

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Rep. David Price (D-NC) addressed his colleagues in the House of Representatives this evening, calling attention to the dire drought conditions in North Carolina. He pledged to work to include emergency relief for drought-stricken farmers in the next Supplemental Appropriations bill.

View the following video clip of his remarks to the House. His full, prepared speech follows below.

I thank my colleague for yielding. That map [showing severe drought conditions in North Carolina] before us is an all too familiar scene, I'm afraid. We have seen the drought areas growing and growing each week in the newspaper depictions of our weather pattern. It is very, very dry up and down the eastern seaboard. In the Washington, D.C. area, this is a serious situation as well. But my colleague is right; no State has been hit harder than North Carolina. And the devastation started in the western part of the State at first, but has now swept across the State, and we have severe drought conditions in every one of our North Carolina counties. The situation is dire.

The gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. Etheridge) who serves so well on the Agriculture Committee and also the Homeland Security Committee, has done us a service in organizing this Special Order tonight and bringing this serious problem to the attention of our colleagues and to the attention of the country.

If anyone has spent any time at all in the Southeast this summer and fall, it would be difficult for the enormity of the drought not to catch your attention. We see it daily during our time in North Carolina. We are not simply talking about brown suburban lawns or needing to take shorter showers, although both of those are realities. The hot and dry conditions of the past several months have dried up our lakes and killed our crops. They are threatening the water supply of many communities, and they are irreparably damaging this year's agricultural output.

It is that damage to agriculture that brings us here tonight. North Carolina boasts one of the

most diverse arrays of agricultural products in the Nation, yet crop yields in North Carolina and other southeastern States are down across the board. I can't think of a single crop that is not affected.

Last month, following our Governor's recommendation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture designated 85 of North Carolina's 100 counties as disaster areas, and all 85 of these counties have lost at least 35 percent of at least one major crop.

Such losses are not confined to farming in rural areas. They may hit the smallest farming communities the hardest, but they inflict serious pain on the entire economy of an agricultural State like ours. They are felt throughout the country, seriously affecting the Nation's food supply and prices.

This may be a regional drought, a disaster that is centered in the Southeast and in North Carolina in particular, but there is no doubt it is a national problem and that national attention is called for. We need to focus attention on this challenge in this body.

Congressional attention and action are demanded.

That is why we signed a letter to the President requesting that he include disaster assistance in any supplemental appropriations request. I am disappointed that yesterday's request failed to do so. I know my colleague shares that disappointment, and I suspect he has talked about it a good deal tonight already.

I am hopeful that the Appropriations Committee will pay attention to tonight's remarks and understand the scope of this problem and take appropriate action. I am a member of that committee, and I plan to press for disaster relief wherever and whenever it can be achieved. I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Again, I commend my colleague for calling this Special Order and for his dogged persistence in looking out for our farm communities, but also understanding the implications of this disaster for the economy as a whole.

Price Calls Attention to NC's Devastating Drought

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