

**Raleigh, N.C.** - *Congressman David Price (D-NC) delivered the following remarks this morning at the annual Farmers' Briefing he hosts with fellow Triangle-area Congressmen Bob Etheridge and Brad Miller. Also speaking at the State Fairgrounds event was House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-MN).*

I look forward to this event every year because it gives us the opportunity to thank you for the work you do and recognize the critical importance of agriculture to our state and our nation.

This is always one of the busiest times of the year in Washington, and given the current economic crisis and the budgetary hole that has opened up over the past 8 years, our work is even more important.

The economic crisis we face now has left us with an unhappy but unavoidable short-term fiscal choice – temporarily increase the deficit with countercyclical spending to help create jobs, or do nothing and watch the deficit grow even worse as revenues plunge and safety net obligations soar.

Inaction is not a credible option, and the bold and necessary recovery package recently signed into law is a vital first step in putting the economy back on sound footing.

President Obama's budget proposal for fiscal year 2010 is another important step towards economic recovery. The detailed budget will be released in April, but hearings are underway already in my Homeland Security appropriations subcommittee and most of the others as well. There certainly isn't any shortage of people and organizations in D.C. these days telling us of their needs and priorities – and I imagine we'll be hearing from some of you as well.

My most direct involvement on agriculture issues is accomplished through this assignment on the Appropriations Committee. With Bob, Brad, and the rest of the delegation, I've worked to secure federal funding for a series of agriculture priorities for our community and state.

A great deal of our appropriations work is focused on N.C. State University, our great land-grant institution. State is a national leader in agricultural research, and the federal government has recognized this by continuing to fund several important research initiatives on campus. The FY 2009 appropriations bill, which will most likely pass in the Senate early this week, includes over 3 million dollars for nine different Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) programs at N.C. State, conducting research on topics ranging from crop pathogens to food fermentation to forest biotechnology.

Researchers at the Animal and Poultry Waste Management Center are leading their field in developing technology for alternative waste management by swine producers. Eventually this research can give us a cleaner environment, meet some of our energy demands, and make money for our state's hog farming industry.

The Plant Science Department is exploring ways to make soybeans, corn, and other crops better suited for our region's climate. Some of their work is genetically identifying and hopefully preventing high-impact diseases that could wreck havoc on crops across a multitude of states.

Other appropriations assistance has gone directly to our state. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture has demonstrated national leadership in protecting our state's agriculture industry from the threat of natural disasters, disease outbreaks, or even terrorist attack. The Multi-Hazard Threat Database in North Carolina is one of the best agriculture security systems in the nation, and I'm glad we've been able to contribute some federal funding to it over the past several years.

Another high-priority funding request for the state builds upon the waste management research being conducted at N.C. State. I'm particularly pleased that we were able to secure a federal contribution to the state fund that will provide technical assistance to producers replacing their lagoons with cleaner, safer, and more environmentally-friendly technology. Lew Fetterman has been a pioneer in demonstrating that such technology is feasible – and it's certainly great to see him here this morning, feeling better and looking well!

And the appropriations process has helped bring locally produced agriculture right to the hearts of many of our cities and towns. Farmers Markets have popped up all around our region of the state, often constructed with federal Economic Development Initiative funds. These EDIs have done exactly what they're designed for: helping to stimulate economic development through actual sales of fresh goods while encouraging visitors to buy from other nearby retailers in the

towns.

Now, you may have noticed that Senator John McCain had some fun last week with one of our NC agricultural projects, \$208,000 I put in the appropriations bill at the request of the Farm Bureau for the federal share of our state's beaver management program. "How does one manage a beaver?" Senator McCain asked – a fairly ignorant question, if I may say so.

This reminds me of the politically turbulent time in 1994, when Rush Limbaugh was regularly mocking funny-sounding agriculture research projects as examples of government waste. I read one of his lists to a group of N.C. State veterinary students when I was speaking to their Senior dinner. No one in the room even cracked a smile! They knew, of course, what the research was about.

There's no indication that Sen. McCain knows anything about the needs for beaver management or how the program is carried out – or that he really wants to know. He merely took a cheap shot at something he thought sounded funny. If he had cared to ask, we could have told him about the \$5 million this program saved last year in potential flood damage to farms, timber lands, roadways, and other infrastructure. We could have told him about the impressive partnership that funds and oversees this program – with federal, state, county, and private landowner participation.

So – there's never a dull moment. Let's continue to work and hope for the day when spending and policy proposals in agriculture – or in any economic sector – are evaluated on their merits and don't become fodder for politicians seeking a laugh or a headline. We have some examples of federal investment we can be proud of in NC, that demonstrate that Washington in its saner moments recognizes the good work you do in our state.

I thank you for that work, I ask for your thoughts and advice as Congress considers issues of concern, and I pledge to you my commitment to North Carolina agriculture when helping formulate our national budgetary priorities.

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