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## House approves new Farm Bill by 231-191 margin

### Chairman Peterson provides perspective on the process

By Sara Wyant, Agri-Pulse Editor

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The U.S. House of Representatives passed a new farm bill Friday by a 231-191 margin, representing a carefully crafted compromise with dozens of key interest groups, including specialty crop growers, the nutrition and food aid communities, and the Congressional Black Caucus. Passage came despite a White House veto threat and “no” votes from the majority of House Agriculture Committee Republicans, who vigorously protested the use of what they described as a last minute tax increase --- included to fund new spending initiatives. Despite the partisan divide, most major farm organizations and commodity groups continued to back the Committee’s bill and pushed for passage of H.R. 2419.

For the first time, lawmakers included an historic \$1.6 billion for specialty crop growers and nutrition advocates and provided over \$4 billion more for food stamps, **effectively neutering political support for a reform-oriented challenge by Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI)** Thursday night. The five-year measure continues the structure of most current farm programs, with some upward adjustments in loan rates and target prices, as well as more funding for conservation, nutrition and renewable energy programs.

House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson told A-P he never really thought Congressman Kind had a lot of support for his own amendment, but admitted that by Wednesday, he still needed to shore up votes for the Committee’s bill.

Peterson eventually cut a deal to make additional cuts in crop insurance in order to provide more money for the McGovern/Dole Food Aid program. He also agreed to authorize an additional 340,000 acres for enrollment in the Grasslands Reserve Program. By the very early hours of Thursday morning, Peterson said he was confident about securing enough votes for passage of H.R. 2419.

While heaping praise on Chairman Peterson and other lawmakers for the farm bill, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) strayed from her official floor statement to repeatedly **thank Rep. Kind for his “persistent and brilliant advocacy” and “work over the years,”** while noting that he has moved this Congress and this legislation to a “very important place” that begins to reform farm policy.

Most of the 31 amendments that were allowed to be debated on the floor were defeated or withdrawn. One exception was an amendment by Reps. Barney Frank (D-MA) and Spencer Bachus (R-AL) to strike the bill's language that would have allowed the Farm Credit System to make loans to agribusinesses involved with renewable energy and expanded single-family housing loans in rural communities up to 6,000 populations.

Asked why Peterson, who had stepped off the floor to take a phone call when the amendment came up, did not defend this challenge or even question the vote with a request for a roll call, Peterson said there was a disagreement, rather than a deal cut in advance with Chairman Frank. "It was probably a mistake... because he (Frank) and I didn't have a serious in-depth talk about this issue. When we finally did get engaged...there just wasn't time to talk through it." Plus, he said there was a sense that "the bankers already had the votes."

After the vote, Peterson said they agreed that there would be joint hearings between one of the Banking subcommittees and the Farm Credit Subcommittee, in Washington and probably around the country, looking into the adequacy of credit in rural areas.

Defeat of an amendment offered by Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY) that would have lifted some of the current restrictions on trade with Cuba was a surprise, Peterson explained.

"I expected us to win that vote big," he added in response to a question about 66 members of his own party voting to defeat the amendment.

(See table below for a summary of the roll call votes that were requested and the vote count.)

Although work in the Senate Agriculture Committee is not expected to start until after the August recess, today's outcome will make it difficult for the Senate Agriculture Committee to develop a bill that's substantially different than what we've done, explained Peterson, especially when you consider the broad base of support from so many interest groups.

**"You've got the National Farmers Union and the American Farm Bureau Federation locking hands. That doesn't happen very often,"** he emphasized.

Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) seemed to disagree.

"There are a lot of good features in the House bill and, of course there are others I believe the Senate will improve upon," he said in a statement. **"Most notably, the House bill did serious damage to conservation** and, in doing so, ignored its tremendous value and potential and its strong support from agricultural producers and conservationists. These programs are needed now more than ever because of increased crop production."

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Amendments	Vote Aye	Vote No	Not Voting	Roll Call Votes
On the Rule for H. R. 2419.	222	202	8	<a href="http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll746.xml">http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll746.xml</a>
Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) reform amendment	117	309	11	<a href="http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll747.xml">http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll747.xml</a>
Rep. Sheila Jackson- Lee (D-TX) to reduce juvenile obesity through school lunch programs.	422	3	12	<a href="http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll748.xml">http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll748.xml</a>
Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY) to remove restrictions on trade with Cuba	182	245	10	<a href="http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll749.xml">http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll749.xml</a>
Rep. John Boehner (R-OH) to change calculation for LDPs	153	271	13	<a href="http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll750.xml">http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll750.xml</a>
Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL) to remove changes to the sugar program	144	282	11	<a href="http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll751.xml">http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll751.xml</a>
Rep. Mark Udall ( D-CO) to cut cotton direct payments for more GRP acres	174	251	11	<a href="http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll752.xml">http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll752.xml</a>

Rep. Adam Putnam (R-FL) to eliminate payment caps on conservation	175	252	10	<a href="http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll753.xml">http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll753.xml</a>
Rep. Cooper (TN) to change crop insurance language	175	250	11 (one voting present)	<a href="http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll754.xml">http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll754.xml</a>
Motion to recommit to House Agriculture Committee	198	223	11	<a href="http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll755.xml">http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll755.xml</a>
Final passage of H. R. 2419	231	191	10	<a href="http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll756.xml">http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2007/roll756.xml</a>

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