

**Raleigh, NC** - "Good morning! It is good to see so many familiar faces here today to discuss important agricultural issues.

"I look forward to this breakfast every year because it gives me the opportunity to recognize all of you and the critical contributions you make to the agricultural interests of North Carolina and this nation.

"I believe this is the longest running event of this kind and was started when Representative Ike Andrews represented Wake County.

"And of course, it is hard to ever have a farm breakfast or gathering of any sort in the North Carolina farming community without thinking about Jim Graham. He never missed one of our breakfasts!

"Last year I stood before you and stated that the tobacco buyout was THE most important issue faced by North Carolina growers as well as growers from every other tobacco-producing state.

"Well, I am glad to stand before you today to let you know that we all stood together, we all fought long and hard, and that buyout IS a reality, at long last.

"But there are other battles ahead.

"Some of you know I'm on the House Appropriations Committee, and I bear the scars of more than a few budget battles on Capitol Hill.

"And boy, have we got a big one on the horizon.

"Our guest speaker, who is the Ranking Member on the Committee on Agriculture in the House, will get into the nitty-gritty.

"But in short:

"The Administration wants to make some pretty steep cuts in the programs that affect everyone of us here today.

"Specifically, discretionary budget items would be slashed by 12 percent from last year. There are proposals to reduce mandatory spending as well. That means farm commodity programs, food stamps, rural development, and conservation, to name a few of the areas affected.

"I, for one, am outraged that they would attempt to balance the budget on the backs of North Carolina farmers. It's wrong.

"We could eliminate every penny of discretionary spending – every new highway, every affordable housing program, all the money for our schools – and they STILL we would not be able to balance the budget.

"Why? Because quality programs like the ones you rely on are not the reason why the country's going broke! It's because of misplaced priorities and fiscal irresponsibility, not because of the much-needed support we give to farmers and other critical American programs.

"And that's what brings me to the good news:

"There is some very good work going on right here in the Triangle – work that has a direct impact on our agriculture community.

"In this year's agriculture funding bill, we got increased support for food fermentation (our pickle research - \$370,000), regional grains genotyping (\$630,000), and soybean research – (\$420,000).

"We were also able to continue to secure federal funding through the NRCS to provide technical assistance to farmers on nutrient management (\$450,000) and the Animal and Poultry Waste Management Center (\$470,000).

"And yesterday, my colleagues and I attended a terrific event with the USDA to announce federally-funded initiative to help protect food safety. The Food Safety Research and Response Network, will experts from 17 colleges and universities. The team will study the pathogens that lead to food poisoning, including those associated with agricultural bioterrorism.

"I, for one, am not going to stand for the elimination or cutting of any of these important programs, and I hope you won't either.

"We're going to take the same bipartisan determination that went into this tobacco buyout and fight for the support you need."

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