



Senate Rejects Farm Payment Limits Reform

Farm state senators vote against the Dorgan-Grassley amendment and family farmers

On December 13, 2007, the U.S. Senate voted to reject the Dorgan-Grassley payment limits amendment to the farm bill. The amendment was defeated with 56 in favor and 43 opposed under an agreement by leadership to require 60 votes for passage.

On page 2 you can see how your senators voted, and in the essay on page 8 you can read a further analysis of the December vote.

For those senators who voted for family farms by voting for the amendment, we urge you to call them and offer your sincere thanks. For those senators who voted to continue unlimited payments that destroy family farming and rural communities by voting against the amendment, we urge you to call them and express your deep disappointment. You can call the Capitol switchboard at 202.224.3121 and ask for any senator's office.

Throughout the last year literally thousands of Center for Rural Affairs supporters and tens of thousands of people nationwide called on their elected officials to reform farm program subsidies. Without your strong support, the vote would not have ended where it did. However, now it is critical that we hold those responsible for the defeat of true reform accountable. Please make your call today.

Conference Committee Next

Next, the farm bill moves to the conference committee. Though the hope for significant reform of farm program

payments is significantly diminished, we will still be fighting to retain and fund other important priorities that support conservation, rural development, and beginning farmers.

At the conference committee stage it becomes more difficult to influence the final composition of the bill. But it is not impossible, especially for those living in areas represented by members of the conference committee. Conference committee members will primarily be selected from the Agriculture Committees in the House and Senate, but those who do not live in those areas will also have opportunities to make a difference in the final bill.

Action directed at legislators will still be able to help secure funding for programs that support conservation, rural development, and beginning farmers, and we will call upon you again when your voice is needed.

Also, we should always remember that taking action is not limited to making a phone call to Washington DC or writing a letter. Being an active citizen does not mean we simply involve ourselves with an advocacy organization and respond to their alerts – though we do think that is important. Working toward the common good means speaking up in your community and talking to your friends and neighbors. It means fighting for what you think is right. And it certainly does not always involve politics and policy.

Contact: Dan Owens, dano@cfra.org or by phone at 402.687.2103 x 1017 to find out more ways to get involved.

Development Matters

The 2007 farm bill has proven, once again, that success in the work that we tackle here at the Center for Rural Affairs requires persistence and determination. The disappointing farm bill debate demonstrates that winning real reform on fundamental issues often takes years or even decades.

That is why we created the Granary Foundation 10 years ago. We raised over \$6 million dollars from donors making gifts of every size. Some gave cash gifts. Some included the Granary in their planned giving or their will.

Revenue from the invested principal of the Granary helps fund our most timely, crucial, and cutting-edge work. During 2008, we will embark upon a campaign to grow and strengthen the Granary. We invite you to join us on this journey and encourage you to consider the ways that you could invest in a better future for rural America by contributing to growing the Granary.

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Senate Vote on Dorgan-Grassley Payment Limitation Amendment

YEAs --- 56

Akaka (D-HI)	Ensign (R-NV)	Murray (D-WA)
Allard (R-CO)	Enzi (R-WY)	Nelson (D-FL)
Barrasso (R-WY)	Feingold (D-WI)	Nelson (D-NE)
Bayh (D-IN)	Feinstein (D-CA)	Obama (D-IL)
Biden (D-DE)	Grassley (R-IA)	Reed (D-RI)
Bingaman (D-NM)	Hagel (R-NE)	Reid (D-NV)
Boxer (D-CA)	Harkin (D-IA)	Sanders (I-VT)
Brown (D-OH)	Hatch (R-UT)	Schumer (D-NY)
Brownback (R-KS)	Johnson (D-SD)	Smith (R-OR)
Byrd (D-WV)	Kennedy (D-MA)	Specter (R-PA)
Cantwell (D-WA)	Kerry (D-MA)	Stevens (R-AK)
Cardin (D-MD)	Klobuchar (D-MN)	Sununu (R-NH)
Carper (D-DE)	Kohl (D-WI)	Tester (D-MT)
Casey (D-PA)	Lautenberg (D-NJ)	Thune (R-SD)
Clinton (D-NY)	Levin (D-MI)	Warner (R-VA)
Collins (R-ME)	Lugar (R-IN)	Webb (D-VA)
Dodd (D-CT)	Menendez (D-NJ)	Whitehouse (D-RI)
Dorgan (D-ND)	Mikulski (D-MD)	Wyden (D-OR)
Durbin (D-IL)	Murkowski (R-AK)	

