Today the House passed HR 2419, the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, better known as the Farm Bill. I was one of 106 who voted against the bill, I want to take a moment to let you know exactly what this bill does….all 673 pages of it. Since 1933, Congress has passed some version of a Fa...

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Since 1933, Congress has passed some version of a Farm Bill every couple of years. Unfortunately, all too often U.S. Farm Bills fail to consider the real needs of a responsible Agriculture policy. The real problem farming presents is not persistent poverty, but rather normal yearly income fluctuations. Below you will find several reasons why this is the wrong direction for Farm policy in America.

- This bill continues to subsidize wealthy farmers. All farmer income tests are rejected by this farm bill and affluent will still remain eligible for permanent subsidies. Most of these subsidies will go into large agribusiness interests.

- This Farm Bill waives the Democrat PAYGO rule, which requires any bill affecting mandatory spending or revenue to be deficit neutral. This conference agreement increases spending by $10 billion over the next decade, and $10 billion in gimmicks are also included. Not to mention, this Farm Bill uses the spending from 2007, which allows for more spending than that of the 2008.

- The measure ignores the plight of consumers facing skyrocketing food prices by making a bad sugar program worse. Due to the current policy, sugar prices in the U.S. are twice the worldwide average and cost consumers nearly $1.8 billion last year, according to the GAO]. This Farm Bill will worsen this situation by increasing the sugar loan rate, and by creating a new sugar-to-ethanol mandate that will purchase sugar at inflated prices and sell it to ethanol producers at a substantial discount. This sweet deal for sugar producers will leave a sour taste in the mouths of American taxpayers.

- This Farm Bill creates a new, $3.8-billion Permanent Disaster Relief Program that disproportionately assists those with political clout, not real needs. This duplicates at least three existing crop insurance programs, along with other subsidy programs. This new program also creates incentives for the use of marginal lands that would otherwise not be farmed. To make matters worse, the cost of the program is likely to be double this amount due to a funding cliff that makes a “permanent” program disappear after only 5 years.

- The Farm Bill contains numerous wasteful earmarks. These include a $250-million earmark for land in Montana, an earmark that requires the USDA Forest Service to sell land to a ski resort, and a $170-million earmark for the salmon industry in San Francisco.

- The true cost of the Farm Bill is much higher than the advertised by the conferees. PAYGO gimmickry and special interest tax breaks and earmarks not contemplated within the advertized $10-billion framework push the overall cost to $23 billion over what the current Farm Bill pays for.