

those who rely on the SNAP program, to get together and find a consensus—some common ground—on a way to wring more nutritional value out of those SNAP benefits.

In Oregon, we have tried this idea out. Those in the retail community, farmers and anti-hunger groups got together, and this group thinks they can do more to improve nutritional outcomes under this very large program.

The amendment makes clear that you could not get a waiver to reduce eligibility, or reduce the amount of benefits that someone on the SNAP program receives. But you could, for example, try various approaches to promote nutritional eating. A State could encourage SNAP recipients to purchase more fruits and vegetables by partnering with grocery stores or other food sellers to provide coupons to enable SNAP recipients to purchase extra or discounted fruits and vegetables. There are now programs that allow SNAP benefits to be exchanged at farmers markets for coupons that produce \$2 worth of produce for \$1 of SNAP benefits. The cost of the extra produce is paid for using non-federal funds. A State waiver could enable this type of program, for example, to be expanded beyond farmers markets.

There is a host of innovative proposals, in my view, that could improve public health and increase the consumption of healthy food. I hope as we go forward toward the conclusion of this legislation in the Senate, we can look at ways to accept the proposition that not all of the wisdom resides in Washington, DC, particularly when we are seeing these skyrocketing rates of obesity, tragically with special implications for low-income women and children. I think there are better ways to proceed. This amendment empowers States to have that opportunity.

The third amendment I am going to offer, I have not spoken about on the floor to date, and I wish to take just a minute to describe what this amendment deals with. It is an amendment I plan to offer that addresses the issue of industrial hemp farming. It is cosponsored by Senator RAND PAUL and is identical to legislation in the House, which has 33 bipartisan cosponsors.

This is, in my view, a textbook example of a regulation that flunks the commonsense test. There is government regulation on the books that prevents America's farmers from growing industrial hemp. What is worse, this regulation is hurting job creation in rural America and increasing our trade deficit. When my colleagues get more information about this outlandish, outrageous restriction on free enterprise, I think most of them are going to agree the restriction on industrial hemp is the poster child for dumb regulations. The only thing standing in the way of taking advantage of this profitable crop is a lingering misunderstanding about its use. The amendment I have filed on this issue will end a ridiculous regulation once and for all.

Right now, the United States is importing over ten-million of dollars of hemp products to use in paper products, construction materials, textiles, and a variety of other goods. We are importing a crop that U.S. farmers could be profitably growing right here at home if not for government rules prohibiting it.

Our neighbors to the north can see the potential for this product. In 2010, the Canadian Government injected over \$700,000 into their blossoming hemp industry to increase the size of their hemp crop and fortify the inroads they're making in U.S. markets, at the expense of our farmers. It was a very good bet. U.S. imports of hemp products have consistently grown over the past decade, increasing by 300 percent in 10 years. From 2009 to 2010, they grew 35 percent. The number of acres in Canada devoted to growing industrial hemp nearly doubled from 2011 to 2012.

I know there are going to be Members of Congress, and others who are listening to this, who are going to say all this talk about hemp is basically talk about marijuana. The fact is, while they come from the same species of plant, there are major differences between them. They have different harvest times, they're different heights, and the cultivation techniques are markedly different. And when we recognize those differences, we'll be able to focus on the benefits from producing domestically the hemp we already use.

Under this amendment, the production of hemp would still be regulated, but it would be done by the States through permitting programs, not the Federal Government. Nine States have already put legislation in place to provide for a permitting system that enforces the prohibition on marijuana and ensures that industrial hemp maintains a very low THC level—under 0.3 percent. The lowest-grade marijuana typically has 5 percent THC content. The bottom line is no one is going to get high on industrial hemp.

Hemp has been a profitable commodity in a number of countries. In addition to Canada, Australia also permits hemp production, and the growth in that sector helped their agricultural base survive when the tobacco industry dried up. Over 30 countries in Europe, Asia and North and South America currently permit farmers to grow hemp, and China is the world's largest producer. In fact, our country is the only industrialized nation that prohibits farmers from growing hemp.

Oregon is home to some of the major manufacturers of hemp products, including Living Harvest, one of the largest hemp food producers in our country. Business has been so brisk there that the Portland Business Journal recently rated them as one of the fastest growing local companies.