NAYs --- 43

Alexander (R-TN)	DeMint (R-SC)	Martinez (R-FL)
Baucus (D-MT)	Dole (R-NC)	McCaskill (D-MO)
Bennett (R-UT)	Domenici (R-NM)	McConnell (R-KY)
Bond (R-MO)	Graham (R-SC)	Pryor (D-AR)
Bunning (R-KY)	Gregg (R-NH)	Roberts (R-KS)
Burr (R-NC)	Hutchison (R-TX)	Rockefeller (D-WV)
Chambliss (R-GA)	Inhofe (R-OK)	Salazar (D-CO)
Coburn (R-OK)	Inouye (D-HI)	Sessions (R-AL)
Cochran (R-MS)	Isakson (R-GA)	Shelby (R-AL)
Coleman (R-MN)	Kyl (R-AZ)	Snowe (R-ME)
Conrad (D-ND)	Landrieu (D-LA)	Stabenow (D-MI)
Corker (R-TN)	Leahy (D-VT)	Vitter (R-LA)
Cornyn (R-TX)	Lieberman (ID-CT)	Voinovich (R-OH)
Craig (R-ID)	Lincoln (D-AR)	
Crapo (R-ID)	Lott (R-MS)	

Not Voting ---1

McCain (R-AZ)

Conservation Partnerships Can Stimulate Rural Development



Through the farm bill debate, we have been promoting the *Cooperative Conservation Partnerships Initiative*. In our view, this provision should support farmers and ranchers who want to do special conservation projects to enhance natural resources AND assist rural community development efforts by allowing public access on their land.

The initiative has different names in the congressional versions of the farm bill. It is called *Partnerships and Cooperation* in the Senate and the *Cooperative Conservation Partnerships Initiative* in the House.

We aren't wedded to either name, but we are wedded to how the provision should look and function in its final form. There are similarities and differences between the two versions. We are, of course, eternal optimists and believe

that when they are joined during the Senate and House conference committee, we will end up with a good final product.

The similarities between the two versions are significant and will help in putting together a final bill. They include such things as allowing a majority of the funds to be set aside for special projects to be decided at the state level. This will enable each state to focus on local priorities and determine which cooperative conservation projects show merit and are worthy of investing federal conservation dollars.

The difference we are most concerned with is a loss of priority for projects that address both conservation and rural community development needs in the Senate's version. The House version places a priority on such projects.

Public access to natural space can be a development asset for communities. It can draw young families to start businesses, populate schools, and revitalize communities. And it provides a basis for new tourism related self-employment opportunities involving bed and breakfasts, hunting, horseback riding, hiking, biking, wildlife viewing, and so forth.

So when the House and Senate get together to work out differences between their farm bills, let's be sure and let them know we support placing a priority on projects that address conservation and rural economic development simultaneously.

Contact: Traci Bruckner for more information on conservation in the farm bill, tracib@cfra.org or 402.687.2100.

C O R P O R A T E F A R M I N G N O T E S

Well, it's 9:00 pm on December 13, and this newsletter article is 48 hours overdue, at least. And we are still in the office watching the waning hours of the Senate farm bill debate. Now is as good a time as any (or as late as our newsletter editor can reasonably allow) to offer an update on how livestock market reforms are faring.

