

## Oklahoman

### **Agriculture Prime Target of Bad Bill**

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**By U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas**

The House Agriculture Committee concluded its first public hearing to review the Waxman-Markey climate change and energy bill (H.R. 2454) on June 11. This was the first time the committee had the opportunity to examine the impact this bill will have on production agriculture and rural America. Unfortunately, this may have been the only time.

It is important to note that there were three witness panels during this hearing, which included Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and representatives from conservation, energy and agriculture-related organizations including the American Farm Bureau Federation. Not one of these individuals endorsed the bill as it reads today. Vilsack said he supported "the notion that there's obviously work yet to be done on this bill."

Even worse, Vilsack admitted that the U.S. Department of Agriculture had not completed any analysis of how this bill will impact farmers and ranchers, but he admitted that "it is fair to say there may be additional costs associated with a farming operation." Vilsack described the bill as a "work in progress."

A 1,000-page bill of this magnitude deserves thoughtful consideration and debate. Yet, we have Speaker Nancy Pelosi ignoring the legislative process and trying to force a "work in progress" through Congress.

This bill has the potential to permanently damage the standard of living for every man, woman and child for decades to come. This is the biggest piece of legislation to impact rural communities in decades and as written, it does not come with an expiration date. And yet, the agriculture committee has held one hearing on it with the speaker of the House insisting this bill be on the House floor for a vote before the Fourth of July recess.

The cap-and-trade part of the bill creates a national energy tax that would do more harm to production agriculture, American industry and our standard of living than it will do any good for the environment. From higher energy costs to lost jobs to higher food prices, cap-and-trade promises to cap our incomes, our livelihoods and our standard of living while it trades away American jobs and opportunities.

Agriculture is a prime target because it is energy intensive. The Heritage Foundation released an economic study on how cap-and-trade will impact farmers. That study revealed that by 2035, the average net income for farmers will decrease by 57 percent. No wonder 100 agriculture and food groups have expressed opposition to the bill with more groups joining the cause every day. They understand that this legislation will destroy their livelihoods.

There are too many unanswered questions for me to support this bill. I cannot support a "work in progress." I cannot support a bill, which despite its magnitude will be pushed through Congress without any respect for the legislative process or for the consequences of our actions. And, I cannot support a bill that will damage an industry that consistently provides America and the world with an abundant and affordable food and fiber supply.

Lucas, R-Cheyenne, represents District 3 in the U.S. House, where he is ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee.

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