Efforts to boost the U.S. specialty crops and organic food industries will not come to fruition in a timely manner—thereby threatening America's world leadership positions—if part of the responsibility for research continues to lie within one USDA agency and part in another, with inadequate coordination between the two!

Problems such as the twin (and related) epidemics of obesity and diabetes cannot be overcome with Federal research, education, and extension efforts divided among two USDA agencies (and some 105 land-grant universities) unless the Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics has under his immediate supervision a national program staff that can provide overarching vision, guidance, and leadership for those two agencies.

Madam Speaker, these are only four examples—among dozens that I could have chosen—but they make the case for the comprehensive approach embodied in CREATE–21. They demonstrate that the opportunities and challenges we face demand both an improved organizational structure and enhanced funding.

When the House Committee on Agriculture sits down in the next few weeks to develop the 2007 Farm Bill, I am hopeful that the foundational precepts and specific provisions embodied in the legislation I introduce today will form the basis for the Committee's Research Title. Therefore, I want to take a few minutes to highlight three key provisions:

CREATE–21 will increase planning and implementation across intramural (e.g., ARS and ERS) and extramural (e.g., land-grant) facilities through a single national program staff working directly for the USDA Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics.

CREATE–21 will also establish a new National Institutes for Food and Agriculture (replacing the current Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service) to provide continuing and expanded support to America's land-grant and other universities and related institutions.

Finally, CREATE–21 will double authorized funding for the food, agriculture, and natural resource research, teaching, and extension programs currently administered by Cooperative State Research, Education, and Economics Service in order to address the enormous opportunities and daunting challenges that face the country and the greater global community.

Besides these distinctive elements, CREATE–21 has three other unique attributes:

CREATE–21 will strengthen the land-grant system with its integrated, National network of State Agricultural Experiment Stations, more than 3,000 Cooperative Extension offices, and universities in all 50 states, DC, and the U.S. territories.

CREATE–21 will augment ''integrated'' USDA funding programs so that many more grants which integrate research with extension and/or education are awarded through competitive, peer-reviewed procedures.

Lastly, CREATE–21 will bolster university capacity, especially for the historically black (1890), tribal (1994), insular area, and small 1862 land-grant universities and members of the American Association of State Colleges of Agriculture and Renewable Resources (AASCARR).

In addition to these provisions, the legislation I am introducing today contains many other amendments to USDA research, extension, and teaching statutes, reflecting the best thinking of a broad cross-section of America's land grant community. These provisions include critical updates that will enhance, among other things, the basic programs providing sustenance for the 1890 land-grant institutions and critical food, health, and nutritional information to low-income families and youth through the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. In fact, this legislation addresses ALL of the Farm Bill priorities outlined by the Presidents of the 1890 colleges.

While I support the key tenets of this legislation and am pleased to introduce it in the House, we all recognize that difficult problems require consensus-based solutions and I remain open to suggestions. I look forward to working closely with my colleagues on the Agriculture Committee as we develop a Research Title for the 2007 Farm Bill that truly has at its core mission: ''Creating Research, Extension, and Teaching Excellence for the 21st Century.''

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 21, 2007

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Speaker, on Monday and Tuesday, May 14 and 15, 2007, I was attending to personal family matters in the District. Consequently, I missed Rollcall Votes No. 342, ''To extend the District of Columbia College Access Act;'' No. 343, ''Supporting the Goals and Ideals of a National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims;'' No. 344, ''Recognizing National Americorps Week;'' No. 345, ''American Veterans Disabled for Life Commemorative Coin;'' No. 346, ''Army Specialist Joseph P. Micks Federal Flag Code Amendment Act of 2007;'' No. 347, ''John R. Justice Prosecutors and Defenders Incentive Act of 2007;'' No. 348, ''COPS Improvement Act of 2007;'' and No. 349, ''Safe American Roads Act of 2007.''

If present, I would have voted ''aye'' on all matters.

THE AFFORDABLE GAS PRICE ACT

HON. RON PAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 21, 2007

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce the Affordable Gas Price Act. This legislation reduces gas prices by reforming government polices that artificially inflate the price of gas. As I need not remind my colleagues, the American people are being hard hit by skyrocketing gas prices. In some parts of the country, gas prices have risen to as much as $4 per gallon.

This increase in the price of gas threatens our already fragile economy and diminishes the quality of life for all Americans. One industry that is particularly hard hit is the trucking industry. The effects of high gas prices on the trucking industry will be reflected in increased costs for numerous consumer goods, thus further harming American consumers.

Unfortunately, many proposals to address the problem of higher energy prices involve increasing government interference in the market through policies such as price controls. These big government solutions will, at best, prove ineffective and, at worst, bring back the fuel shortages and gas lines of the seventies.