- As previously reported, a prohibition of packer ownership of livestock for more than 14 days prior to slaughter was included in the Senate Ag Committee's farm bill without official dissent. Although there were noises, mostly from Senator *Pat Roberts* (R-KS), about an amendment on the floor of the Senate to strip the provision from the bill, no such amendment was even offered.
- The growing popularity of the ban on packer ownership of livestock that forced opponents to shy away from resisting the amendment in committee also kept them from fighting it on the Senate floor. Their belief that they will ultimately get whatever they want in the House-Senate Conference Committee, however, is a warning that livestock competition reforms still face stern challenges.
- We had a tougher time with another important provi-

sion in the Senate Agriculture Committee's Livestock Title. That provision would require USDA to write rules preventing unjustifiable price discrimination against family farm and ranch livestock producers. The committee bill made clear that preferential pricing that is not justified by real differences in quality or actual, quantifiable differences in procurement costs will not be allowed.

- Senator Roberts of Kansas offered an amendment that would have removed crucial language and allowed the purely volume-based sweetheart deals that packers give to large industrial livestock operations. After weeks of negotiations, Senator Roberts withdrew his amendment, although the final language is not all that we had hoped.

The farm bill has created opportunities to breathe new life back into livestock markets. This is important, not just for family farmers and ranchers, but also to curtail the economic and environmental nightmare that has resulted from the consolidation, industrialization, and vertical integration of livestock production across rural America. Retaining these and other livestock competition reforms in the House-Senate Conference Committee and at USDA will be a long, tough battle.

Contact: John Crabtree, johnc@cfra.org or 402.687.2103 x 1010 with questions and comments about Corporate Farming Notes.

Resources for Beginning Farmers/Ranchers

We get several calls, letters, and emails each week from beginning farmers and ranchers asking for information, advice, money, land, and validation. We answer each one with encouragement and sources of information to help them make a sound start to their business. Here are some recent questions.

Q. I want to start a farm, raise my family there, and provide quality food for people. Please send me anything that will get me started.

A. Congratulations for planning to start farming or ranching! There are lots of opportunities today for people who look beyond typical commodity crops and who build solid businesses. The quality of life in raising a family on a farm has tremendous benefits as well.

The short answer to your question is to treat your farm as a business so you have enough profit to stay on it, and to learn from people who are already doing what you want to do. ATTRA (below) has lists of organizations and internships that provide learning opportunities in each state.

Q. I want to make my living from a small farm. Is that still possible?

A. There are literally hundreds of enterprises you can run from a farm or ranch based on the natural resources, history, or culture of the area or based on your skills and interests. Farm/ranch startups need high-margin enterprises and limited risk, particularly those that entail skilled labor and management.

A recurring recommendation for highest profit is with certified organic crops (see p. 7); low-cash-input enterprises reduce risk, such as grass-based livestock, dairy, and poultry operations. The most efficient approach is to “stack” enterprises that feed each other, using the same land base or facilities. That’s obviously not limited to startups, as crops and livestock are integrated enterprises on many farms.

ATTRA is the sustainable ag information clearinghouse for enterprise ideas, production practices, and marketing; check its website for online documents and references: www.attra.org. The USDA SARE program also has a number of publications that can help with marketing or raising crops and livestock: www.sare.org. The USDA National Ag Library Alternative Farming Center has lists of resources for many farming topics: <http://afsic.nal.usda.gov>. Your local Extension office can also link you with publications and experts for your area.

Q. How do I get the money to buy farmland or start farming/ranching?

A. First, treat your farm/ranch as a business. Make a budget and cash flow projection to be sure all your decisions lead to profit BEFORE spending any money. Any lender will want to know that as well, so they can be assured of getting repaid.

Second, don’t expect free money. There are no grants for farm startup, but there are a number of loan programs. Start with the USDA Farm Service Agency, with offices in most counties. Look at our financial resources document (www.cfra.org/resources/beginning_farmer). Resources in many states are listed here: www.stateagfinance.org/types.html.

Third, consider other options to debt. Starting small, creating a work-in arrangement, or running a subscription market garden can reduce your need for cash. Look on these websites for examples: www.cfra.org/resources/beginning_farmer/success_stories and www.farmprofitability.org (a series of case studies).

Contact: Wyatt Fraas for more information, wyattf@cfra.org or 402.254.6893.

