

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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ON SENATE FLOOR, DOLE HAILS "NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY"

WASHINGTON -- In a statement today on the Senate floor, Kansas Senator Bob Dole took note of today's "National Agriculture Day" celebrations. Following is the text of Dole's remarks:

MARCH 20TH IS BEING CELEBRATED ACROSS THE COUNTRY AS NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY AND IS A WAY TO RECOGNIZE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE AMERICAN FARMER TO THE NATION AND THE WORLD.

IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE

MUCH WILL BE SAID TODAY ABOUT THE PRODUCTIVITY OF OUR FARMERS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE TO OUR SOCIETY. AGRICULTURE IS THE NUMBER ONE INDUSTRY WITH ASSETS OF OVER ONE TRILLION DOLLARS. IT IS THE NATION'S NUMBER ONE EXPORTER WITH EXPORTS VALUED AT OVER THIRTY FIVE BILLION DOLLARS. AND EVERY BILLION DOLLARS IN EXPORTS TRANSLATES INTO 35,000 JOBS FOR OTHER AMERICANS. AGRICULTURE GENERATES ABOUT 23 MILLION JOBS, ROUGHLY ONE-FOURTH OF ALL U.S. EMPLOYMENT, AND ACCOUNTS FOR 20 PERCENT OF THE GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT. THE AMERICAN FARMER IS A MASTER AT HIS CRAFT PRODUCING ENOUGH FOOD TO FEED HIMSELF AND 80 OTHER PEOPLE.

THESE ARE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT THE AMERICAN FARMER REPRESENTS ONLY THREE PERCENT OF OUR POPULATION. OUR CITIZENS HAVE BECOME FURTHER REMOVED FROM OUR AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE, BUT WE HOPE THAT THE ROLE OF THE FARMER IS NOT FORGOTTEN. IT'S NOT AN EASY JOB TO CONTEND WITH THE WEATHER, INSECTS, GOVERNMENT POLICIES, UNSTABLE MARKETS, WORLD COMPETITION, AND THE OTHER CHALLENGES THAT OCCUR ON A DAILY BASIS, BUT IT'S CLEAR THAT THE FARMER IS TRULY THE BACKBONE OF OUR NATION.

THE RECENT ATTENTION FOCUSED ON FARMERS BY THE MEDIA HAVE BROUGHT THE PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURE TO THE NATION'S ATTENTION. PERHAPS NOW MORE AMERICANS HAVE A BETTER INSIGHT INTO THE PROBLEMS FARMERS FACE AND A BETTER UNDERSTANDING THAT ALL OF US HAVE A STAKE IN THE GOAL OF RETURNING A PROFIT TO AGRICULTURE. MEMBERS OF THIS BODY WILL HAVE TWO "WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY" TO HELP GET AGRICULTURE BACK ON ITS FEET.

THE BEST FARM BILL CONGRESS COULD PROVIDE WOULD RESULT FROM A THREE-WORD INITIATIVE -- BALANCE THE BUDGET. THAT GOAL MAY TAKE A COUPLE YEARS, BUT WE CAN BEGIN RIGHT AWAY TO MOVE IN A BIPARTISAN FASHION TO SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE THE FEDERAL BUDGET DEFICIT. WE CAN ALL AGREE THAT THE FARMER NEEDS LOWER INTEREST RATES, A MODERATED DOLLAR THAT DOESN'T SHRIVEL HIS EXPORT MARKETS, AND HIGHER PRICES. AND SOON WE WILL HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WORDS TO TURN TO ACTION. WE WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO REDUCE THE FEDERAL DEFICIT. IT WOULD HELP EVERY FARMER. IT WOULD HELP EVERY AMERICAN.

OUR SECOND INITIATIVE SHOULD BE A FARM BILL THAT ADDRESSES THE REALITIES OF OUR PRESENT-DAY SITUATION. EXISTING LEGISLATION AND ACTIONS OF RECENT YEARS HAVE WORKED TO THE FARMERS DISADVANTAGE. THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN THE NATION'S AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY IS ALREADY TOO LARGE, AND ITS COST CONTRIBUTES TO THE FEDERAL BUDGET DEFICIT, INTEREST RATES, AND THE HIGH VALUE OF THE U.S. DOLLAR.

ON THE OTHER HAND, A MARKET-ORIENTED FARM POLICY IS SUFFICIENT ONLY IF THE MARKET IS FAIR AND FREE. WITH PROTECTIONISM ABROAD, PLUS THE SUBSIDIES THAT OTHER GOVERNMENTS PROVIDE FOR THEIR FARM ECONOMIES, THE WORLD MARKETPLACE IS IN NEED OF MUCH GREATER FAIRNESS. OUR DOMESTIC PRICE SUPPORT FORMULA WILL HAVE TO BE COMBINED WITH A REALISTIC INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURE STRATEGY.

WE NEED TO DEVISE A MORE EFFECTIVE FARM PROGRAM -- BUT A NEW FARM BILL WILL NOT DO THE JOB UNLESS OTHER FACTORS WHICH SHAPE THE FARM SCENE ARE ALSO ON THE RIGHT TRACK. NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY IS AN APPROPRIATE TIME TO CELEBRATE THE BOUNTIES OF OUR RICH AGRICULTURAL TRADITION AND COMMIT OURSELVES TO WORKING TOGETHER IN PRODUCING SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF OUR FARMERS AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.