Instead of expanding government, Congress should repeal federal laws and polices that raise the price of gas, either directly through taxes or indirectly though regulations that. discourage the development of new fuel sources. This is why my legislation repeals the federal moratorium on offshore drilling and allows oil exploration in the ANWR reserve in Alaska. My bill also ensures that the National Environmental Policy Act's environmental impact statement requirement will no longer be used as a tool to force refiners to waste valuable time and capital on nuisance litigation. The Affordable Gas Price Act also provides tax incentives to encourage investment in new refineries.

Federal fuel taxes are a major part of gasoline's cost. The Affordable Gas Price Act suspends the federal gasoline tax any time the average gas prices exceeds $3.00 per gallon. During the suspension, the federal government will have a legal responsibility to ensure the federal highway trust fund remains funded. My bill also raises the amount of mileage reimbursement not subject to taxes, and, during times of high oil prices, provides the same mileage reimbursement benefit to charity and medical organizations as provided to businesses.

Misguided and outdated trade polices are also artificially raising the price of gas. For instance, even though Russia and Kazakhstan allow their citizens the right and opportunity to emigrate, they are still subject to Jackson-Vanik sanctions, even though Jackson-Vanik was a reaction to the Soviet Union's highly restrictive emigration policy. Eliminating Jackson-Vanik's threat of trade-restricting sanctions would increase the United States' access to oil supplies from non-Arab countries. Thus, my bill terminates the application of title IV of the Trade Act of 1974 to Russia and Khazaskin, allowing Americans to enjoy the benefits of free trade with these oil-producing nations.

Finally, the Affordable Gas Price Act creates a federal study on how the abandonment of the gold standard and the adoption of freely floating currencies are affecting the price of oil. It is no coincidence that oil prices first became an issue shortly after President Nixon unilaterally severed the dollar's last connection to gold. The system of fiat money makes consumers vulnerable to inflation and to constant fluctuations in the prices of essential goods such as oil.

In conclusion Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the Affordable Gas Price Act and end government polices that increase the cost of gasoline.

JAY EAGEN'S RETIREMENT

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 21, 2007

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jay Eagen on the occasion of

his retirement from the position of Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of the U.S. House of Representatives, effective May 31, 2007.

For the past 20 years, Jay Eagen has dedicated himself to serving the public through a variety of roles in the House of Representatives. He began his career as a Legislative Assistant in 1982 and a year later was appointed chief of staff to Rep. Steve Gunderson of Wisconsin. In 1985, he joined the office of Rep. Bill Goodling of Pennsylvania first as his chief-of-staff, then as minority and majority staff director of the Committee on Education and the Workforce under Goodling's leadership.

When Republicans assumed the majority in 1994, we were determined to professionalize the operations of the House, many of which currently exist within the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer. In 1997, Jay was chosen to become the CAO. For the past 10 years, Jay Eagen has demonstrated what a commitment to the effective, transparent administration of the House will yield. Once he assumed the role of CAO, Jay quickly established an environment of financial stewardship and responsibility, which would yield eight consecutive ''clean opinions'' on the House's annual financial statements. A considerable achievement considering that previously those records were so poorly kept they could not even be audited.

Although Jay was appointed and sworn in by Speaker Newt Gingrich, he always conducted himself as a steward of the institution, without regard to party or politics. He mastered that rare feat of catering to all Members, while being beholden to none. Members often sought Jay on this very floor to express their feelings on everything from the menu selections in the Members' Dining Room, to the preparations for such historic events as the passing, and subsequent lying in state in the Capitol Rotunda, of Presidents Reagan and Ford. Regardless of whether an ''R'' or ''D'' followed the Member's name, no issue was too large or too small for Jay to attend to. He personally took responsibility for countless requests, and worked with the staff of his organization to find a resolution to each one.

Madam Speaker, in an institution where it is rare for Members on both sides of the aisle to agree, few will dispute the dedication that Jay Eagen has demonstated to this body over the past 20 years. Soon Jay, his wife Cathy, and their son Keiran will leave the Washington, D.C., area for the tranquility of Durango, Colorado. While Jay will likely welcome the change provided by his newly sylvan surroundings, those Members whom he has so capably assisted for these many years will acutely feel the loss of this tireless public servant.

On behalf of the Members and staff of the House, I would like to extend my warmest wishes to Jay and his family in the months and years ahead as they embark upon the next chapter of their lives.

