

fell to levels that could threaten the very survival of our Nation's independent family livestock producers. Farmers and ranchers have questioned whether a free and open market operates in the livestock and meat packing industry, and the issues of packer concentration and market access are at the core of their concerns.

This legislation will require the President to appoint a commission on concentration in the meat packing industry. The commission would be chaired by the Secretary of Agriculture and be comprised of cattle, hog, and lamb producers; experts in antitrust legislation; economists; corporate chief financial officers; and corporate procurement experts. The commission would be charged with achieving the following goals:

First, determine if the upcoming USDA study on concentration in the red meat packing industry represents current market conditions. Producers are concerned that the study is based on outdated information and does not cover critical aspects of the livestock industry. This study was mandated by Congress in the fiscal year 1992 Agricultural appropriations bill. Producers and consumers need to have confidence that the findings of this study will apply to current market conditions.

Second, review the adequacy of current antitrust laws with respect to the livestock industry. Four large packing companies control over 80 percent of the cattle slaughtered in this country. Fifteen years ago this level was only a third as much. Given this amount of market concentration, producers question whether current laws are adequate to ensure free, open, and competitive livestock markets.

Third, make recommendations regarding the adequacy of price discovery in the livestock industry. Producers question whether the regulations governing price discovery in the livestock industry ensure the operation of a free and open market.

Fourth, review the reasons for the large producer to retail price spread. Although producers have been receiving some of the lowest prices in recent history for their livestock, packers and retailers have been enjoying record profits. Both producers and consumers deserve to know the reasons behind this distressing price spread.

Mr. Speaker, I invite you and my colleagues to join me in examining the underlying reasons behind one of the most difficult periods for livestock producers in recent memory. This legislation can accomplish this.

A SALUTE TO THE WINNERS OF ILLINOIS PRESS ASSOCIATION AWARDS

HON. WILLIAM O. LIPINSKI

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 18, 1995

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a number of news publications in my district whose efforts to uphold the highest principles of journalism were recently recognized by the Illinois Press Association at its annual awards ceremony.

First place winners in both large and small weekly newspaper divisions cover portions of my district. The Southtown Economist of Chicago was named best large daily newspaper

in the State. Press Publications of Elmhurst, IL took first place in the large weekly category and The Regional News of Palos Heights, IL was the winner in the small weekly category. These newspapers also won other numerous awards.

Other first place winners from my district included the Star newspaper of Chicago Heights, IL, which was honored for newspaper design and spot news photography, and The Doings of Hinsdale, IL which was recognized for an in-depth report on the teardown of homes in its community.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate these newspapers and their hard-working journalists on earning these prestigious honors.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 18, 1995

Mr. POMEROY. Mr. Speaker, I regret that I was not present for Rollcall No. 717, the Farr fish habitat amendment. At the time of the vote, I was meeting with Gen. Ronald Fogelman, Chief of Staff for the U.S. Air Force, at the Pentagon regarding the Minot Air Force Base. Had I been present, I would have voted "yes."

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 1976, AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. VIC FAZIO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 12, 1995

Mr. FAZIO of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the conference report for H.R. 1976, the Agriculture Appropriations bill for fiscal year 1996.

H.R. 1976 is not a perfect bill. Next year's bill continues an alarming trend in cutting important programs for agriculture research, animal and plant inspection, food safety and inspection, conservation programs, and rural housing and development.

Certainly some savings have accrued from the reorganization of the Department of Agriculture and closing of numerous field offices nationwide.

But we must guard against debilitating cuts that prevent these agencies from fulfilling their important missions.

Cuts to research, cuts to inspection, cuts to food safety, cuts to conservation programs—we are short-sighted in cutting back on these investments in this, the most productive sector of our economy.

But, despite my reservations about these cuts, we must judge the conference product against the House version of this bill, and we must judge it against what is possible this year and in this political climate—and based on these comparisons, the conference report is an improved product.

The conference report improves upon the House funding level for research and exten-

sion. It improves upon the House funding level for food safety and inspection. It improves upon the House funding level for rural housing and economic development.

I have particular praise for three items of importance to California agriculture and to my district.

First, funds have been included for buildings and facilities construction within the Cooperative State Research Service, including funds for an important integrated pest management research facility at the University of California at Davis and at Riverside.

Although some Members disagree with funding for these facilities, and the House bill contained no funds for this construction program, the conference agreement is the right decision.

It makes sure that our important agriculture research institutions who have worked in good faith over the years are not left high and dry. But it also directs the institutions to provide a specific and verifiable cost-share, and it tells them this is not an unlimited source of funds—it brings fair closure to this account over the next 2 years.

Second, the conferees fought successfully and in defense of the House position for the Market Promotion Program.

There is probably no more important tool for export promotion than MPP.

Agriculture exports, projected to exceed \$50 billion this year—up from \$43.5 billion for fiscal year 1994—are vital to the United States.

Agriculture exports strengthen farm income. Agriculture exports provide jobs for nearly a million Americans.

Agriculture exports generate nearly \$100 billion in related economic activity.

Agriculture exports produce a positive trade balance of nearly \$20 billion.

If U.S. agriculture is to remain competitive under GATT, we must have policies and programs that remain competitive with those of our competitors abroad.

GATT did not eliminate export subsidies, it only reduced them.

The European Union spent, over the last 5 years, an average of \$10.6 billion in annual export subsidies—the United States spent less than \$2 billion.

The E.U. spends more on wine exports—\$89 million—than the United States currently spends for all commodities under the market promotion program.

MPP is critical to U.S. agriculture's ability to develop, maintain and expand export markets in the new post-GATT environment, and MPP is a proven success.

In California, MPP has been tremendously successful in helping promote exports of California citrus, raisins, walnuts, almonds, peaches and other specialty crops.

We have to remember that an increase in agriculture exports means jobs: a 10 percent increase in agricultural exports creates over 13,000 new jobs in agriculture and related industries like manufacturing, processing, marketing and distribution.

For every \$1 we invest in MPP, we reap a \$16 return in additional agriculture exports. In short, the Market Promotion Program is a program that performs for American taxpayers.

The conferees have wisely held on to this important program in the face of ill-informed and short-sighted action by the Senate.

Third, the conference committee has continued to provide important funding for special