Taste of Nebraska Agri-Tourism Event

The 3rd Governor’s Agri/Eco-Tourism Workshop is scheduled for February 5-6, 2008, in North Platte at the Sandhills Convention Center. A Tuesday evening networking event called “Taste of Nebraska Agri-tourism” from 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm has been added this year.

The Governor’s conference invites people to showcase their Nebraska homemade / homegrown products at the Tuesday evening networking event. There is no cost to participants, but organizers ask that they provide samples of products for attendees to taste. Packaged products, except for wine and beer, can be sold.

For more information, contact *Karen Kollars*, 308.249.3220 or karenk@VisitNebraska.org. To learn more about the Governor’s Agri/Eco-Tourism Workshop go to www.VisitNebraska.org/industry.

17th Farming for the Future Conference

The Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) will celebrate the 17th annual Farming for the Future Conference February 7, 8, and 9, 2008. Each year this nationally recognized event has grown in number of attendees, workshops, and overall stature. Last year over 1,700 farmers and consumers attended the three-day conference, making it one of the largest sustainable agriculture conferences in the nation.

In addition to over 80 workshops and 10 pre-conference tracks, the conference features locally-grown, organic meals, a 78-vendor trade show, arts and music, and programming for youth and kids. To receive a full color brochure and find complete conference information and online registration, visit www.pasafarming.org

Organic Farming Offers Beginners a Viable Path into Agriculture

The lack of young farmers is threatening the future of agriculture. Plenty of young people want to get into farming and ranching, but few can afford the high startup costs of land, machinery, and operating capital.

Most production today is marketed as generic grain or livestock, where the only way to compete is to produce for less. These short-term gains are quickly lost as others learn these skills or adopt the new technology.

The one practice that has kept many farms solvent is an increase in production. But steadily increasing production means greater investment, an option not available to most wanting to get into agriculture. Is it possible the “get bigger or get out” philosophy is making it impossible for young people to get in?

To get a foot-hold in agriculture today, young farmers should look at getting more per acre. Instead of focus-

ing on the generic market, they could produce for a premium market. Finding markets and support systems for new products is difficult and risky, but an established market already exists that pays a premium, not for what you produce, but how you produce it.

The organic market is growing at a rate of 20 percent per year. Iowa State Ag Economist, Dr. *Craig Chase*, calculates a \$254 annual per acre return to management (after deducting labor and production expenses) for a four-year organic crop rotation of corn, soybeans, oats, and alfalfa. At that rate, only 171 acres are needed to generate \$45,000 in net income, while a non-organic corn/soybean rotation farm with a profit of \$52/acre needs 865 acres to make the same money.

Organic farming practices can cut production costs as well, according to Dr. Chase. Even after compensating for an additional nine-hour per acre labor

expense, the organic rotation showed a savings of \$66/acre in input expenses. At an average of \$250/acre machinery expense, the smaller farm saves \$93,500 in machinery investment over the conventionally managed farm.

Erin Berryman, a livestock feed buyer with West Plains Grain (erinb@westplainsco.com) quotes the following prices for new crop (2008) organic livestock feed grain: Yellow Corn, \$8.00 - 9.00; Soybeans, \$16.00; Wheat, \$11.00; Barley, \$6.50. These prices are attainable from commonly grown crops, grown in an uncommon way. With organic prices at this level, returning to the days when a quarter section of land could support a family seems possible again.

Learning the organic production rules and practices is a challenge, but, once mastered, these practices will continue to provide savings and premiums far into the future. The young farmers of tomorrow will meet that challenge. We need to give them the opportunity to try.

Contact: Martin Kleinschmit, martink@cfra.org or 402.254.6893 for more information.

Add More to Value Added Grant Program

Last October at least 48 requests for the Value Added Grant Program were submitted to the Nebraska Rural Development Commission, resulting in a grand total of \$2.5 million in requested funding. Unfortunately, only \$800,000 will be awarded in this round.

The grants are for Nebraskans who want to start or expand a value-added agricultural enterprise. The popularity of the Nebraska value-added grants is a testament to the need for helping farmers and ranchers access premium markets with new strategies that help them to capture a greater share of the food dollar. Such value-added ventures can also help address economic decline and poverty in rural areas by enhancing rural economic development and creating new employment opportunities.

