

(Washington, DC) - Congressman Herger today released the following statement regarding H.R. 2419, the Farm Bill Extension Act of 2007, after House Democrats upended the bipartisan nature of the bill by inserting a \$6 billion tax increase at the last minute:

"Northern California is one of the most productive and diverse agriculture areas in America. We are the second largest rice growing region in the nation and grow almost sixty percent of the world's dried plums. Our farmers are national leaders in almond and walnut production as well. Beef, dairy, peaches, and olives are also grown in our 10-county area.

"The 2007 Farm Bill recognizes this diversity. The bipartisan bill passed unanimously by the House Agriculture Committee maintains the safety net program for rice, provides unprecedented support for specialty crops, and makes investments in water quality and water use efficiency for Sacramento Valley and Klamath Basin growers. It was a good compromise that I was looking forward to supporting on the House floor.

"The bill enjoyed the unanimous support of Republicans and Democrats when it was passed out of committee late last week. Unfortunately, the Democrat leadership in Congress attached a controversial \$6 billion tax increase to this bill just hours before it was scheduled to be debated on the House floor. Keeping taxes low on American families and small businesses is one of the most important principles I stand for, and we cannot set this bedrock principle aside to move the Farm Bill forward. Tax increases will only hurt our competitiveness and our economy.

"The Farm Bill is traditionally a very bipartisan process. The 2002 Farm Bill passed the House 291-120. Almost equal numbers of Republicans (151) and Democrats (139) supported this bill. But regrettably, today's eleventh hour tax increase maneuver has driven a partisan wedge into a normally bipartisan effort, generating opposition from the Republican ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee and virtually all of the Republican members of the committee. This development is unprecedented in Farm Bill history, and has tainted what is otherwise a very promising and important piece of legislation.

"Good farm policy shouldn't be held hostage to irresponsible tax policy. For this reason, I opposed this legislation and will work to rekindle the bipartisanship that normally exists when Congress writes the Farm Bill. Our nation's farmers and ranchers deserve this kind of cooperation and I pledge to do everything I can to achieve that."