Marcy Kaptur
U.S. Congresswoman

Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, who represents the Toledo area’s Ninth Congressional District in Northwest Ohio, is currently serving her eleventh term in the U.S. House of Representatives and has just successfully run for another term of office. She is the senior-most Democratic woman in Congress and ranks as the senior Democratic woman on the exclusive House Appropriations Committee. Her district includes Lorain County which is part of the Western Reserve.

Trained as a city and regional planner, she practiced 15 years in Toledo and throughout the United States before seeking office. While pursuing a doctorate in urban planning and development finance at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, she was recruited by her local Party to run for office.

In addition to the House Appropriations Committee, Representative Kaptur serves on subcommittees on Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, Environmental Protection, Veterans, NASA and the National Science Foundation.

In July of 2004, Congresswoman Kaptur offered an amendment to the 2004 Farm Bill which authorized a Farmers Market Promotion Program without funding, to provide $6 million of funding for that program. Included here is the text of her testimony and response from Congress. Her message delivers many important facts about small scale farming in Ohio.
AMENDMENT OFFERED BY MS. KAPTUR

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment offered by Ms. Kaptur:

Add at the end (before the short title), the following new section:

SEC. 7__. The amounts otherwise provided by this Act are revised by reducing the amount made available under title I for "OFFICE OF THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER" and by increasing the amounts made available under title I for "MARKETING SERVICES" under the heading "AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE" (for the Farmers Market Promotion Program and administrative expenses related to such program), by $6,000,000 and $6,000,000, respectively.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the order of the House of today, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. Kaptur) and a Member opposed will each control 10 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. Kaptur).

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, the farm bill established for the first time the Farmers Market Promotion Program to expand and promote our farmers markets around the country, to help farmers increase their sales at roadside stands and community-supported farmers markets across this country.

My proposal would take $6 million from the Chief Information Officer's account and put it in this program. Though authorized by the farm bill, there were no funds appropriated to this account that were in the bill that cleared the subcommittee.

What this program does, it would give additional traction to farmers who are farming especially around our large urban areas to earn money from the market place rather than from subsidy programs. It is a direct-marketing program. None of the dollars in this measure go to buildings and so forth. And it is really aimed at those farmers that are trying to hang on and earn money from the market place.

The average age of farmers in our country is now about 58 years old. This is a very small amount of money coming out of a bill that is over $80 billion, but really it has so much effect. If you go up here just on the street on the Mall and you look at the farmers market that operates outside the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the roadside stands that exist in many of the communities in which we live, or I was talking to the gentlewoman
from New York (Ms. Velázquez) and on the Lower East Side of Manhattan this weekend, farmers were able to bring their product there and have a real opportunity to market in a very high-priced part of the United States where there is a lot of the poverty.

This program is aimed at expanding those types of efforts and connecting the farm to the town, helping our farmers move their diversified product. And many of these farmers are not on any subsidy program. They raise vegetables. They raise fruits. They process the product. They bring them to the farmers market. This would really help them to expand their ability to market.

So we just basically move funds inside the bill from the administrative account of the Chief Information Officer, and we put it over in the account that deals with this farmers market program that was established in the new farm bill.

When Secretary Veneman spoke at the opening of the USDA Farmers Market just a little more than 2 weeks ago, she talked about how farmers were gravitating to farmers markets and trying more sophisticated ways to market their products because of the difficulties that are being faced in the general market place itself as it becomes more difficult for small entrepreneurs, small business people to move their product to market. So we know that the need is great.

The 2002 Census of Agriculture showed a 37 percent increase just since 1997 in direct sales to consumers. And we know that the interest is there. We know our farmers need a lot of help in marketing. Most farmers, if you ask them what is the worst thing they do, they say it is market simply because they spend all their time growing, all their time picking and displaying, and it is hard for them to move product to market. This is something that will make a difference immediately.

It will also help farmers avoid the slotting fees that they have to pay if they are asked to show in a supermarket. They cannot afford $50,000 or $25,000 to put their product right on the shelf. It gives them an alternate direct-marketing opportunity.

I would ask the Members for their support of this very worthy program, to give life to the farmers marketing program that was authorized in the new farm bill.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. Bonilla) is recognized for 10 minutes.

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, the gentlewoman has already voted to zero out the agriculture buildings and facilities account. Cutting the CIO account would result in a direct loss of Federal
jobs. The amendment for farmers markets would result in an increase of $5.2 million, or a 600 percent increase.

