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SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 8015

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State of Washington                      58th Legislature                      2003 Regular Session

By Senators Sheahan, Hale and Rasmussen

Read first time 02/12/2003. Referred to Committee on Agriculture.

1            TO THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,  
2            AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF  
3            REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
4            UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, AND TO THE HONORABLE ANN M.  
5            VENEMAN, THE SECRETARY OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE:

6            We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of  
7            the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled, respectfully  
8            represent and petition as follows:

9            WHEREAS, Wheat farming is the major industry in many rural regions  
10           of Washington State and thus the health of the industry is inextricably  
11           linked to the economic health of the populations in these rural  
12           regions; and

13           WHEREAS, Approximately one hundred fifty million bushels of wheat  
14           is produced annually on two and one-half million acres by five thousand  
15           farms and generates four hundred fifty million dollars in gross crop  
16           value, placing Washington State third in the nation among wheat  
17           producing states; and

18           WHEREAS, Washington is one of the largest and most heavily reliant  
19           of the wheat exporting states with up to ninety percent of the state's  
20           production being exported each year; and

1       WHEREAS, The wheat production in Washington State is predominantly  
2 by family farm operations that are as efficient and productive as any  
3 growers in the world and that produce the highest quality product  
4 possible; and

5       WHEREAS, Despite being the most efficient producers of the highest  
6 quality product, low prices received by farmers in recent years,  
7 especially for those farmers with loan obligations, have resulted in  
8 the continual erosion in many farmers' net worths and a loss of farming  
9 operations; and

10       WHEREAS, Because prices for wheat in recent years, including funds  
11 from government programs, have frequently been at or below the cost of  
12 production, the wheat farming community is very sensitive to  
13 significant government actions that affect supply and demand and  
14 depress wheat prices; and

15       WHEREAS, The price of the soft white wheat predominately grown in  
16 Washington reached a high in early fall of four dollars and eighty  
17 cents per bushel at the Portland grain terminal but has fallen  
18 dramatically by over one dollar per bushel due to a combination of  
19 factors, including large sales over a short period of time from  
20 federally held grain reserves and the labor dispute causing the  
21 cessation in the shipment of grain at export facilities; and

22       WHEREAS, A bushel of wheat makes forty-two pounds of flour, which  
23 makes sixty-six loaves of bread, and comprises only six cents of the  
24 one dollar and thirty cents average retail price per loaf;

25       NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully pray that new  
26 federal procedures be established to assure that future sales of wheat  
27 stocks from federally held grain reserves be conducted in a manner that  
28 such sales will not unduly disrupt the market while also fulfilling the  
29 original intent of providing for emergency humanitarian food needs in  
30 developing countries.

31       BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately  
32 transmitted to the Honorable George W. Bush, President of the United  
33 States, the Honorable Ann M. Veneman, Secretary of the United States  
34 Department of Agriculture, the President of the United States Senate,  
35 the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and each member of  
36 Congress from the State of Washington.

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