

volatility.

“I firmly believe the legislation restores a robust rural economy, invests in America’s farmers, ranchers and foresters, and bolsters every facet of American agriculture, and having seen the widespread support from stakeholders across this country, I believe we have achieved that goal,” Thompson said.

Of the four Texans on the House Agriculture Committee, two voted in favor of the legislation—Reps. Monica De La Cruz and Ronny Jackson—and two voted against it—Reps. Jasmine Crockett and Greg Casar.

“This legislation is not just about supporting our farmers and ranchers. It’s about ensuring security and prosperity of our nation. As I’ve often said, food security is national security,” De La Cruz told the committee.

She said this farm bill provides crucial assistance to our agricultural communities, helping them weather the challenges of predictable weather, fluctuating markets and ever-changing regulations.

“It supports our farmers in producing food and fiber that sustains our nation and feeds the world, but this farm bill is about more than just agriculture,” De La Cruz said. “It also plays a vital role in promoting rural development, conservation efforts and nutrition programs that benefit millions of Americans. It is a comprehensive piece of legislation that touches the lives of every single one of us. This legislation provides stability and support to our rural communities and ensures that our agriculture industry remain strong and competitive.”

Three bills introduced by De La Cruz were included in the House farm bill, including the Texas Agricultural Producers Assistance Act, which would provide relief to farmers and ranchers affected by Mexico’s failure to deliver the water it owes the United States under the 1944 Water Treaty.

“Specifically, it mandates that the Secretary of Agriculture conduct a comprehensive review to catalog all existing U.S. Department of Agriculture authorities and programs that can provide relief to affected Texas farmers and producers in South Texas,” De La Cruz said. “The situation has become so dire that the Rio Grande Valley Sugar Growers (sugar mill) recently closed due to lack of water. This was a loss of over 500 jobs that was caused by Mexico’s failure to deliver on its legal obligations. The Texas Agricultural Producers Assistant Act ensures that struggles of Texas farmers and ranchers are not overlooked.”

De La Cruz’s Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Enhancement Act and the Southern Border Farmers and Ranchers Protection Act were also included in the draft version of the food and farm legislation.

The Cattle Fever Tick Eradication legislation would direct the secretary of agriculture to enter into a contract with a land grant college or university or a non-

land-grant college of agriculture to study the effectiveness of the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program. It also requires a report on any suggestions for improvement to the program.

The Southern Border Farmers and Ranchers Protection Act, co-led by Reps. Henry Cuellar and Tony Gonzales and De La Cruz, would provide farmers and ranchers with the financial and technical support needed to repair agricultural infrastructure and damage to fields along the southern border caused by people crossing Texas’ southern border.

Jackson’s Livestock Indemnity Program Enhancement Act was also included in the House farm bill.

It requires USDA to establish an additional payment rate through the Livestock Indemnity Program to cover the loss of unborn livestock lost due to a natural disaster like the wildfires that swept across the Texas Panhandle earlier this year.

“The current program that’s out there provides payments to livestock producers when they face excessive losses due to natural disaster and certainly this fire that we just had up in the panhandle fits into that category. This bill takes into consideration there were calves involved, as well that were unborn,” Jackson told the TFB Radio Network. “That’s going to be multiple year impact for these ranchers and these cattle producers because obviously they lost those unborn calves as well. This takes into consideration the unborn calves and provides payment for them as well. Otherwise, a lot of these ranchers are going to have a hard time recovering in the years to come because of that extended loss.”

Jackson told the committee he supports the farm bill because it addresses the concerns of the farmers and ranchers in his district.

“The number one issue I hear from my producers in my district when I’m at home is the need to increase reference prices in Title 1. This bill does that,” Jackson said.

He said the agriculture sector is vastly different than it was in 2012, and Congress must pass a farm bill quickly to ensure the farm safety net is providing he needed risk management for farmers and ranchers.

“I’m also proud to see a number of initiatives I led included in this bill,” Jackson said. “One of my largest initiatives in this year’s farm bill is my Foreign Animal Disease Prevention, Surveillance and Rapid Response Act.”

The initiative would make investments to prevent, respond to and mitigate foreign animal diseases.