For this grant program, “value-added” means changing the physical state of the product, such as turning grapes into wine. Last year one of the grant recipients was the Nebraska Syriaca Cooperative which produces Syriaca (milkweed) oil from Syriaca pods grown and harvested by farmers.

There are many other niche markets that have yet to be tapped, but without adequate resources, many producers can't get these ideas off the ground.

With over \$2.5 million in requests this year and only \$800,000 in available grant funds, it is clear the demand for this program is far outstripping available resources. We encourage the Legislature to work diligently to increase funding for these grants so that more Nebraska entrepreneurs and communities can benefit.

Contact: Elisha Greeley Smith, elishas@cfra.org or 402.687.2103 x 1007 for details.

Time to be Counted: 2007 Census of Agricultural

Taken every five years, the Census of Agriculture is a survey of America's farms, ranches, and the people who operate them. The U.S. Department of Agriculture calls the Census, “the most complete agricultural data resource available, providing the only source of uniform, comprehensive information for every county in the nation.”

The 2007 Census of Agriculture will soon be underway. Around the first of the year, Census forms will be arriving in farm mailboxes across the country. USDA emphasizes the importance of the information. “The Census gives farmers and ranchers of each state the chance to be heard and to shape the direction of American agriculture.”

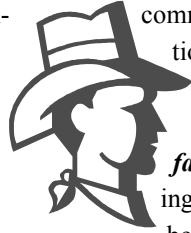
New this year, forms can be filled out online or mailed back.

“Promising Opportunities” in Agriculture and Rural Communities

In 2004, we released a report highlighting the economic development strategies that were working for communities across the rural Great Plains. *Fresh Promises* focused on these opportunities and divided them into categories that are crucial for viable rural communities, especially ones that are agriculturally-based.

These categories are again highlighted in our newest report, *Promising Opportunities*. Intended to address issues the 2007 farm bill should and could address, we include proposals that could easily be modified for use at the state level. We also identify legislation that will be necessary for these economic opportunities to be replicated in other communities, regions, and states.

1. Development based on the local environment – Policy needs to reflect the needs of the smallest communities with limited resources. By focusing on



community assets and collaborations, these communities can experience some success.

2. Support for local farmers and ranchers – Entering traditional agriculture is becoming increasingly difficult for young, want-to-be farmers and ranchers. Public policy needs to support a new generation in agriculture, making way for communities to better support themselves and their residents.

3. Rural microenterprise programs – Spurring innovation and job creation in communities is the key to ensuring the long-term future of rural America. Entrepreneurs generate new economic value for their communities. Economic development strategies based on entrepreneurship add jobs, raise incomes, create local wealth, improve the quality of life for rural residents, and allow rural communities to function in the

global economy.

4. Initiatives focused on quality of life – Small towns all face similar challenges – a dwindling population base to provide adequate economic activity and resources to keep the town and its institutions viable. Many communities across the rural Great Plains are trying to stop the trend of depopulation.

5. Small and moderate-sized farms and ranches – Though declining, mid-size farms and ranches nationally continue to make up the largest share of working farms and continue to play a crucial role in many rural communities. The prosperity of moderate-size farms and ranches and how public policy influences their prosperity is a critical variable to rural community success.

Both reports can be found on the Center’s website, www.cfra.org or by contacting *Kim Preston*, kimp@cfra.org or 402.687.2103 x 1022.

Local Food Systems Important for Rural Community Development

A community’s culture makes it special. Yet to be sustainable, a level of economic and social cohesiveness is needed. One of the key components of a sustainable community model lies in local food consumption.

We have seen many “Buy Local” campaigns started throughout the country, but what do they really mean in terms of community? After the industrial revolution, food sources became global. Concentration of production and processing led to concentrated wealth and efficiency. A community development problem that occurred in this paradigm was ignoring the social aspect of raising local foods.

