

Adams on Agriculture
Interview with Rep. Roger Marshall
April 13, 2018

Note: This is an unofficial transcript of a discussion with Mike Adams and Rep. Roger Marshall (R., Kansas) from the *Adams on Agriculture* radio program.

Adams: Joining us now we have Kansas Congressman Roger Marshall, a member of the House Ag Committee joining us. Congressman, are you there? Thanks for being with us.

Marshall: Yes. Can you hear me?

Adams: Yes, I can hear you. Hey, I know it's a busy time. You've been on the floor voting. Just your thoughts real quick, because we're going to have to go to a break here, about the farm bill.

Marshall: My thoughts are I'm so proud of what we've gotten done here. It's going to give producers five years of certainty. It's going to take care of crop insurance. There's a lot of great things in this bill. We need to get it passed.

Adams: All right. Can you stay with us a couple minutes, or do you have to go vote again?

Marshall: I'm in good shape. I'll hang on here with you.

[*Break.*]

Adams: Welcome back to AOA, Adams on Agriculture. Our guest is Kansas Congressman Roger Marshall, member of the House Agriculture Committee. Okay, Congressman, Democrats are saying that your proposal will force a lot of people away from the food that they need, that the proposed farm bill takes access to healthy food away from families that need it. What's your response to that?

Marshall: Well, Mike, I think that's fake news. You know, once again, I think that people need to read the entire bill themselves and make their own decisions. There's so many great things in this nutrition title. As a physician, nothing is more important to me that I'm doing in Congress right now than the nutrition title. I certainly do believe that food is health, and I've just [made the] painstaking efforts to make sure that everybody has access to adequate nutrition.

There's some great things in this nutrition bill. Number one, it helps our food banks. I love working with food banks. I'm sure you've got them all across the country with your listeners. They do a great job. Next we're going

to make sure that the elderly have more access to food nutrition as well as children. And I think that those people are the most vulnerable, those on the elderly, and then the young kids and the infants are the most vulnerable. We're going to make sure that young kids have more access to fresh fruits, vegetables and milk, hopefully whole milk, in the near future.

So I think there could be nothing further from the truth. And really, if you think about the big picture, the most important thing we've already done is we have an economy that's heating up. There's literally 50 million jobs that are open across this country right now. The best thing we can do to help anybody in poverty right now is to help them get a job, and that's the goal of this bill.

Adams: Okay, let's get into that because this is another point of contention when it comes to worker requirements, and some are saying that should not be part of this, that's why food is not going to be available to the people who need it. What are you talking about here when you're talking about work requirements for food stamp recipients?

Marshall: All right, Mike, let me see if I can explain to you, first of all, the parameters we're talking about. What we're requesting, what we want to see happen is if you're a person between the ages of 18 and 59, if you're not pregnant, if you're not disabled, if you don't have a child under the age of six at home, you should be either working or else getting training for work. And if you don't have access to training, we're going to set that up for you. We're going to pay for it and help you out.

We want to help move you from poverty to work. We want to move you from welfare to work. And we think this has been successfully piloted in Kansas. We've seen some great results. I think Maine has seen great results. I think one of the greatest things we can do for a person is to help them find a job to start a new career, a job that brings value to themselves, value to their family, and value to their community. And my personal opinion is people that have a good job, a great career are healthier people and they're happier people.

Adams: Okay. Have you heard from the grocers? Are they concerned about this, that they would actually lose business at grocery stores across the country?

Marshall: You know, I've not heard that. And it doesn't make any sense to me. I think as people, as we help people get jobs, they're going to have more income, way more income than what food stamps can provide them, what [TANF] provides. In Kansas we saw that people that had work requirements really had doubled their income, more than [doubled] their income in a year's [worth] of starting them back on a path into the workforce. So the net outcome for grocery stores is going to be better.

As the economy improves, more people will be buying beef, which is really good for Kansas agriculture producers. So I've not heard that one bit. But if I do, that's what I'm going to tell them. The best thing we can do for the grocery stores, like most businesses, is improve the economy and help people get a job. If you're on welfare and we can move you into work, they'll be spending more money on groceries than the food stamps were getting them.

Adams: Okay, so let's just kind of... I want to make sure I understand this because the criticism is that these cuts or these changes, the proposals that you have in the farm bill, would cut SNAP participation by as many as one million people over the next ten years. But you're saying if you're moving them from the SNAP program and into a job where they actually buy the food, then that's a positive, whereas those who oppose this are pushing this as a negative.

Marshall: Absolutely. We have a total difference in philosophy of life. How do we measure success when it comes to people on welfare? I think we measure success by how many people we move from welfare into work that's providing for themselves and their families. They're going to be mentally healthier, they're going to have better access to food, so I think that's a great thing. Instead of measuring success [on] welfare or food stamps or how many people are on food stamps. How in the world could that be a good measure?

