Lawmakers Struggle to Come Up with Veto-Proof Farm Legislation

WASHINGTON (AP) — Struggling to complete a farm bill that can survive a presidential veto, U.S. lawmakers have sent the White House a sixth extension of farm and nutrition programs. Lawmakers had hoped to finish the legislation this week so a final version could be debated on the House and Senate floor next week. But following a meeting that lasted until early Friday morning, some key issues, including the size of payments to farmers, remained unresolved.

Farm Bill Seen by Many as Food Bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most people call it a farm bill. But it is really more of a food bill. That is even truer this year as U.S. congressional negotiators, spurred by the leader of the House of Representatives, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and other urban lawmakers, move dollars from crop subsidies to food stamps and other programs for feeding the needy.

Suddenly, higher food prices for consumers are a more urgent political issue as the November election approaches than government payments to farmers who are doing pretty well on their own now.

Around two-thirds of an almost $300 billion (€219 billion), five-year bill moving through Congress is devoted to nutrition programs, most of which go to food stamps for the poor. That compares with 55 percent six years ago when a food bill.

Van Buren County Farm Is Preserved

Van Buren County Farm is preserved

by Andy Hughes

Eighty-one acres of land on Map 51 in Paw Paw, owned by Charles Lachman, is the first land parcel in Van Buren County to be preserved for lifetime agricultural use. A dedication of this land took place last Saturday at the Van Buren County Land Preservation Board, together with the landowner of the county's first successful purchase of development rights project. The land will remain private, but development rights are gone.

There was also a special dedication of a new sign created by Lawton High School student Courtenay Cowan, proclaiming the land as "preserved farmland." In addition to farmland, the acreage also includes 10 acres of forest and seven acres of wetlands. The majority of the parcel, however, will be devoted to farming. The forest and wetlands will remain as they are.

One reason why Lachman wanted to preserve his farmland was because of its proximity to Interstate 94. Gorges, fast-food restaurants and other commercial buildings have sprung up near his farm, and he has received more than one generous offer for his land, including offers from Wal-Mart and McDonald's.

Lachman said that he first started to pursue preservation of his land 10 years ago. The land has been in his family since 1965, and he grew up on the farm. It was first purchased by his father, Alvin.

"I'm really excited to preserve this land," he said. "I believe the state of Michigan is interested in preserving contiguous parcels of land. Lachman will try to convince the owner of land adjacent to his property to preserve his land as well.

"I think farmland preservation is crucial," said Michigan State Rep. Tony Schuitmaker (R-District 86), who grew up on a farm. "This farm will forever be a farm for future generations."

"It's something that our children and grandchildren can really enjoy," said Van Buren County Commissioner Don Hannah. "We've protected over 7,000 acres in southwest Michigan and we're pleased that Pete TerLouw of the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy is shepherding this farm into preservation."

My family has spent many hours on this property," Lachman said. "This is a great step for the county and for the state of Michigan."