

Kansas senators vote for disputed farm bill

WASHINGTON (AP)- Both Kansas senators voted for the farm bill on Thursday, despite cuts they say will hurt the state's farmers. The Senate passed the \$290 billion measure with a 81-15, a day after the House approved it on a 318-106 vote.

Both margins are more than enough to override a threatened veto from President Bush. The White House claims the bill sends too much money to wealthy farmers at a time of soaring crop prices. Republicans Pat Roberts and

Sam Brownback said they were disappointed that the measure would cut \$313 million in direct payments over three years and \$5.7 billion out of the crop insurance program.

But they praised the bill for offering tax relief and money for cellulosic ethanol.

Direct payments — subsidies paid to producers of certain crops regardless of yield — are particularly important to wheat and sorghum farmers who face the risk of crop ruin from droughts or freezes.

"In recent years, direct payments and crop insurance have been a lifeline for Kansas farmers and their lenders," Roberts said late Wednesday in remarks on the Senate floor.

Roberts was a member of the conference committee that resolved differences between farm bills passed in the House and Senate.

Brownback called it "a good farm bill" overall. "The positive aspects of this bill outweigh the negative," he said.

The bill contains tax breaks

to help residents of Greensburg, Kan., rebuild after a devastating tornado last year left much of the town in ruins. It also includes \$300 million for payments to support biofuel production like biodiesel and cellulosic ethanol, made from plant matter. And it works to expand broadband Internet service in rural areas.

Overall, the bill boosts nutrition programs like food stamps and emergency food aid for the needy by more than \$10 billion. An additional \$40 billion would go to farm subsidies, while \$30 billion is directed to farm conservation and environmental programs.

The bill also gives the Homeland Security Department authority to approve construction of a new biodefense facility outside of the current location on Plum Island, N.Y. Kansas is one of five states competing to win the new lab, which would bring economic benefits to the state. Current law requires the agriculture secretary to issue a permit to move the lab only if he determines the move to be necessary and in the public's interest.

Local student named governor's scholar

At the invitation of Governor Kathleen Sebelius, Colby High School senior Josh Baden was selected to attend the 25th Annual Governor's Scholars Award Program May 4 in Topeka.

The recognition ceremony honors the top academic one percent of Kansas high school seniors. Scholars are selected from accredited public and private schools in the state.

"These high school seniors have shown dedication in their studies and a commitment to learning. They've earned this honor, and I want to congratulate all of them on this achievement," said Governor Sebelius. "We should also recognize their families, teachers and mentors for helping these out-

standing students achieve their academic goals."

This program is coordinated for the Governor by the Confidence in Kansas Public Education Task Force. It is funded by donations from the Kansas Bankers Association and other private sector businesses in Kansas.

Baden will attend the University of Kansas next year where he will major in computer science and mathematics.



Baden

Correction

An article in Wednesday's edition of the *Colby Free Press* omitted two Thomas County Public Health Department staff members. In addition to Lisa Molstad, administrator; other employees are Connie Walden, registered nurse; Juanita Gatz, advanced registered nurse practitioner; Viviana Garibay, medical records clerk and bilingual receptionist; Laurie Allen, part-time medical billing clerk and Joyce Schroeder, part-time home visitor. Discounted fees at the department are based on a percent of charges scale which is calculated solely from the client's self-declared income, not by presenting a pay stub or income tax statement.

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