

tax burden as a result of being in a foreclosure or in the middle of the mortgage crisis. And the FHA reform that we passed earlier today says: We want to make it better by providing you alternatives and help to be able to keep your home.

I particularly want to thank, first, my cosponsors of the legislation that is the underlying legislation that has resulted in this action today—my Republican cosponsor, Senator VOINOVICH, who has been just terrific. Both of us come from the Midwest, Michigan and Ohio. We both find ourselves in many similar situations economically, with families who have been faced with the issues of mortgage foreclosure and challenging refinancing situations. I want to thank Senator VOINOVICH, who is key to the place we are today, in getting to this point. He has played an incredibly important role, and I am grateful to him for that. Senator JOHN KERRY has also been very helpful, and his staff; Senator LEVIN, my partner, who is always there, both of us working on behalf of Michigan; and Senators SNOWE, BROWN, HATCH, COLEMAN, SCHUMER, HARRY REID, NELSON, KLOBUCHAR, LIEBERMAN, HARKIN, and SALAZAR.

Of course, we would not be here without our leader, Senator HARRY REID. I know this is a personal concern to him in Nevada. I know that in his State there is a real challenge, as in mine, as it relates to the mortgage crisis, and he has made this a personal priority, and I am very grateful for his support.

Of course, Senator BAUCUS, our chairman of the Finance Committee, without whom, also, we would not be here, if it was not for his leadership, and his partner, Senator GRASSLEY, without their bipartisan working relationship—they are so extraordinary—we would not have an opportunity to address this issue and pass this legislation.

We held a hearing earlier this week, and I want to thank again our Finance Committee chairman for focusing a bright light on this mortgage crisis, what is happening not only in the subprime lending market but in the general economy as it relates to the ripple effect in the housing crisis, and his commitment has brought us to this point. I want to thank him.

I also want to thank Senator JUDD GREGG, who brought this issue to the debate on the farm bill and, frankly, was very instrumental in bringing this focus to the Senate floor, very articulate in explaining what the problems are that families are facing, and he, too, deserves a lot of credit for being a part of the effort to get us to this point and getting the actual bill passed this year.

Finally, I want to thank the White House. I think it is fair to say that there are not a lot of issues in which I find myself on the same side as our President, but this is one of those on which we have worked very well together. I appreciate his staff's good will in working with us to be able to get this done.

This was an important bipartisan effort from top to bottom, and I think we can all be pleased and grateful that we have the opportunity to work together to really get something done. That is what people want us to do. I know our Presiding Officer understands that, that people want us to work together, they want us to understand what is going on in their lives and that it is not just a game, that there are real things that need to be fixed, that we need to solve problems. I know that is why we have come here. The examples today, working together on the Mortgage Debt Forgiveness Act and FHA, are two examples of what happens when we work together.

I am a member of the Agriculture Committee and proudly have worked with our chairman and ranking member and all of the members of the committee to get a farm bill passed, a Food and Energy Security Act that is good for the country, not just for rural America but for all Americans and for our economy.

So this is a day—we have the Department of Defense authorization that was passed—this is a day of good cheer, a day of showing what we can do with the right kind of leadership, and I again thank Senator REID for providing that leadership. He and Senator MCCONNELL, working together on the efforts that we were able to pass today, have made a real difference.

We have, in fact, as it relates to families who find themselves in a very difficult crisis or on the verge of a crisis related to losing their homes, said to them: We not only hear you, but we are going to step up and we are going to help. That is what this bill does. That takes away the tax liability for families. That is what we did earlier today with FHA modernization, and it is a good way to end a very hard-fought week, a very difficult, challenging week, to come together on this Friday to be able to get work done for the American people, and I am very proud we have been able to do that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

#### THE FARM BILL

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I wish to thank the Senator from Michigan for summarizing the important issues we worked on today that help the American people. We are grateful for her work on these issues and her great leadership.

I wish to speak just for a few minutes, probably less than 2 minutes, about the farm bill. It is hard to do that because it is such a massive piece of legislation, but suffice it to say that I think when we came to this Congress a year ago—it was a brandnew Congress—we said we were going to focus on change in a new direction. I think the change we have tried to bring is a change of priorities, really. I think this farm bill is evidence of that. It is also

a bipartisan effort, the whole list of things you have already heard on the specialty crops for States such as Pennsylvania, a brandnew part of the farm bill, whether it is the help that our dairy farmers in Pennsylvania will receive—not nearly enough help; we have more work to do there but certainly some new changes there.

The energy title is so important to create the jobs of the future but also reduce our dependence on foreign sources of energy. The conservation and the reform efforts that were made here are important. To highlight something in the nutrition title in this bill, there is more than \$5 billion of new money for nutrition, so needed by families across America.

So I think we can be very proud, and I wanted to say how much I appreciate the work of the whole Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee. Chairman and Forestry Committee. Chairman TOM HARKIN did a wonderful job. The ranking member, Senator CHAMBLISS, spoke before about Senator CONRAD's contribution as the Budget chair, also sits on our Agriculture Committee. I am grateful that so much work went into this for the people, in my case, of Pennsylvania but also for the people of America.

S-CHIP

Before I turn the microphone over to one of our fellow committee members, and, like the Presiding Officer, a fellow freshman, Senator KLOBUCHAR from Minnesota, who will be coming after me, I want to say one word about the President's veto this week, yet again, the second time, of the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

Once again, he is wrong. Once again, he is going counter to the bipartisan effort in America but especially here in Washington when it comes to parties trying to work together where we could cover 10 million American children. Once again, the President has stepped in front of that.

Unfortunately, in this season of hope, this holiday season, the President has made it much more difficult now to cover 10 million American children. It is a mistake. It is bad for the country. It is certainly bad for those children. But in the long run, it is bad for our future economy. I think the President should talk to members of both parties and try to work something out to get 10 million children in America covered.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

#### SENATE ACTION

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today first to thank my staff for their wonderful work on the farm bill: Hilary Bolea, who is a very smart young woman, who has been working with us in Washington, DC, and then also Dave Frederickson, experienced—he was the former head of the National Farmers Union who came out of retirement to join my staff in Minnesota. They are quite a pair. My favorite