

Mr. Speaker, I reluctantly voted against this bill though there is much in it that merits support. However, the benefits accorded to farmers in this bill are disproportionately skewed to large operations, not to smaller-scale, family farms. If people want to step back and provide benefits for small farms, I will be the first to look at ways that we can do that in a cooperative fashion. But this bill is not targeted. We continue to pour unprecedented sums to agriculture without addressing the apparent failure of the so-called 'Freedom to Farm' bill.

Several provisions illustrate the lost opportunities. We missed an opportunity with Cuba in this bill. We successfully trade with China. Why can't we pursue a rational trade policy with Cuba? Cuba trade will hasten the departure of Fidel Castro, leader of one of the last remaining bastions of communism.

There is a rider for the sugar industry buried in this conference report that subverts the reform the 1996 Freedom to Farm bill was supposed to usher in. It will do nothing to change the \$352 million in loan defaults taxpayers are paying this year, no GAO's estimated \$1.9 billion cost of the sugar program to consumers.

As pointed out in an October 1 editorial in the Washington Post, the drug reimportation language in this bill is unlikely to do much to address the problem of affordability of prescription drugs. The five-year time limit on the bill will significantly minimize the effectiveness of this token effort to address the skyrocketing cost of pharmaceuticals. These narrow provisions won't have the impact for our seniors that real solutions to the prescription drug crisis would have.

This bill does not do enough to address the serious problem of hunger in the United States. Even in this time of unprecedented prosperity, many families are hungry. Oregon has one of the highest rates of hunger in the nation. Yet, the conference report provides less funding to food stamp programs, less funding to school breakfast and lunch programs, and less funding to the WIC programs than what was originally allocated in the House and Senate versions of this bill.

We can do better.