More than consumption drove local food markets. These were gathering places for social interaction and led to a greater understanding of community. Farmers markets were (and still are) social centers for more than economic commerce. These became great policy arenas where major decisions could be made. Acquaintances became friends and ultimately dependant on each other for survival.

Poverty became the strongest cause of food insecurity, and globalization led to greater poverty, not sustainability. As we were able to obtain more foods at different growing seasons, we became unsuspecting victims of our own greed.

We now know that these facts are indisputable:

- All people are food insecure.
- As resources are depleted and energy costs rise, food security will increasingly become an issue.
- As poverty grows, we understand that social contracts that once held firm are now broken.
- Dependency on global food systems lead to social degradation and eventual loss of any interaction that drives culture and welfare.

What we need to do for the future is to preserve the community’s relationship with the food system so that residents understand what is truly at stake. For small rural communities, a tie to local food is the cohesive bond that unifies people. It can also be a strong economic tool, but it doesn’t have to drive the project. Whether or not local food systems and markets drive economic development is not as important as what local food systems do for the social development of the community.

In the next couple of months we will look at local food systems and learn how we need to design our small rural communities to accept the markets as a community development tool and not as the economic force to sustain the community.

Contact: Michael L. Holton for more information on rural community development, michaellh@cfra.org or 402.687.2103 x 1020.

ACROSS THE NATION

Kentucky: Advocates for the communities affected by mountaintop-removal coal mining had a recent opportunity to take members of the statehouse on a tour of mine sites. The group visited both strip mines and the people who live in nearby communities. Some state legislators were moved by the trip, and pledge to work to pass legislation to stop the practice. Other legislators continue to support it.

Maryland: In an effort to control pollution from farm runoff, the state is promoting winter cover crops through a state conservation program. The state pays farmers up to \$50 per acre to plant wheat, rye, or other crops on their bare fields before winter. This year farmers are expected to plant a full one-third of cropland in the state with a cover crop protecting it from erosion and runoff and building soil organic matter.

Montana: As the rural population in the state continues to decline, the most rural school districts in Montana are searching for ways to keep the doors to their schools open. Administrators from some rural districts met recently to discuss strategies to avoid more outright consolidation. Finding new ways to share faculty and staff among districts, four-day school weeks, and combining grades are all being used help keep rural schools open. Often a keystone of a rural community, keeping the school open can help keep a community alive.

Tennessee: Underserved and rural hospitals in Tennessee and parts of Georgia will benefit from a \$2 million grant from the Federal Communications Commission. The grant is part of an FCC pilot program that aims to expand health care access through telehealth networks. With the grant, Erlanger hospital in Chattanooga will work to establish high-speed internet connections with health care providers in rural areas. The high-speed connections will facilitate video conferencing and electronic transfer of X-rays and CT scans to medical specialists not otherwise accessible.

Timber States: A tentative deal reached in congress could bring an end to a longstanding dispute over federal aid to timber communities facing declining revenues due to more restrictive government regulations on logging national forest land. Currently attached to energy legislation, the agreement must be passed by both the House and the Senate before it is final. The deal would bring \$1.5 billion in aid to 700 rural counties to support schools, roads, and community infrastructure.

Contact: Brian Depew, by email at briand@cfra.org or by phone at 402.687.2103 x 1015 to comment or suggest other news for next month.

Naturally Raised Meat Standard

Public comment period during January

On November 28, 2007, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service released for public comment a proposed voluntary standard for meat products to be marketed as “naturally raised.” Public comments on this proposed standard are due by January 28, 2008.

In brief, the proposed standard as written gives us great concern. Under this standard, to qualify for a USDA “naturally raised” label the livestock must not be administered antibiotics and growth hormones. That is good, but that is all the standard addresses. It fails to address other production practices that one associates with “naturally raised,” for example, ensuring the animals are raised on pasture.

The standard as proposed will enable large-scale feedlots that don't use antibiotics or hormones to qualify for a USDA label that says their product is “naturally raised.” We have seen some of the feedlots (have some right here in our home state) that would fit this category, and we have to say, there isn't anything natural about that.

