

Legislative work presses into fall

Agriculture

Disaster Assistance

Congressman Nunes became a co-sponsor of H.R. 3157, which will provide coordinated disaster assistance to farmers in the event of an agricultural disaster. The proposed law would designate the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a disaster liaison during official disaster declarations. The agriculture disaster liaison office would be established locally on a per case basis, and would be tasked with coordinating communication with farmers during an emergency.

Dairy

Recent United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) actions in the butter market have negatively affected American producers. Last year, more than half of the Dairy Export Incentive Program (DEIP) butter allocations were unused, despite record low farm market prices. Congressman Nunes joined San Joaquin Valley colleagues in a letter to Agriculture Secretary Veneman expressing his concern about the continuation of this policy.

Value-Added Products

The 2002 Farm Bill established funding for the Value-Added Development Product grant program. This program helps farmers access much needed capital for product innovation. Congressman Nunes expressed his support for Diamond of California's application for funding under this program, which will provide seed money for the development

of a snack food product. Diamond proposes marketing the walnuts, produced by its' 1,900 growers, outside of the traditional baking market. The ambitious plan calls for making the new snack nuts available in 80 percent of the nation's retail grocery stores.

The Value-Added Development grant program provides essential capital to cooperatives and enables growers to expand the value of their commodity through new markets. The California and Arizona based cotton cooperative, Calcot, which represents 1,460 growers, has sought funding through this Rural Development Program to enhance the regional identity of their cotton and to vertically integrate production. Congressman Nunes strongly supports this endeavor and sent a support letter to Secretary Veneman on Calcot's behalf.

Jobs

Congressman Nunes sent a letter to all Members of Congress asking them to support H.R. 3142, the Agriculture Job Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act (AgJOBS). This letter invites other Members to become co-sponsors of the legislation that would allow experienced and trusted workers with a significant work history in American agriculture to stay here legally and earn adjustment to legal status. For the long term, the currently broken and cumbersome H2-A legal guest worker program would be overhauled and made more streamlined, practical and secure. This legislation would be an achievable ap-

proach to resolving current problems and preventing a growing crisis that threatens American agriculture, workers, and consumers.

Methyl Bromide

Farmers in the United States have been severely impacted by reductions in the availability of methyl bromide, which is an essential component of U.S. fruit and vegetable production.

Under the provisions of a treaty signed by President Clinton (the Montreal Protocol), the U.S. must petition the United Nations through a critical use exemption process in order to continue using methyl bromide. However, there is no guarantee that our request for authorization to use methyl bromide will be approved. In such a circumstance, American farmers would be subject to enormous losses and our nation's farm economy would be severely damaged.

Congressman Nunes is cosponsoring legislation that will require the Environmental Protection Agency to authorize methyl bromide use at the level requested through the CUE process even if the international organization denies our nation's request. This will allow agricultural commodities from throughout the US, which have gone through a rigorous CUE approval process at the EPA, to continue using methyl bromide after the 2005 phase out.

Appropriations

Transportation

As the Transportation-Treasury Appropriations Conference Committee finalizes their fiscal year 2004 fund-