There are similar success stories in other States. One company in North Carolina has been incorporating hemp into building materials, reportedly making them both stronger and more

environmentally friendly. Another company in California produces hemp-based fiberboard.

No country is better than ours at developing, perfecting, and expanding markets for our products. As the market grows, it ought to be domestically produced hemp that supplies that growth.

I would like to close on this topic with a couple statements by one of the leading newspapers in my State, The Bulletin. I think it would be fair to say The Bulletin would not cite itself as one of the first places one ought to look for left-wing thinking, and here is what they had to say with respect to my amendment, which they encouraged support for:

... producers of hemp products in the United States are forced to import it. That denies American farmers the opportunity to compete in the market. It's like surrendering the competitive edge to China and Canada, where it can be grown legally.

The editorial then goes on to say:

Legalizing industrial hemp does not have to be a slippery slope towards legalizing marijuana. It can be a step toward removing regulatory burdens limiting Oregon farmers from competing in the world market.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a copy of the editorial from The Bulletin.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Bulletin Staff, June 9, 2012]

U.S. SHOULD LEGALIZE INDUSTRIAL HEMP  
(Editorial)

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., has introduced a change to the farm bill to remove the federal prohibition on growing industrial hemp. Wyden's change would put an end to an unnecessary ban.

The Oregon Legislature authorized the growing of industrial hemp in 2009, but federal law still blocks hemp as an illegal crop.

Why? Federal policy does not distinguish between the varieties of cannabis. Some are good for oilseed and fiber. Some are better for smoking to get high.

Yes, both do contain the hallucinogenic compound delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Industrial hemp is low in it. Marijuana is high in it.

That doesn't mean the country should ban growing all of it.

Industrial hemp is versatile and can grow like crazy. It can be used for paper, clothes, rope. The seed oil can be used for a variety of things: food, paint, pharmaceuticals and more.

It's already used in Oregon and across the country. But producers of hemp products in the United States are forced to import it. That denies American farmers the opportunity to compete in the market. It's like surrendering the competitive edge to China and Canada, where it can be grown legally.

There are concerns about what legalizing hemp would mean. Would it be another headache for law enforcement?

One way to solve that, if it's a problem, is to require industrial hemp fields to be licensed and require random testing to ensure the crop is low in THC. Oregon's law said the state could seize crops that had a THC level higher than 0.3 percent.

Legalizing industrial hemp does not have to be a slippery slope toward legalizing marijuana. It can be a start toward removing regulatory burdens limiting Oregon farmers from competing in the world market.

Mr. WYDEN. Madam President, if this farm bill is about empowering farmers and increasing rural jobs, let's give them the tools they need to get the job done. Let's boost revenue for farmers and reduce the overhead costs for the businesses around the country that use this product. And let's put more people to work growing and processing an environmentally friendly crop with a ready market in the United States.

For all the reasons I have described, I will be urging my colleagues to support this amendment so the law can be changed and farmers are not prevented from growing a profitable crop in the future.

Even though my amendment is about growing a crop and should be clearly relevant to the farm bill, it may be blocked from getting a vote because of the Senate rules on what amendments are allowed to be offered once cloture is invoked on the bill. If I get the opportunity, I am going to bring this amendment up through the regular order. But if cloture is invoked and my amendment is not allowed, I want colleagues to know I will be back at this again until there are smarter regulations in place for industrial hemp.

In closing, let me say I don't think we can overstate the importance of the best possible farm bill. Senator STABENOW and Senator ROBERTS have, in my view, done yeomen's work in trying to build a bipartisan approach. The question now is can we use the amendment process to improve on the kind of bipartisan effort they brought to the floor.

Each of the areas I have described this afternoon—improving the Farm to School program, wringing more value and better nutritional outcomes from the SNAP program, and helping a promising hemp industry—give us a chance to attain the objectives of what I have described as the best possible farm bill, and we can do this all without spending one single dime of additional taxpayer money—not a dime of additional taxpayer money. It is my hope we can take the good work that has already been done by Senators STABENOW and ROBERTS and build on that. I hope the Senate will support the three amendments I have described this afternoon.

