

then presented with a choice—either pass the bill or shut down the government.

I have long believed that one of the most important things we can do is fix this process. The way to do that would be to move to a biennial appropriations system. By providing funding for 2 years instead of 1, Congress would immediately make the consideration of regular appropriations measures more likely. Instead of subjecting itself to a nearly perpetual annual cycle of developing and attempting to pass 12 appropriations bills for the next fiscal year, which starts October 1, Congress could spread those bills over 2 years, allowing more time to develop and scrutinize them and give 2 years' worth of planning to everybody.

Not only would a biennial appropriations process help Congress execute its power of the purse, it would also benefit the Federal agencies too. Agencies would have more time to devote to developing and to executing long-term strategies and would finally have some certainty in their budgets.

Nowhere is the need for this more obvious than at the Department of Defense. The Budget Committee has heard repeatedly from Defense Department leaders that the one thing they want more than anything is budgetary certainty. Annual spending fights and the inability to plan under continuing resolutions have wreaked havoc on the Department's workforce and contracting efforts.

Secretary of the Navy Richard Spenser recently delivered public remarks in which he identified \$4 billion in waste due to a lack of financial stability. He said:

Since 2001, we have put \$4 billion in a trash can, poured lighter fluid on top of it, and burned it. It's enough money that it can buy us the additional capacity and capability that we need. Instead, that \$4 billion of taxpayer money has been lost because of inefficiencies [caused by] continuing resolutions.

Transitioning to a biennial appropriations process could help solve that problem.

Last Congress, I introduced legislation that would continue the budget resolution process on an annual cycle in order to allow for top-line adjustments and reconciliation instructions as events warrant but would move toward a bifurcated biennial appropriations process. Under such a proposal, appropriations would continue to be divided among 12 different bills, 6 of which would be adopted in the first session of Congress, and 6 would be adopted in the second session. Maybe we could even make it so the six toughest ones would be done right after an election and the six easier ones, just before an election, to take more of the politics out of it.

By cutting in half the number of bills required to be adopted annually, Congress could create space for itself to devote more time and attention to oversight and other national priorities. If adopted, I believe this proposal would

yield a more sustainable and successful budget and appropriations process—a goal I believe both parties share.

I thank Speaker of the House RYAN for his comments this morning in which he suggested that we should do it on a biennial basis and that they should be divided into two segments of six, each for a 2-year period, so they would stagger how they are approached.

My third suggestion is a minor one but could have some of the most significant impact on the budget. The first one is, change the name of the Budget Committee. People think that we actually make all of those spending decisions. We don't. We set the top line for the Appropriations Committee, which is also improperly named, so they can do their work. My suggestion would be that we stop calling the Budget Committee the Budget Committee and call it the Debt Control Committee. We ought to be and are responsible for seeing how much revenue is coming in and what some of the different allocations are and doing a lot of reviews of that and checking to see what the debt-to-GDP ratio is going to be and how much the debt limit is going to go up, which becomes another subject of debate. If that were the Debt Control Committee, all of that could be done in committee, with one approval here on the floor.

The other half of that suggestion is that the Appropriations Committee ought to be called the Budget Committee because they really are the ones in control of the spending, in control of the budget. In every State in the Nation, the committee that actually does the appropriations is the budget committee. That would stop the flood of people who come in right after the President's budget comes out and before the Senate Budget Committee does their work, where they think they have to come in and ask for the details on their expenditures at that time. If it was the Debt Control Committee, they would have a whole different perspective on what it was that committee is trying to do, and they would take their suggestions to the appropriate committee, which would be the Appropriations Committee, renamed the "Budget Committee" so they would understand what they are doing.

As the Joint Select Committee continues to work, I encourage my colleagues here and in the other body to consider biennial appropriations as a necessary reform. I wish them success in their endeavor.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I rise today to talk about the farm bill. I want to start by thanking Senators ROBERTS and STABENOW for making this farm bill a model of bipartisanship.

I have lived in a community in Newark for the last two-plus decades that most folks would not associate with a

farm bill. The truth is, the issue we are grappling with in this bill affect all of our American communities—suburban, urban, and rural alike.

Folks in my community have borne the burden of horrific environmental injustices for decades—from toxins that poisoned our river, to lead in our soil, to pollutants in the air. Families in my city cannot plant crops in their soil because huge swaths of my city in many areas are toxic. We also have food deserts that exist in communities like mine, where people don't have access to healthy foods.

I have also visited rural areas of our country that endure the same kinds of injustices. I have met families who cannot open their windows because industrial farming operations are spraying waste into the surrounding air. Families can't hang their clothes outside, they can't run their air-conditioning, and they can't plant in their soil because of the way we do factory farming.