INTRODUCTION OF THE OCEAN AND COASTAL MAPPING INTEGRATION ACT

HON. MADELEINE Z. BORDALLO

OF GUAM

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, May 21, 2007

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, Thomas Jefferson, in 1807, signed into law an Act requiring the President ''to cause a survey to be taken of the coast of the United States . . . together with such other matters as he may deem proper for completing an accurate chart of every part of the coasts.'' The mapping and charting of our coasts and marine waters continues to be an issue of great national importance two hundred years later.

President Jefferson's original intent with that Act was to provide seafarers with nautical charts that would allow for them to safely navigate in the new nation's coastal waters. Since that time, our mapping needs have expanded significantly, and federal agencies have risen to the occasion. Today, at least ten federal agencies conduct mapping and surveying activities to support myriad U.S. interests. Mapping continues, of course, to be done to ensure safe navigation. Understanding the contours of our ocean's floors is imperative for national security. Hydrographic surveys are used to locate and protect cultural resources, such as shipwrecks, and natural formations and other areas worthy of protection. We use them to identify sensitive habitats, and to manage and conserve fishery resources and protected species. Mapping efforts are conducted to identify sources of energy for the country, and to ensure that energy development is done in a way that is compatible with other uses of our oceans, and that protects the natural resources that exist there. Mapping is, in addition, necessary to ensure that ocean observation platforms are sited in a similarly sensitive way.

These ten agencies, along with dozens of private entities, academic institutions, and state and territorial agencies, conduct these activities in a largely, if not entirely, uncoordinated matter. Agencies may use a variety of techniques and spatial frameworks in collecting data and developing products, which leads to incompatibility between data sets and products from one agency to another. One agency is generally unaware of mapping efforts being undertaken by other entities, leading to redundant efforts and unnecessary spending. In addition, these data are not easily accessible, and there exists no central portal through which they can be obtained. The lack of availability means that the public and private sectors both miss out on a significant and useful informational resource.

As you are well aware, the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy released a report at the request of the President recommending actions needed to improve ocean policy in the United States. The work of this Commission, as well as that of the Pew Oceans Commission, is being carried on and championed by the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative. The Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife and Oceans, which I chair, held a hearing on March 29, 2007, to learn of the most pressing problems with our current ocean management system. A recurring theme during this hearing was that the lack of coordination between federal agencies and other levels of government is a serious shortcoming of our current ocean management framework. It is in the spirit of this need for better coordination that I introduce today the Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration Act.

Among the suggestions made by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy was a recommendation that existing federal mapping activities be consolidated and coordinated, and that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) lead this effort. At the same time, the National Research Council (NRC) completed a study to identify the most pressing national needs for coastal mapping and charting. This study, requested by NOAA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the United States Geological Survey (USGS), three of the primary agencies involved in ocean and coastal surveys, identified the same need for coordination. Their findings included a need for a consistent spatial framework, increased access to geospatial data and mapping products, and increased inter- and intra-agency communication, cooperation, and coordination. The bili that I have introduced today is a direct response to these recommendations.

I have already described the myriad reasons for mapping our oceans and coasts. As a resident of the island of Guam, whose Exclusive Economic Zone includes approximately 80,000 square miles of ocean, it is easy for me to understand the urgency of these needs. I recognize, however, that many Americans, especially those that do not live on the coast, may not share a similar appreciation for the need to improve our country's capabilities in this area. For them, I offer a more simple statement of need. And that is, are not the lands that lay beneath our waters as much a part of this country and our resources as those that lie on our highest peaks and in our deepest valleys? We have mapped every plateau, river, and canyon across our landscape, but have very little detailed information on what lies beneath the waters of our Exclusive Economic Zone and the Great Lakes. Where would we be if 200 years ago Thomas Jefferson had not sent Lewis and Clark out to explore the uncharted West? The need for improving our mapping and charting capabilities could be as simple as a desire to fully understand the extent and nature of our resources.

For some, the thirst for knowledge and to learn what lies beneath our waters may not be a compelling argument for seeking to improve our ocean and coastal mapping capabilities. The issue, however, can be further explained and reframed. If the United States Senate were to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, we will have the opportunity to extend our seaward claim to the edge of our continental shelf, where an estimated $1.3 trillion in oil, mineral, and sedentary species resources lie. Without proof of the extent of that shelf, we forgo these claims.

It is in the interest of national and economic security, the advancement of ocean science, the protection of our cultural and natural resources, and safety of navigation to better coordinate the ocean and coastal mapping capabilities of the United States. By passing this Act, Congress will ensure that our mapping and charting needs are met in an efficient and coordinated manner, that ocean science will advance, and that ocean exploration technologies will continue to develop. It is my hope that my colleagues will support this bill and that they will join me in ensuring that federal agencies' mapping and charting capabilities and products are developed and utilized to their full potential.