The minority views in this report highlight a lot of funding shortfalls; and we have been reviewing them, not just today, but since they have arrived when they were completed. Not one of the amendments that has been offered today attempts to put money in any of the programs that were highlighted in the minority views. In fact, this amendment adds money to a newly authorized program.

I oppose this amendment and I ask that all Members who care about this bill oppose it as well. This is, again, somewhat of a flailing to try to put money into this program when, again, we find it interesting that many of the views expressed by the minority on this bill, none of those were addressed but yet there is an attempt to put money into this program.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, in closing today, I would just like to ask the Members of this House to think about the communities that they represent, how many farmers markets, how many potential farmers markets, how many roadside stands could be helped by additional marketing authority. We are not taking or creating any new money here. We are just moving money from an information account to a direct-market account for farmers to put income in their pockets through direct marketing of their own product, made and grown and harvested with their own hard labor. And I am always proud to stand up on behalf of the farmers of our country and try to help them find new ways to the market.
any area fortunate enough to have such a market at its core--will benefit from the economic ripples that will flow through their communities.

I have seen the boon these farmers' markets bring at first hand. For many years, the Rochester Public Market in my New York district has both benefited farmers in the adjacent counties while it has become a true gathering place for all our citizens. It's just the place to go--and with good reason. Who doesn't thrill when the first local tomatoes appear, or delight in the smell of fresh basil while buying just-picked corn that will go to the dinner table the same day? And that's just from the consumer's point of view. For our Monroe County farmers, it represents a fast and dependable way to move their goods to market productively without the otherwise inevitable middlemen.

In Buffalo, I have recently spearheaded a similar project on the East Side of the city, which is in dire need of economic stimulus such as this. In April, Congresswoman KAPTUR came to the announcement of a major overhaul of the country's oldest public market, which is now in need of revitalization--the Broadway Market. She, along with New York State Agriculture Market officials, Buffalo and Erie County officials, and agriculture leaders helped brainstorm ways we can return the Market to its former glory. We want it to become the finest farmer's market in the state--and after such a fine start, I'm sure it will. The farmers of Erie, Orleans, and Niagara Counties will reap the financial harvest.

This Farmer's Market Amendment would provide $6 million to help other communities initiate worthwhile projects like the Buffalo Market by providing the seed money necessary for them to blossom and grow. That is exactly what the Agriculture Appropriations bill should be doing across the country, and why I hope my colleagues will join me in a favorable vote.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the KAPTUR amendment to provide a modest $6 million in funding for the Farmers' Market Promotion Program. This program was established by the Farm Bill to make grants to cooperatives, nonprofits, local governments, economic development corporations and regional farmers' market authorities for projects to establish, expand, and promote farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture programs. Unfortunately, the program has never been funded.

At a time when we spend billions on programs that primarily assist large agribusinesses, Congress needs to reaffirm its commitment to help farmers most in need of assistance. This relatively small investment in the Farmers' Market Promotion Program will produce economic benefits to small farmers and local communities that far exceed the $6 million investment we are proposing in this amendment.

Farmers' markets are essential sources of income for thousands of small farmers. They provide farmers with direct access to consumers, and, in many instances, all of the small farmer's income comes from sales at farmers' markets. In a USDA survey of 772 farmers' markets, over 6,000 farmers said they sell their products only at farmers' markets.
Mr. Chairman, consumers also benefit from farmers' markets. Consumer demand for locally grown food produced by small farmers is on the rise. For safe, nutritious food, Americans place more trust in smaller scale farms. According to a recent national consumer survey, seven in ten Americans said smaller scale family farms are more likely than large farms to use techniques that won't hurt the environment.

Farmers' markets also help promote nutrition education, wholesome eating habits, and better food preparation, as well as boost the local community's economy. Many urban communities where fresh, nutritious foods are scarce gain easy access to quality foods at fair prices.

Consumers also have the opportunity to personally interact with the farmer who grows the produce. I enjoy spending Saturdays shopping at the farmers' markets in my district and interacting with the farmers. I know many of my colleagues have similar positive experiences at markets in their district.

The sights and smells of fresh produce, a conversation with a local farmer about the weather and growing techniques--these experiences make shopping at farmers' markets such a unique and enjoyable experience.

I urge my colleagues to support the Kaptur amendment to provide a modest but important investment in the Farmers' Market Promotion Program. Let's take this opportunity to help family farmers and consumers.

- [End Insert]

Mr. BONILLA. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. Kaptur).
The question was taken; and the Chairman announced that the noes appeared to have it.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Chairman, I demand a recorded vote.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to clause 6 of rule XVIII, further proceedings on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. Kaptur) will be postponed.