The truth is, pollution and environmental degradation at the local scale, in communities like mine and many of the communities I visited, are real for folks all across this country. It is real for rural folks; it is real for urban folks; and it is real for suburban folks. It has caused the same misaligned incentives that are also contributing to the much larger scale problem of climate change. Just like local-scale pollution—toxins—in communities like mine and others, global climate change is very real and cannot be ignored because of its impacts on folks all over our country, particularly on those in vulnerable communities.

So I will take a few moments to talk about these kinds of pollutants and to talk about climate change, which is closely intertwined with issues within the farm bill, even if it doesn't appear to be so at first glance.

The numbers on what is happening to our climate are clear. We know that atmospheric carbon dioxide levels are higher now than they have been at any point in recorded history and that our global carbon emissions are still rising.

Sixteen of the seventeen warmest years on record in history have all occurred in the 21st century, and if nothing changes, we are headed for 3 degrees Celsius of warming by 2100, which would cause catastrophic changes in many parts of the world and in many parts of the United States of America. Hurricanes in the North Atlantic will actually continue to become stronger and more intense and potentially more devastating. Drought and heat waves out West will become ever more frequent, and parts of the southwestern United States could see temperatures above 100 degrees for one-third of the year.

All of the extreme weather will have a dramatic impact on our farmers. Climate change is real for American family farmers even now. Some U.S. crop yields are expected to drop significantly with climate change, and estimates suggest that under a "business

as usual" emissions scenario, yields of wheat and soybeans and corn could fall by 20 to 50 percent by the end of this century.

Just as climate change impacts our agricultural system, our agricultural system also impacts the climate. Although it is often not discussed in the same breath as transportation or power generation, the global agricultural industry is, actually, one of the largest contributors to climate change. Some estimates suggest that up to one-third of our global greenhouse gas emissions come from agriculture, and these numbers are projected to grow and grow and grow as people's diets from around the world continue to change. In fact, as China and India and parts of Africa move to a Western diet, our globe simply cannot sustain that impact. As people shift to our diet, global agricultural emissions are projected to rise another 80 percent by 2050 alone. This is huge. This is unsustainable.

Industrial animal agriculture, in particular, is especially harmful to the climate. This factory farming is having a tremendous impact on our climate. Globally, livestock production alone accounts for nearly 15 percent of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, which is greater than the total greenhouse gas emissions for the entire global transportation sector. It is a fact.

We have all of the tools we need to tackle the dual challenge of climate change and environmental degradation, but in order to solve these problems, we must address the impacts of this consolidating global industrial farming system. This system is having an impact on our climate and environment. The farm bill should find ways to reduce the pollution, to reduce the impact, to reduce the environmentally devastating impact it is having on our country. The 2018 Senate farm bill takes some small steps in the right direction.

The farm bill grows the overall funding for agricultural conservation practices. It encourages farmers to plant cover crops, which improve soil and water quality. The farm bill also helps to drive climate-smart agriculture with several initiatives to keep carbon stored in our soils and in our forests. Yet what we really need is a fundamental shift in some of the major elements of our food system, shifts that, actually, can improve health and well-being and improve our Nation as a whole.

We need to emphasize local farm economies, where food is produced in a way that minimally impacts the environment and, actually, empowers our small- and medium-sized farmers. We also need to grow more of our produce by using organic and regenerative methods.

We need to put limits on the ability of major agricultural corporations, which are growing in size, to consolidate—to merge—and dictate the market. These corporate agricultural insti-

tutions that are growing so large and so powerful are dictating practices that are contrary to our very idea of farming in our country, whereby small- and medium-sized farmers who engage in practices that are more sustainable are being overrun by these large factory farms. We need to protect small family farmers from being squeezed out of business.

I am a New Jersey Senator, but I have been meeting farmers from all over our country who have told me the painful stories of what we are allowing to happen as our country is being gutted out of our traditional farmers by these big agribusinesses.

Consolidation in the agricultural industry is threatening the American farmer. The top four grain companies today control 90 percent of the global grain trade, and just four companies now control 60 percent of the poultry market. While giant agribusinesses are posting record earnings, our farmers—our American farmers—are facing desperate times. A farmer's share of every retail dollar has plummeted from 41 percent in 1950 to, approximately, 15 percent today. Many of these large corporate agricultural companies—some of them are not even American-owned—are continuing to punish America's small farmers by shrinking their margins, driving them out of business, and undermining what is an American way of life.

This consolidation must stop. I am working on a new bill that would help address this challenge, but for the farm bill that is before us, I will speak now about three amendments that I have filed.