To view the proposed standard online go to <http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/stand/NRnotice1107.pdf> And be sure to watch our website for more information, www.cfra.org.

Contact: Traci Bruckner for more information, by email at tracib@cfra.org or by phone at 402.687.2103 x 1016.

Small Business Tax Filing Web Cast on January 8

The 2008 tax filing season is right around the corner. The IRS's January 8 Tax Talk Today program, “Getting Ready for the Filing Season 2008: Part 2, Businesses” will give business owners a head start. Tax Talk Today is a free, live, monthly interactive Web cast. The one-hour program begins at 2 pm ET.

The show's panel of experts will discuss business tax return issues for small businesses and self-employed taxpayers, recent tax law changes and updates for the 2007 tax year, IRS regulations, business credits, common errors, and processing issues that impact filing business returns for the 2007 tax year.

To access the Web cast at no charge, viewers can register online at www.TaxTalkToday.tv. Tax Talk Today can be viewed with Windows Media Player and Real Player. *Source: Internal Revenue Service (IRS)*

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You may also correct your mailing address and fax the back page to 402.687.2200, or call *Kim Kaup* at the Center for Rural Affairs, 402.687.2100.

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Midwest and Plains Senators Cast Key Votes to Kill Payment Limits

The U.S. Senate has rejected the Dorgan-Grassley amendment to close payment limitation loopholes and invest the savings in small business development, beginning farmers, and creating a future in rural America.

The vote demonstrates that Southern members of Congress are not the primary obstacle to farm policy that strengthens America's rural communities. The responsibility for killing reform lies with a small handful of Northern Plains and Midwestern senators who sided with selfish interests over the needs of the majority of farmers and rural people.

The drive to kill reform in the Senate farm bill was led behind the scenes by Senator *Kent Conrad* of North Dakota. He was joined in this vote by Senators *Pat Roberts* of Kansas, *Ken Salazar* of Colorado, *Max Baucus* of Montana, *Claire McCaskill* of Missouri, *George Voinovich* of Ohio, and *Debbie Stabenow* of Michigan.

These senators are responsible for continuing the policy of destroying family farming and undermining rural communities by subsidizing mega farms to drive smaller operations out of business.

Senators *Byron Dorgan* and *Chuck Grassley* proved themselves true statesmen and genuine fighters for rural Americans. Also voting on the side of rural people were Senators *Ben Nelson*, *Chuck Hagel*, *Tom Harkin*, *Tim Johnson*, *John Thune*, *Sam Brownback*, *Jon Tester*, *Herb Kohl*, *Russ Feingold*, *Barack Obama*, *Richard Durbin*, *Sherrod Brown*, *Richard Lugar*, *Evan Bayh*, *Carl Levin*, *Wayne Allard*, *Mike Enzi*, and *John Barrasso*.

The amendment failed despite garnering the support of 56 senators, a clear, bipartisan majority.

Senate Majority Leader *Harry Reid* (D-NV) had earlier announced a parliamentary maneuver forcing the Dorgan-Grassley amendment to gain a super majority of 60 votes for passage. Once again, the Democratic leadership has contradicted its rhetoric about representing ordinary Americans.

This action leaves us without meaningful payment limitation reform in either the House or Senate farm bill. The Senate bill halves the effective limit

on direct payments and counter cyclical payments, but only for *unmarried* farmers. The House bill raises the limit for married farmers on direct payments made every year regardless of price, from \$80,000 to \$120,000.

It is conceivable that some additional reforms will be added in the conference committee convened in January to work out differences between the House and Senate bills. But that is a long shot.

This is a deeply disappointing vote. But it is no reason for despair. Citizens across this nation rose up and spoke out. You took on some of the nation's richest and most powerful interests. And you won a majority. We just lost the vote.

We must not give up. This is but one battle. The struggle for genuine opportunity and fairness for rural people – all people – dates to the time of the prophet Isaiah. It will not be won or lost in a single vote, or a single generation. Our work for fairness, opportunity, and justice is work for the ages.

Agree or disagree: Send your comments to *Chuck Hassebrook*, chuckh@cfra.org.