With that, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, first, let me thank all of our colleagues who are working with us as we move forward in putting together a package of amendments to be voted on here in the Senate. I want to thank everyone—of course my ranking member, Senator

ROBERTS, but also people on both sides who are working together in good faith as we move through this process.

This morning, we did have two votes, and in the next little while we will have two more. And I do want to speak to one of those but also to just indicate again to all of our colleagues how important it is to farmers and ranchers, families, and rural communities across America that we come together and pass this farm bill.

Sixteen million people have jobs related to agriculture. I am not sure there is any one single piece of legislation we have had in front of us that actually impacted 16 million people like this one. Of course, we are very proud of the way we have come together in a bipartisan way to propose something that actually cuts the deficit by over \$23 billion and creates real reforms that taxpayers and farmers have asked for, while strengthening our risk-management tools for agriculture, conservation, other jobs efforts, certainly rural development, alternative energy, and certainly our support for families with their own personal disaster when it comes to putting food on the table during an economic downturn for them.

I want to specifically take a moment, though, to speak and urge my colleagues to vote yes on a motion to table Coburn amendment No. 2353, which would repeal two of the most successful conservation programs in the history of our country, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, which we all call EQIP, and the Conservation Stewardship Program.

EQIP is on the front lines of production agriculture, helping farmers comply with regulatory pressures, and it has been very effective. It is the cornerstone of our country's commitment to voluntary, incentive-based conservation—voluntary—working with farmers, working with ranchers in a voluntary way, to partner with them to be able to provide ways to tackle environmental issues we all care about.

I would underscore the fact that what we call the farm bill is actually the largest investment we as a country make in conservation of land, air, and water on working lands—lands that are owned by the private sector, partnering, because we all have a stake in runoff and clean water issues and erosion issues and all of the other things that relate to protecting our wildlife and our wetlands for not only habitats but also for our hunters and fishermen and all of the other issues around which we celebrate what we have been able to do around conservation in this country.

EQIP really is a cornerstone of our commitment to a voluntary incentive-based conservation program. It provides a cost share to farmers to implement practices that have been absolutely proven to work to benefit our country's soil, air, and water resources.

This last year the Environmental Quality Incentive Program entered

into 38,000 contracts with farmers and ranchers all across America, covering 13 million acres of land. EQIP has a number of incredible stories across the country—in Louisiana, helping farmers recover from Hurricane Katrina; in Oklahoma, helping producers implement best management practices to reduce sediment in the Mission Creek, improving water quality, helping restore fish populations. In Michigan, they have helped farmers struggling with bovine TB protect their herds and livelihoods.

So this is one of two critical conservation programs that would be repealed by this amendment. The other one is the Conservation Stewardship Program. This encourages higher levels of conservation across agricultural operations as well as the adoption of new and emerging conservation practices. CSP encourages producers to address resource concerns by undertaking additional conservation activities and improving and maintaining their current activities. And they focus on seven resource concerns as well as energy—soil quality, soil erosion, water quality, water quantity, air quality, plant resources, and animal resources—all things important not only for our farmers and ranchers but to all of us—every community, every State, all of us in the country.

This program is extremely popular. It has been very successful. This year producers enrolled 12 million acres in the program, and this brings the total to 49 million acres across the country that now have conservation practices as a result of the CSP. It provides conservation bankers with more acres than any other conservation program in the country. I strongly urge we table this amendment. I ask for a "yes" vote in tabling the amendment.

I would like to talk a little bit more about what we have done in a positive way in the conservation title. One of the areas of this bill I am most proud of is the work that has been done with conservation and environmental groups all across the country—in fact, we have 643 conservation and environmental groups that have said this is the right approach.

In tough economic times, when we know we do not have additional dollars, we took a look at every single page, every single program. There are 23 different programs in conservation. Every time somebody had a good idea, a program got added rather than looking at duplication, redundancy, how we can streamline and make it better for farmers, communities, better for ranchers, make it simpler and more understandable. So we decided to go back and do what every taxpayer and every citizen has asked us to do; that is, streamline, make more accountability, cut the paperwork, make things work better.

We do support flexibility. We support locally led ground-up voluntary efforts.