First, I will talk about the amendment that Senator LEE and Senator HASSAN and I have filed—a bipartisan amendment that would make much needed reforms to our checkoff programs.

Checkoff programs collect fees which amount to their being a tax on all farmers. They collect these fees from producers of particular agricultural commodities. They are supposed to use these fees that are collected from farmers to promote and do research on that particular commodity. Unfortunately, we have seen some of these checkoff programs plagued by conflicts of interest—people who are engaging in anti-competitive behavior and funneling dollars to trade associations that only represent a sliver of the farmers who are required to pay into the checkoff programs. As one would imagine, those farmers who get the benefit are the big agribusinesses, often to the detriment of our small- and medium-sized farmers. Let me give you some examples.

We know, for example, in 2015, that documents obtained from requests under the Freedom of Information Act showed that the American Egg Board illegally used checkoff dollars to attempt to halt the sales of an egg-free mayonnaise product. Talk about anti-competitive activities.

In 2016, it was discovered that the Oklahoma Beef Council lost 2.6 million

checkoff dollars to embezzlement by a staff member who wrote over 790 fraudulent checks to herself during a 10-year period.

In 2017, it came to light that the USDA had failed for more than 4 years to publish legally required annual financial reports on the \$400 million per year dairy checkoff program.

This year, 2018, a Federal court ruled that the USDA had unlawfully approved the spending of \$60 million of hog farmers' checkoff money on a defunct promotional campaign.

So this amendment I am leading with Senator LEE and Senator HASSAN would make some commonsense reforms to the checkoff program in order to stop these abuses. Frankly, I don't see how anyone could argue against what are very commonsense, moderate reforms to the checkoff program so as to create fairness and transparency and actually stop and prohibit these conflicts of interest. That is what the amendment would do—prohibit conflicts of interest.

The amendment would require more transparency and mandate that the USDA publish budgets and expenditures that the USDA approves.

The amendment would prohibit anti-competitive behavior, such as we saw from the American Egg Board in its attacking of a startup company that it viewed as a threat. The language from the emails was actually stunning—about working to kill a business.

The amendment would prohibit checkoff boards from contracting with entities that engage in ag lobbying. I am one of those people. We have enough lobbyists here in DC, so I hope that this bipartisan amendment to implement commonsense reforms will get a vote and that it will receive the bipartisan support it needs to pass.

There are two other amendments I have filed that I would like to discuss that would help to protect contract farmers. They are the salt of the Earth. These farmers are Americans, many of whom have been on their land for generations, and what is happening now is unacceptable.

The first amendment I am filing to protect contract farmers would prohibit retaliation against these farmers by the large integrators, like Smithfield and Tyson.

As our agricultural markets have become more and more corporate-concentrated, the rights and bargaining power of our family farmers have diminished dramatically. The traditional model of independent farmers selling to independent processors has shifted toward one of contract production, particularly in the livestock and poultry sectors. Farmers now go into debt in excess of \$1 million to help build the facilities on their farms in order to get into this new contract production and often put their farms and their homes up as collateral.

For the majority of contract farmers, the large corporate integrator with which one must contract is either the

only company or one of two companies in a farmer's area. These farmers simply don't have the option of shifting to other buyers. Under these new circumstances of consolidated corporate, major agribusinesses, contract farmers—small farmers, small business people—are left incredibly vulnerable to retaliation by these big corporate agribusinesses. At least one—Smithfield, for example—is not even an American company. It is a Chinese company.

Recently, I had some contract farmers come to my office to meet with me. These farmers were terrified of coming to DC and actually talking to Members of Congress and Senators. They were terrified that the integrators they contract with might find out that they were talking to us and raising legitimate concerns about the abuses they were suffering.

This is the United States of America. We are making our farmers, our small business people, afraid of even talking about the abuses they are suffering from these massive, multinational agricultural corporations. Our contract farmers should not have to live like this. They should not have to be afraid that they will be retaliated against for engaging in lawful activities like speaking with Members of Congress or the USDA or for joining together in producer associations. James Madison's Federalist No. 50 talks about this idea of free association. Yet these contract farmers are afraid of doing that.

The second amendment I am filing to help contract farmers would require transparency in how these large corporate integrators calculate the payments they make to contract farmers. The payment mechanisms that are used by poultry companies and meat packers to pay livestock and poultry farmers are deliberately opaque. It is deliberately difficult to understand how those payments are made. Not only does this lack of transparency make it difficult for farmers to make wise business decisions, but it allows integrators to manipulate the farmers' compensation. It is a practice that is despicable. It is not the free, open, and transparent market we all claim to have in the United States. These are large, concentrated, massive corporations manipulating local contract farmers in our communities for nefarious purposes.

