

# Alexander defends voting decision

August 8, 2007  
The News-Star

U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander defended last week's votes against the 2007 Farm Bill and the State Children's Health Insurance Program, which both passed the House despite his opposition but are likely to be vetoed by President Bush.

Alexander, R-Quitman, who spoke during a Monroe Chamber of Commerce luncheon at the Civic Center on Tuesday, vowed to continue seeking earmarks, or funding, for northeastern Louisiana projects despite criticism over the practice.

"I don't want people to think I've turned my back on farmers," Alexander said. "We're also going to make sure that underserved children are going to be

cared for."

But Alexander said that both bills, as they stand, are too expensive and would require additional taxes.

Alexander said he has lobbied President Bush to extend the existing farm bill, with which most northeastern Louisiana farmers are satisfied, and that will be the likely result if the president vetoes the measure.

"That's what we wanted in the first place," said Alexander, who predicted that the existing Farm Bill will be extended by eight months to a year.

The House's 2007 Farm Bill protects most of the current subsidy levels for large northeastern Louisiana crops like cotton and rice but adds supports for specialty crops, most of which aren't grown commercially in Alexander's 5th District.

Alexander said the House version of the State Children's Health Program would expand the program to include families making four times the poverty level compared to the current program, which included families making twice the poverty level.

He said the new plan would require reduced benefits for seniors on Medicare.

"I voted no because it's a massive expansion that leads us closer toward socialized medicine," he said.

"You sent me to Washington to do what I could to benefit projects that have wide-ranging benefits in northeastern Louisiana," he said. "I'm a big earmark man. I'm not ashamed to say that I ask for money for special projects in this district, which is one of the poorest in the nation."