

has been for many, many years—with only one exception, which was reversed not long afterward.

This budget problem is so significant that I would think, or at least hope, that the conferees and the leadership would be embarrassed to bring such an obvious budget gimmick to the floor. Let me explain further. The agricultural disaster package dollars will practically all be expended in fiscal 2005.

However, the offset that the House adopted does not kick in until fiscal 2006 according to CBO scoring. The offset would save \$56 million in fiscal 2006, then the per-year savings would increase over the years, but the full offset would not be achieved until the end of fiscal 2014. Of course, I am not arguing for taking more out of the farm bill earlier. I am just saying that this entire idea of offsetting a disaster program that pays out in one year out of mandatory spending over the next 10 years is a charade. It will cannibalize money from the farm bill and dramatically damage the conservation title of the farm bill. It will reduce the farm bill baseline and damage our ability to write the next farm bill in a few years. And it is a precedent that ties the hands of the appropriations committee to respond to future disasters.

The point of the whole exercise? To come up with a budget gimmick that is not really even an offset and which raises a budget point of order. Again, the larger point here is that it makes no sense to require offsets for emergency disaster assistance legislation. A disaster is a disaster no matter where it is—and an emergency is an emergency, no matter where it is. We should simply recognize the wisdom and the necessity of funding agricultural disaster measures through the emergency spending designation—which is the overwhelming precedent over many years. Again, with only one exception we can find ever—in the past many decades in which we have responded to disaster losses.

American farmers and ranchers help keep food affordable in this country and also help to feed the world. They produce the food and fiber that is so vital to our economy while protecting our soil, helping to keep our waters clean, and reducing air pollution across the country. And, they are the basis for the strongest part of our Nation's economic engine—in fact, food and fiber comprise roughly 16 percent of our gross domestic product.

Farmers and ranchers did not ask for floods or frost or drought. Congress needs to respond to these natural disasters by providing assistance to those affected including the nation's farmers and ranchers to help restore financial stability in times of such losses, and since we have traditionally provided such assistance on an emergency basis without cutting programs to the class of those suffering—we should continue to do so as the Senate has already supported.

Mr. President, I am deeply concerned today at the manner in which the Congress, and more specifically conferees to the fiscal year 2005 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, have chosen to address disaster funding. Our agriculture producers in South Dakota and across America have waited a long time for substantive relief—relief that will enable our family farmers and agricultural communities to survive through hard times—and the majority leadership has chosen to provide emergency relief for hurricane victims while requiring farmers and ranchers on the Northern Plains to cannibalize an already underfunded conservation program in order to secure moderate drought assistance.

With respect to the Conservation Security Program, the CSP budget was funded at only 41 million dollars for Fiscal Year 2004. The severe funding limitations on the program allowed the Natural Resources Conservation Service to write only around 2,000 contracts, and limited watersheds were chosen, not one of which was in my home State of South Dakota. South Dakota has already been shortchanged because of decreased conservation dollars, and I would urge my colleagues to ensure CSP can operate as intended under the farm bill.

The disaster package that was attached to the Homeland Security funding bill had bipartisan support and was approved in the Senate by a voice vote. Given the enormous savings we have experienced with farm bill price support programs, totaling nearly \$16 billion, we shouldn't be robbing Peter to pay Paul to provide any type of substantive relief. Farmers shouldn't have to pay any more, and they shouldn't have to choose between crucial environmental programs and substantive disaster relief.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the resolution, and the clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I announce that the Senator from Colorado (Mr. CAMPBELL), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. CHAMBLISS), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CORNYN), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAIG), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. GRAHAM), the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. SPECTER), and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mr. SUNUNU) are necessarily absent.

Mr. REID. I announce that the Senator from Indiana (Mr. BAYH), the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. BREAUX), the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. EDWARDS), the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. HOLLINGS), the Senator from Massachusetts (Mr. KERRY), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. MILLER), and the Senator from Maryland (Mr. SARBANES) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 71, nays 14, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 209 Leg.]

YEAS—71

Akaka	Dayton	Lieberman
Alexander	Dodd	Lincoln
Allard	Dole	Lugar
Allen	Domenici	McConnell
Baucus	Dorgan	Mikulski
Bennett	Durbin	Murray
Biden	Enzi	Nelson (FL)
Bingaman	Feingold	Nelson (NE)
Bond	Feinstein	Pryor
Brownback	Frist	Reed
Bunning	Graham (FL)	Reid
Burns	Grassley	Roberts
Byrd	Hagel	Rockefeller
Cantwell	Harkin	Schumer
Carper	Hatch	Shelby
Chafee	Inouye	Smith
Clinton	Jeffords	Snowe
Cochran	Johnson	Stabenow
Coleman	Kennedy	Kohl
Collins	Kohl	Talent
Conrad	Landrieu	Thomas
Corzine	Lautenberg	Warner
Crapo	Leahy	Wyden
Daschle	Levin	

NAYS—14

DeWine	Inhofe	Nickles
Ensign	Kyl	Santorum
Fitzgerald	Lott	Sessions
Gregg	McCain	Voinovich
Hutchison	Murkowski	

NOT VOTING—15

Bayh	Cornyn	Kerry
Boxer	Craig	Miller
Breaux	Edwards	Sarbanes
Campbell	Graham (SC)	Specter
Chambliss	Hollings	Sununu

The resolution was agreed to, as follows:

S. RES. 454

Whereas, agriculture has been the cornerstone of every civilization throughout history and remains the driving force behind the nation's economy;

Whereas, American farmers and ranchers help keep food affordable in this country and also help to feed the world;

Whereas, America's farmers and ranchers produce the food and fiber that is so vital to our economy while protecting our soil, helping to keep our waters clean, and reducing air pollution across the country;

Whereas, all sectors of our country rely in some way on a successful, strong and vibrant agriculture industry;

Whereas, it is the nature of agriculture that farmers and ranchers will suffer production losses because of the vagaries of weather;

Whereas, Congress has responded to natural disasters by providing assistance to those affected including the nation's farmers and ranchers to help restore financial stability in times of such losses; and

Whereas, Congress has traditionally provided such assistance on an emergency basis without cutting programs to the class of those suffering.

*Resolved*, That it is the Sense of the Senate that the 108th Congress should provide the necessary funds to make disaster assistance available for all customarily eligible agricultural producers as emergency spending and not funded by cuts to the farm bill.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. NICKLES. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.