocks

Includes \$320 million in loan guarantees for biorefineries producing advanced biofuels

Provides \$35 million for a new program to help existing ethanol facilities reduce their fossil fuel use

Creates the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) to provide \$250 million in grants and loan guarantees for agricultural producers and rural small businesses to purchase renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements

- Includes grant funds for organizations with energy expertise to assist agricultural producers and rural small businesses in performing energy audits
- Assists agricultural producers and rural small businesses in planning and preparing feasibility studies for projects supported by the Rural Energy for America Program

Provides \$120 million for the Biomass Research and Development Program

- Coordinates research and development activities, including improvements in feedstock development and the efficiency of biofuel production

Funds the Bioenergy Program at \$300 million

- Provides incentives for expanding production of advanced biofuels made from agricultural and forestry crops and associated waste materials, including animal manure and livestock/food processing waste

Creates a Biomass Crop Assistance Program to develop the next generation of feedstocks for renewable energy

- Encourages the production of feedstocks for cellulosic ethanol and other energy production and provides for multi-year contracts for crop and forest producers to grow dedicated energy crops
- Provides incentives for producers to harvest, store, and transport biomass to bioenergy facilities

Establishes a sugar-to-ethanol program

- Provides sugar to biofuel producers at competitive prices
- Specifies that sugar would be provided for biofuel production only during times of excess sugar supply

Provides \$9 million for the Biobased Markets Program authorizing eligible producers to label biobased products as a 'USDA Certified Biobased Product'

- This provision also sets a federal procurement preference for biobased products, to encourage the purchase of products that are comprised of a greater percent of biobased material.

Funds the Biodiesel Education Program with \$5 million to help educate government and private owners of vehicle fleets about the benefits and technical aspects of biodiesel

Horticulture and Organic Agriculture Programs

Expands access to locally grown food

- Expands activities covered under the Farmers' Market Promotion Program, including the expansion of EBT systems at farmers markets
- Provides \$33 million to expand opportunities for direct producer-to-consumer marketing.
- Expands producers' eligibility to access funds in the program
 - The Farmers' Market Promotion Program provides competitive grants to improve and expand farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities.
- Establishes the Healthy Urban Food Enterprise Development Center and provides \$3 million to help bring fresh foods into urban food deserts

Provides new funding to support organic farmers

- Provides \$22 million for USDA's cost-share program
- Provides \$5 million for organic marketing data collection and publication
 - The USDA's National Organic Certification Cost-Share Program defrays the costs that producers and handlers incur when seeking organic certification

Helps fruit and vegetable producers address food safety, pest and disease management issues

- Provides \$377 million for pest and disease detection and control
- Directs USDA to develop assessments and establish priorities to combat pest and disease threats
- Provides money and outlines a plan for new programs of joint action between Federal and State governments to provide for early detection and surveillance of plant pests and diseases
- Establishes proactive, cooperative, audit-based certification systems between USDA, States, and growers to address plant pest infestations

- Research title (Title VII) provision offers fruit and vegetable producers a new tool for cooperating in efforts to fight food-borne illness through a \$23 million set-aside in the specialty crop research initiative for research on food safety hazards

Continues support for Beekeepers and prioritizes research on Colony Collapse Disorder

- Supports beekeepers by extending the honey marketing loan.
 - Honey prices are supported through marketing loans in Title I that provide interim financing and additional income support if market prices fall below 69 cents per pound.
- Creates a high-priority research area to continue research to identify causes and solutions to address Colony Collapse Disorder in honey bees and authorizes \$10 million per year for research related to colony collapse disorder and pollinator issues
 - Colony collapse disorder (CCD) is characterized by the sudden die-off of honey bee colonies. The cause of CCD has not been determined and is a cause of concern for beekeepers and farmers who rely on bees to pollinate their crops

Funds the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

- Provides \$466 million over 10 years to expand the specialty crop block grant program
 - The block grants are provided to states to support projects in research, marketing, education, pest and disease management, production, and food safety

Establishes and funds a National Clean Plant Network

- Provides \$20 million to establish and operate the National Clean Plant Network
- Develops a national source for clean plant stocks for horticultural crops
- The program would help maintain plant stocks that are free from pests and diseases

Crop Insurance Programs

Expands data mining for crop insurance records to reduce waste, fraud and abuse

- Authorizes mandatory funds to search crop insurance records for anomalous patterns that indicate potential fraud.
- Data mining has a proven record of detecting and deterring fraud and abuse in the crop insurance program and saving hundreds of millions of dollars

