



**Rodney Alexander** / Louisiana's 5th District  
UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN

**THOUGHTS FROM CAPITOL HILL**  
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# Farm Bill Tug-of-War Finally Over

After nearly a year and a half of committee talks, conference negotiations, a Presidential veto, repeated extensions, postponed votes and, yes, more conference negotiations, the House of Representatives finally passed the farm bill conference report Wednesday, May 14, and this time around, the version appears to have the support to trump a Presidential veto.

That support includes my own.

I was proud – and greatly relieved – to vote in support of the latest version of the farm bill, a multibillion-dollar reauthorization of the federal farm, nutrition assistance, rural development and agricultural trade programs.

Unlike the previously passed version of the farm bill reauthorization, which was vetoed by President Bush last year, this version did not include tax hikes snuck into the bill by Majority leadership after the committee passage.

With those provisions removed, I felt it was time to stop the squabbling and pass the bill so that that farmers and lenders can finally have the predictability and stability the farm bill provides. The conference report passed the House with a vote of 318-106.

The Senate passed the bill Thursday, May 15, and the bill is expected to be sent to President Bush on Tuesday, May 20.

The \$289 billion five-year package is not without criticism, however. President Bush and some members say the bill is too costly and does too little to restrict subsidies to wealthy farmers.

Perhaps the change to the bill that will affect 5th Congressional District farmers the most is the cut to direct payments. These subsidies have been cut by \$313 million by reducing the percentage of acres for which a farmer can collect direct payments from

85 percent to 83.3 percent.

Though a bill the size and scope of the farm bill cannot be perfect, after a year-long farm bill tug-of-war, I feel the bill we have produced does achieve its primary purpose.

The new farm bill will ensure that our farmers have the income and commodity price support they need to get their jobs done and continue moving Louisiana's economy forward.

***U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander, R-Quitman, represents the 5th Congressional District and serves on the House Appropriations Committee and the House Budget Committee. He can be reached at the Monroe District Office (318-322-3500), the Alexandria District Office (318-445-0818) or Washington, D.C. (202-225-8490.) Visit Alexander's Web site at [www.house.gov/alexander](http://www.house.gov/alexander) or write him at 316 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515.***

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