“The projected cost associated with just one of these foreign animal disease outbreaks would be devastating to our ranchers and our livestock producers,” Jackson said. “For example, foot and mouth disease outbreak would cost nearly \$60 million per day in losses.”

The majority of democrats on the House Ag Committee voted against the committee’s farm



Trip! Residents from Robert Lee Care Center took a trip to the Hummer House in Christoval on Friday, May 17. Those attending enjoyed seeing the amazing little hummingbirds and visiting with former Coke County resident Cathy Brown.

bill, citing concerns with changes to the nutrition title, the removal of climate guardrails on Inflation Reduction Act funding and limits on the Secretary of Agriculture’s use of Climate Commodity Corporation funding.

“Bipartisanship means that we are looking at making sure that those things that are at the core of who we are, and when we say things like we’re fighting for SNAP benefits, I do want to be clear that me fighting for SNAP benefits isn’t about my district. I mean, obviously it is, but at the end of the day, so many members have said, “My district, my district, my district, my district.” When we write a farm bill, it is for everyone in the United States of America,” Crockett told the committee. “Just to clarify, when it comes to SNAP benefits, specifically rural America uses more SNAP benefits than urban America. Right now, I serve an urban district. The majority of my Republican colleagues serve rural districts. So, when I say that I’m fighting for a bill, that includes making sure that people in this country don’t go hungry. I’m not saying that just to say that this is about Texas 30.”

Crockett told the committee the farm bill is about all of us, and she shared that she was able to connect with farmers in her district, and even drive a combine, thanks to TFB.

“Let me be clear, I had a chance to drive a tractor in my district, too,” Crockett said. “I want y’all to know as urban as my district is, I’ve been able to climb up on one, as well. That means that I’ve got farmers in my district as well, and when it comes down to it, I know that the average American who

hasn’t necessarily worked on a farm probably doesn’t realize that you just will a crop and in a day it sprouts up. Instead, they have to make plans. To decide that you’re going to pull this money out of the ecosystem, it’s not just about the people that will go hungry, but it’s also about our farmers and our ranchers and our producers and them being able to adequately prepare for making sure that they can take care of the American people.”

Casar opposed the farm bill, saying it fails small farmers and ranchers and American workers.

“In fact, in today’s 954-page draft bill, the word worker is only mentioned six times, and in none of those instances are they talking about the rights or wellbeing of the people who harvest, process or pack our food for far too little pay,” Casar said.

The House version of the farm bill now awaits consideration on the House floor.

“The main obstacle now is we’ve got to get it to the floor. And that’s where the real challenge is, is gaining the votes on the House floor in order to pass this,” Adams said. “We’ve always had this predicament of some folks think that it doesn’t go far enough and some folks think that it goes too far, and that’s on both sides of the aisle.”

Adams said TFB, its members and leaders will be talking with lawmakers and monitoring the process as the legislation moves forward.

“We have to make sure that during the process that nothing gets watered down as far as strengthening the food safety net, the farm safety net and putting more into crop

insurance and things like reference price updates,” Adams said. “We must have that or we’re going to have to reconsider where we are on the bill.”

However, Adams said he believes Thompson and Boozman will help ensure the true farm safety net provisions, such as reference price increases, will remain intact because of their leadership.

On the Senate side, Sen. Debbie Stabenow, chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, told Brownfield Ag News she awaits Senate Republican’s priorities on the farm bill so they may begin negotiations.

The country is currently operating under a one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill. The extension expires at the end of September.

Adams is optimistic action on the farm bill will be taken before the end of the year.

“I don’t know if it’s going to be Sept. 30, but I think that we could certainly see it done this year. Odd things happened during lame duck, and it’s amazing how quickly things can move in lame duck,” Adams said. “We’re hopeful that we don’t have to worry about doing another extension. Congress needs to roll up their sleeves, work together and get this done. It’s a matter of national food security. It’s a matter of making sure that our farmers and ranchers can continue because they’re really struggling right now. If our farmers and ranchers are struggling and they’re not able to continue, that’s going to put the nutrition side in jeopardy too. I mean, they must have food in order to make the nutrition side viable.”