My amendment would simply require poultry companies, swine contractors, and meat packers to provide farmers with the relevant statistical information and data used to calculate their compensation. This is clear. You shouldn't do these things to squeeze or retaliate or pit farmers against each other. These are businesses. Have some transparency about the data so businesses can make sound decisions.

When President Obama left office, the USDA would have proposed rules that would have prohibited this kind of retaliation from these large corporate entities. They would prohibit retaliation by integrating and requiring more

transparency in payments to contract farmers. We were moving in the right direction. Unfortunately, under this administration, when they came in, they killed these GIPSA rules, once again siding with big agribusinesses, some of which are these foreign-owned companies that are coming in and rendering our contract farmers and our small family businesses into what has been compared to sharecropping.

The dignity of these small businesses, the humanity, the American tradition of farming is being eroded and undermined by these massive corporations, many of them foreign-owned. They are attacking our way of life. They are attacking one of the most dignified professions in America, which is small farming. It is outrageous and unacceptable what is going on to contract farmers across our country.

These two amendments would reverse the Trump administration's rollback of these important protections for our small contract farmers. I urge, with all of my heart, my colleagues to support these two amendments to be with the small farmers of America, to be with these people who are now struggling with mortgages and facing bankruptcy, who are now suffering because of these large corporations that are making their lives so difficult, that are undermining what has been the American way for centuries.

I conclude by speaking about the importance of SNAP and SNAP assistance for the food insecure. I was relieved. I actually rejoiced to see that the Senate farm bill does not cut SNAP funding.

In 2014, I voted against the farm bill because it contained more than \$8 billion in cuts to SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. It disproportionately helps people in my State of New Jersey, so the cuts disproportionately impacted my State. The truth is, at a time when we continue to heavily subsidize these large agribusinesses, I say very purposely that there is still corporate welfare in our farm bill. We should not force struggling families, seniors, and disabled citizens, working Americans to make sacrifices they can't afford. At the end of the day, this program aims to feed our country's most vulnerable population, with more than half of SNAP recipients being children and seniors. I repeat that. More than half of SNAP's benefits are for our kids and our elderly.

In my home State of New Jersey, approximately 142,000 senior citizens and 113,000 disabled residents receive SNAP. SNAP helps a cross-section of Americans in all ethnic groups. SNAP helps folks in our cities, towns, suburbs, and rural communities alike, and SNAP feeds our family farmers who too often rely on food assistance to feed themselves and their families while producing the food we eat. The irony of that is unacceptable. SNAP feeds our childcare workers, our healthcare providers, and our veterans. SNAP feeds

those who are in between jobs or who have three jobs and are still struggling to make ends meet.

I am glad to see the Senate bill has rejected the damaging and destructive SNAP cuts in the partisan House farm bill because, the truth is, at a time when over 13 million children in our country—please understand, the children in America, a global, knowledge-based society, the greatest natural resource a country has is not coal, oil or gas, but the genius of our children, and young minds need proper nutrition. At a time when 13 million children in our country face food insecurity, what we need to be doing is funding programs like SNAP—not funding them less but actually funding them more.

SNAP plays a critical role in making sure children are able to focus in a classroom and not be distracted about where their next meal is coming from or the hunger pains they are feeling.

I live in a low-income community. I am a Senator who lives in a community where, according to the last census, the median income is \$14,000 per household. I see my neighbors, working folk, working full-time jobs and still not making ends meet. When I go to my local bodega, I see people use programs like SNAP. God bless America, if we are not going to raise the minimum wage so people who work a full-time job in this country don't have to still live in poverty, we should not be cutting programs that are essential to helping families meet their nutritional needs. I see this at the end of the month when SNAP benefits are running out. One study shows that calories fall by up to 25 percent—the intake of calories for folks on food stamps—from the beginning of the month to the end. Families struggle. Kids struggle when there is less food in the house, when they go to school hungry. What does that do to cultivate that genius?

That is why we should be passing the SNAP for Kids Act of 2018 introduced by my friend and colleague Senator KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND. If we are serious about helping our communities and making sure every child, every adult, every senior citizen has access to their next meal, this legislation is important.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, I would like to talk today for a few minutes about food stamps and the farm bill. Let me preface it by saying, it has been my experience that the American people are the most generous people in the world.

We spend about \$1 trillion of taxpayer money at the Federal, State, and local levels helping our neighbors who are less fortunate than we are. In America—and I am very proud of this—if you are homeless, we will house you. If you are too poor to be sick, we will pay for your doctors. If you are hungry, we will feed you. That separates our country from a lot of other countries