As this economy continues to improve—and we've had three quarters in a row now of 3% GDP growth, record unemployment, for like 17 years the lowest unemployment in our country's history, a great time to get a job. I think [how] we measure success is how many families that we move from welfare to work should be the measure of success, not how many people we kept in poverty, drowning them, every time they lift their head above the water, drowning them back into poverty.

And I think that's just a big philosophical difference, unfortunately, between Nancy Pelosi and the Congress. On the House side, on the Republican side of the Congress we want to help people get a job. We want to help teach people to fish as well as give them fish. Let's give fish to those who really need it, but also help teach people how to fish.

Adams: Talking with Kansas Congressman Roger Marshall. Now beyond the nutrition title, is there agreement? Is there bipartisan agreement for the rest of the bill? I know you're making some changes in conservation. Tell us about some of those changes and what you're hearing on the other side of the aisle. Do you have support?

Marshall: Right. I really think this whole bill has bipartisan fingerprints all over it. You know, it wasn't until two weeks ago that the Democrats started walking away from this bill. Suddenly it's politically driven, not policy driven. And

you don't know me very well, but I'm not the person that wears my Republican red color on my shirt sleeve. I wear it in my conservative heart. But there are bipartisan fingerprints all over this bill.

I think that number one is it gives people five years of certainty. If there's one thing I know about business it is we hate uncertainty, so this bill does that for five years. Number two, it provides crop insurance, it maintains crop insurance. The whole bill overall is budget neutral. To talk about your conservation practices and then CRP, those types of things, we've worked very hard. We've listened a lot. We found that people really think the EQIP is working well, so we've doubled that funding for EQIP and we're trying to prioritize what acres, what type of cropland should go into CRP.

So I think that this is very much a bipartisan approach. And by the way, this is not over with. We have to submit a bill. We're going to put this bill on the floor on the House committee next week, and then it'll go for the floor. And there's opportunity to improve the bill at every step of the way. So I think it's 90% there, but I bet that we'll find some ways to make it even better.

Adams: Yeah, you've got markups starting next week. There no doubt will be some amendments offered. As you said, there's still a ways to go on this before you even get it to a floor vote.

Marshall: Yeah, absolutely. And it's hard for me to predict exactly what's going to happen there in committee. I would be happy—I'm pretty happy with this bill as it is. Nobody's going to get everything. But I would tell you we had over 70 town halls in my state. We've had over 120 hearings up here in D.C. We did six national hearings as well. We've listened and listened. And I think that this bill is pretty good for everybody. Again, no one's going to get everything they want, but I think that at least as far as Kansas agriculture goes, we may have gotten 95, 98% of what we were asking for.

Adams: When you look at it, if you're a farmer, and not that a farmer doesn't think these other nutrition programs are important, I'm not saying that, I'm just saying there's a lot at risk here as far as crop insurance and conservation programs and ARC, PLC. If all that is at risk because of the differences on nutrition, the fear is the whole thing goes down or we don't get a new farm bill because of that one issue.

Marshall: Absolutely. And I think that's what Democrats have to answer when they go back to their district. And there's very few districts in this country that are not impacted by agriculture. So you're going to go—can you imagine trying to go back to the producers in your district and say you voted against a farm bill, you voted against five years of certainty, you voted against five years of improving ARC and PLC programs, you voted against five years of funding for crop insurance because the Republicans wanted to take—to ask people, to encourage people who could work to go work, and if you couldn't work,

then we'll get you training. How can you ever justify that to your base, to your constituents? It just doesn't make any sense at all.

Adams: Well, it just sounds like it comes down to a philosophical difference on this issue of, you know, on the nutrition title who gets food stamps, or how you determine who gets them and qualifies for them, and whether or not you view moving them into efforts to get them employed rather than just keep them on the food stamp roll.

Marshall: Yeah, I think that's basically right. And I think that sometimes these issues get blown up out of proportion. When we were doing our tax cuts and jobs bill, two weeks before that bill was passed you would have thought that the sky was falling and it was never going to happen. But we were able to push it through the finish line. Even on the House side we were able to push through our repeal and replace bill for Obamacare. So maybe this bill was about where those two bills were two weeks before they were voted on.

So this is to be expected. Nobody would have ever expected us to roll out a bill today and everybody be happy with it. Everybody's posturing, everybody's trying to get one more little piece of this pie for their constituents or for their philosophy. But I would think that if you would push a Democrat or a Republican, they would all say this is about 90 or 95% there. And surely to goodness we can figure out these differences. And if we don't, then whose shoulders is that going to rest upon?

And right now the Democrats and Nancy Pelosi have walked away from the negotiating table. They literally walked away and have not spoken to our chairman for over two weeks rather than talking about, well, what would you do with the food nutrition supplements, what can we do to make it better? They said that this is a non-negotiated issue. This has Nancy Pelosi's fingerprints all over it at this time. They've made this totally political. But we'll get through it. We'll overcome her political bias in order to get this done.

Adams: Congressman, thank you for your time, and we'll talk again as this process continues. Thank you very much.

Marshall: We look forward to it. Thanks for having me on.

Adams: All right. Kansas Congressman Roger Marshall.

[End of recording.]