WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Sen. Bill Armstrong (R-Colo.) has urged Members of the House Agriculture Committee to act quickly on the "sodbuster bill," which would deny federal subsidies to speculators who plow up fragile grasslands.

In a letter to the House Agriculture Committee Members, Armstrong called for a speedy passage of his legislation to "stop subsidizing the sodbusters."

Armstrong introduced the bill, S. 663 in the Senate more than two years ago. The Senate passed the measure unanimously before adjourning in December, 1983. Armstrong, in writing to the House Committee Members, said the bill is of "vital importance" in the effort to stop the destruction of fragile lands.

"I was delighted that the Senate passed the bill, but the victory will be short-lived if this spring's plowing destroys thousands more acres of fragile lands without the House having acted on the bill," Armstrong said.

Pointing out that more than 500,000 acres of fragile grasslands have been put to the plow in Colorado alone since the bill was introduced in 1981, Armstrong said, "We simply cannot afford to delay any longer enactment of this important bill."

There are at least three versions of the sodbuster legislation pending in the House Committee, including S. 663, and hearings have been held several times.