

News from Senator

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DROUGHT RELIEF PACKAGE ON ITS WAY TO PRESIDENT BUSH.
DOLE HELPS SECURE BEST DEAL FOR WINTER WHEAT;
HOUSE AGREES TO SENATE'S TARGETED RELIEF FOR PROGRAM CROPS.
0/92 ALSO INCLUDED

MR. DOLE. MR. PRESIDENT, I'M PLEASED THAT THE HOUSE AND SENATE HAVE FINALLY AGREED ON A DROUGHT RELIEF/DISASTER PACKAGE. IT IS BASICALLY THE SENATE PROPOSAL - THAT IS IMPORTANT, BECAUSE ONLY OUR PACKAGE RECOGNIZED THAT THERE WERE PRIORITY NEEDS ON THE DISASTER FRONT, ESPECIALLY FOR WINTER WHEAT PRODUCERS. WE DIDN'T OPEN THE TREASURY GATES FOR EVERY CROP IN AMERICA.

WE SAID LOUD AND CLEAR THAT FARMERS WHO WERE CLOBBERED BY DROUGHT OR FLOOD; WHO PRODUCED PROGRAM CROPS AND PUT UP WITH GOVERNMENT RED TAPE; AND PRODUCERS WHO SIGNED-UP IN THE CROP INSURANCE PROGRAM -- THESE ARE THE PRODUCERS WHO DESERVE PRIORITY ATTENTION -- AND THEY'RE GETTING IT.

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, WINTER WHEAT FARMERS WILL BE PLEASED TO KNOW THE SPECIFICS OF DISASTER RELIEF BECAUSE THEY WILL BE BACK IN THE FIELD PLANTING NEXT MONTH.

DISTINCTIONS

LET ME REITERATE THE THREE POINTS THAT I SEE ARE THE CLEAR MERITS OF THE DISASTER RELIEF BILL. AS I HAVE STATED, WE HAVE PROVIDED SOME MUCH DESERVED DISTINCTIONS BASED ON BURDEN SHARING AND CROP INSURANCE: WINTER WHEAT FARMERS AND OTHER PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS WITH CROP INSURANCE WILL GET LAST YEAR'S RATE OF 35/65. OTHER PROGRAM CROP PARTICIPANTS WILL GET 40/65. SOYBEANS AND OTHER OILSEEDS WILL GET A 45/65 FORMULA AND FINALLY, NON-PROGRAM CROPS AND NON-PARTICIPANTS WILL BE LIMITED TO A 50/65 RATE.

SECOND, WE HAVE DRAMATICALLY SCALED BACK THE NUMBER OF NON-PROGRAM CROPS ELIGIBLE BY REQUIRING A 50% LOSS THRESHOLD BEFORE THEY QUALIFY AND THIRD, WE HAVE MET THE ADMINISTRATION'S BUDGET TARGET OF \$900 MILLION.

WE HAVE ALSO KEPT IN THE BILL A SENATE PROVISION I BELIEVE IS FAIR AND EXTREMELY SIGNIFICANT FOR KANSAS PRODUCERS - THAT IS THE SO-CALLED "0/92" OPTION.

THE FINAL BILL DOES CONTAIN A HOUSE PROVISION REQUIRING PRODUCERS WITH A 65% LOSS WHO GET DISASTER BENEFITS TO BUY CROP INSURANCE THE FOLLOWING YEAR. THERE IS SOME FLEXIBILITY FOR WAIVERS BASED IN PART ON THE COST OF THE INSURANCE PREMIUM AND A DETERMINATION BY THE COUNTY COMMITTEE AS TO ECONOMIC HARDSHIP. I SIMPLY NOTE FOR THE RECORD THAT SOME MEMBERS HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THIS MANDATED APPROACH BECAUSE THEY FEEL YOU ARE FORCING PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN A PROGRAM THAT HAS SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS AND THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO WAIT UNTIL REFORMS ARE MADE. REFORMING CROP INSURANCE WILL BE A KEY ISSUE NEXT YEAR.

UNDOUBTEDLY, THERE ARE OTHER IDEAS THAT MANY OF US WOULD HAVE LIKED INCLUDED. BUT WE HAD LIMITED MONEY THIS YEAR AND DIFFICULT CHOICES. AND I BELIEVE OUR PLAN WILL PROVIDE ENOUGH ASSISTANCE TO HELP MOST FARMERS HANG ON ANOTHER YEAR.

CONCLUSION

I COMMEND MY COLLEAGUES, SENATORS LEAHY, LUGAR, COCHRAN, BOREN AND OTHERS WHO SPENT A LOT OF TIME ON THIS ISSUE AND I URGE ADOPTION OF THE MEASURE.

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