

107TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. CON. RES. 520

Expressing the sense of Congress that the Secretary of Agriculture should reexamine the authorities governing the Conservation Reserve Program and adjust the program to the maximum extent practicable to assist agricultural producers adversely affected by severe drought conditions.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 14, 2002

Mr. GRAVES submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Agriculture

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress that the Secretary of Agriculture should reexamine the authorities governing the Conservation Reserve Program and adjust the program to the maximum extent practicable to assist agricultural producers adversely affected by severe drought conditions.

Whereas the Conservation Reserve Program is the largest environmental program administered by the Department of Agriculture;

Whereas the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture has estimated that the Conservation Reserve Program saves several tons of soil per year, improves water quality through estimated riparian

buffers, and has restored upland bird populations throughout the principal farm States;

Whereas, during 2002, many States with substantial Conservation Reserve Program acres received adequate rainfall during the spring months, but, during the optimum summer growing months for grazing and hay pastures, drought drastically reduced pasture production in these States;

Whereas these extreme weather conditions during the spring and summer of 2002 devastated the economic viability of thousands of farmers and ranchers in the United States, particularly livestock producers;

Whereas, despite experiencing severe drought conditions, many of these farmers and ranchers did not qualify for drought relief under the current Conservation Reserve Program rules due to the large amounts of rain their farms and ranches received during the early spring;

Whereas the Conservation Reserve Program is a valuable forage resource, and the Secretary of Agriculture has substantial authority to administer the Conservation Reserve Program with flexibility to address drought conditions; and

Whereas lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program continue to provide significant forage resources that should be used to assist producers in emergency drought conditions: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
- 2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of Congress that the Sec-
- 3 retary of Agriculture should—

- 1 (1) reevaluate the conditions under which the
2 Conservation Reserve Program is designated to per-
3 mit haying and grazing, taking into consideration
4 rainfall, temperature, crop production, partial county
5 designations, State criteria for disaster relief, and
6 such other relevant factors; and
- 7 (2) review and promulgate new rules and regu-
8 lations regarding the appropriate use and availability
9 of haying and grazing on Conservation Reserve Pro-
10 gram lands to better reflect the needs of farmers
11 and ranchers in times of disaster.

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