Reforms crop insurance to provide better coverage for organic producers

- Requires USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) to conduct a thorough risk analysis on differences between conventional and organic crops
- Directs RMA to reduce premium surcharges on organic crops if the analysis demonstrates no significant difference in production risks between conventional and organic crops
- Directs RMA to work with USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to survey prices organic products receive in the marketplace so those prices can be incorporated in the crop insurance options available to organic crops

Decreases reimbursements to crop insurance companies

- Cuts A&O reimbursement by 2.3 percent
- Allows a 50 percent restoration in states with a loss ratio greater than 1.2

Authorizes renegotiation of the Standard Reinsurance Agreement (SRA) by 2011

- Ensures that the crop insurance market reflects current conditions
- Grants the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) the authority to conduct periodic renegotiations of the SRA
- Requires renegotiations every five years beginning in the 2011 reinsurance year

Promotes conservation and protects our nation's prairies

- Denies crop insurance coverage for crops grown on grassland or pasture in the Prairie Pothole National Priority Area that has never been planted, at the discretion of the governor

Increases efficiency and education in the crop insurance program to help farmers better manage risk

- Increases USDA's focus on risk management education for socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers

Miscellaneous Programs

Socially Disadvantaged Producers

- **Increases mandatory funding for the Section 2501 Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Outreach and Technical Assistance Program**
 - Provides \$75 million in mandatory funding for fiscal years 2009-2012
 - Amends the program to better meet the needs of socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers:
 - Enhances the coordination of the outreach, technical assistance, and educational efforts authorized under USDA programs
 - Assists the Secretary in broadening participation of socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers
 - Requires the Secretary of Agriculture to provide Congress with an annual report on the program's operation
- **Improves transparency and accountability**
 - Requires USDA to annually compile application and participation rate data for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in USDA programs
 - Authorizes all USDA agencies to collect and transmit data to the Secretary, regarding race, gender, and ethnicity
- **Provides funding for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program with \$75 million for fiscal years 2009-2012**
 - The program provides training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers
- **Directs the Secretary of Agriculture to establish permanently the USDA Office of Advocacy and Outreach (taking over the duties of the Office of Outreach and Diversity currently located in the Office of Civil Rights) with responsibilities that include carrying out the Section 2501 Outreach Program**
- **Establishes a Farmworker Coordinator in the Office of Advocacy and Outreach**
 - Serves as a liaison to groups that represent low income migrant and seasonal farmworkers; coordinates with USDA and State and local governments to assure that farmworker needs are met during declared disasters and emergencies; and assures that farmworkers

have access to services and support to enter agriculture as producers

- **Establishes the Minority Farmer and Rancher Advisory Committee at USDA to:**
 - Review the operation of the Section 2501 Outreach Program
 - Maximize participation by minority farmers or ranchers in USDA programs
 - Review civil rights activities

Farm Program Reforms

- **Permanently bans anyone convicted of defrauding USDA from any subsequent participation in USDA programs (except for participation in food assistance programs)**

Office Closures

- **Prohibits the closure or relocation of county or field offices for the Farm Service Agency for two years**

Agriculture Security

- **Establishes an Office of Homeland Security within USDA**
 - Integrates inter-agency emergency response plans and works with the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies to coordinate planning and response efforts
 - Creates a bio-security communication center to prepare for potential animal disease emergencies, agro-terrorism attacks and other threats to agricultural bio-security
 - Establishes an agricultural bio-security task force
- **Builds biosecurity capacity, communications, planning, preparedness and response**
 - Creates a competitive grant program to develop and expand agriculture bio-security training programs for veterinarians and food science professionals
 - Provides grant and loan assistance for states to assess their agricultural disease response capabilities
- **Establishes programs to protect and respond to potential animal and plant disease emergencies**
 - Creates a grant program to fund research and development of agricultural countermeasures that could be used in cases of animal and plant disease emergencies

Animal Welfare

- **Strengthens prohibitions on animal fighting ventures and increases criminal penalties for violations**
- **Bans the importation of dogs under six months of age and strengthens fines for violations of the Animal Welfare Act**
- **Directs USDA to review findings of study related to use of dogs & cats in Federal research**

Regional Infrastructure and Economic Development

- **Establishes three regional Commissions to encourage economic development**
 - The Southeast Crescent Regional Commission
 - The Southwest Border Regional Commission
 - The Northern Border Regional Commission
- **Authorizes \$30 million per year that the Commissions will use to provide grants for basic infrastructure and business development in**

the region to improve economically distressed and underdeveloped areas

Quote of the Day

“Democracy is timelessly human, and timelessness always implies a certain amount of potential youthfulness.” -Thomas Mann

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