



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 104th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 142

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, JULY 11, 1996

No. 102

Senate

The Senate met at 9 a.m., and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Gracious God, show us enough of our real selves to expose our false pride and enough of Your grace to overcome our self-sufficiency. When we are tempted, fortify us with Your strength. Give us keen intellect to listen for Your voice in every difficulty. Be with us on the mountain peaks of success to remind us that You are the source of our talents and gifts and in the deep valleys of discouragement to help us receive Your courage to press on. You are our light. We were not meant to walk in darkness of fear or uncertainty. We trust You to use all of the victories and defeats of life to bring us closer to You.

Bless the women and men of this Senate that, laying aside the divisions of party spirit, they may be united in heart and mind to serve You together. May debate be a quest for greater truth and may the will simply to win arguments be replaced by the greater purpose of working together to discover and do what is best for our Nation. May a new team spirit overcome our separatism and may oneness in You make us loyal to one another as fellow Americans. In our Lord's name. Amen.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, this morning there will be a period of morning business until the hour of 10 a.m., with Senator DASCHLE in control of the first 40 minutes and Senator COVERDELL in control of the remaining 20

minutes. At 10 a.m., the Senate will begin consideration of S. 1864, the Department of Defense appropriations bill. Amendments are expected to that appropriations bill. Therefore, all Senators can expect rollcalls throughout today's session. I anticipate that the Senate may be in session into the evening in order to make progress on the Defense appropriations bill. Senators should plan their schedules accordingly.

Mr. President, I note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GREGG). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair would note that under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 10 a.m. Under that order, 40 minutes shall be under the control of the Democratic leader and 20 minutes under the control of the Senator from Georgia.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I am going to begin a brief discussion along with two of my colleagues who will appear shortly, Senator BREAU from Louisiana and Senator ROCKEFELLER from West Virginia, on what we have called the families-first agenda that we

developed to lay out what we think we would like to accomplish in the months ahead and also in this and the following Congress.

Before I do that, however, I wanted to share with my colleagues something that I will share at greater length at a later time.

Yesterday, we voted on the minimum wage. There has been a lot of discussion back and forth on the issue of the minimum wage, and the opposition to the minimum wage from some is that it will cost jobs; from others, that there ought not be a minimum wage.

There has been a lot of controversy about it. The Congress I think in its good judgment decided after about 7 years that another adjustment should be made; the last adjustment was made in the latter part of 1989. But we will still have some discussion about it because there needs to be a conference and, I expect, more debate in the Chamber about the minimum wage.

Last evening, I found something that I want to share with my colleagues which I think contributes to the debate some. It is a piece written by Edward Filene. Some will remember, especially in Massachusetts and others around the country, the name Filene because Filene is the name that is attached to department stores, Filene's Basement among others.

Edward Filene, September 1923, a businessman of some significance at that time, wrote the following. And this is only the last paragraph. I intend to share this at greater length with my colleagues at a different time.

"The Minimum Wage," Edward Filene says in 1923.

In this connection, I will call attention to a result which cannot be ignored—to the man who has produced the best commodity for the price of its kind in the world, produced in quantities never before dreamed of

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

S7679

and produced it so cheap that it can be sold in competition with the cheap labor of Europe—so cheap, indeed, that no country can make it to compete with him. I refer to Henry Ford. He has produced twelve hundred thousand automobiles a year—eight a minute—has financed his whole business from the profits, and has become the richest man in the world. And the minimum wage he pays is so high that if it were proposed in Massachusetts, those who advocated it would be set down as crazy. Even at his high minimum wage, he has been able to employ the lame, the crippled, the blind of the community not as a charity but at a profit. The statistics in his autobiography covering these facts are amazing. The demonstration of the possibility of the minimum wage speaks louder than my words and I hope it may be borne in mind in any decision of the minimum wage question.

This was September 1923, by Edward Filene, a businessman of some significance, then. I wanted to share this, which I think is a wonderful piece about the minimum wage written some 70 years ago, but I think it is still relevant today with respect to the questions that we face.

FAMILIES-FIRST AGENDA

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about the agenda. We discussed it some yesterday. I want to discuss it additionally today. Senator REID, from Nevada, and myself were asked by the Democratic leader to begin work with our caucus to develop an agenda. It is easy to discern quickly in this Chamber what someone stands against, what someone opposes, what a party opposes. That takes very little skill, to oppose anything. It takes very little skill to be negative. So the political system and the give-and-take of politics has those who are proposing things and those who are opposing them.

Again, it is easy to discern quickly who opposes what. The question, however, for us in our country, is not what do we oppose; the question is, really, what do we support? What is it that we believe can be done to advance the interests of this country?

As I indicated yesterday, the standard by which we ought to judge that is, at the end of the day, have we done things in this country, in the public and private sector, to increase the standard of living in America? Do we have people who have an opportunity for better jobs at better pay? Are their children going to better schools? Are we driving on better roads? Are we able to acquire better products?

The most important ingredient in all of that, the thing that is the linchpin of opportunity, is: Do we have an economy that is growing? Do we have an economy that is producing new jobs and is capable of producing new jobs at a decent income at a sufficient pace to keep abreast of the increase in population and to keep the American people understanding there is an opportunity and hope ahead?

As I begin discussing the families-first agenda that we have put together,

let me say the first and most important element of what we stand for as Democrats is economic opportunity and economic growth. It is the legacy of the Democratic Party. We have been the party that pushes insistently to expand this country's economy and therefore expand opportunities, not just for some, but for all in America.

I must say, my own view of the current economic situation is, while this administration has done a remarkable job in a range of areas, it has not had the kind of cooperation I would like to see from those who construct monetary policy at the Federal Reserve Board. It certainly has not seen much cooperation from Wall Street.

We have, it seems to me, an economic strategy, especially in the area of monetary policy, that shortchanges our country today. As Mr. Rohaytn from New York says, the minute you get some prevailing wind, we see a Federal Reserve Board decide to drop anchor.

It makes no sense to create a false choice, saying we must choose between either inflation or growth. It makes no sense to believe if we have decent growth that provides decent expansion and therefore more jobs at better income, that we will necessarily stoke the fires of inflation. That is nonsense. Inflation is down. It has been coming down 5 years in a row. If you believe Mr. Greenspan, that the CPI overstates inflation by a percent and a half, then you have to conclude there is almost no inflation in America today. If that is the case, why do we see this rate of economic growth targeted at an artificially low rate, which means the false choice is answered, by those who provide answers, that we will continue to fight an inflation that does not exist? The cost of fighting that inflation will be lost opportunity for American families and lost jobs and a less bright economic future.

I am going to talk about the families-first agenda, but I will come to the floor and talk about this at some length. Last week, what did we see? We saw a news report at the end of last week that said unemployment is going down again, unemployment has dropped. What did Wall Street do? What did the bond market do? What did the stock market do? It had an apoplectic seizure. Good economic news for Wall Street means bad times.

What on Earth is going on? Is there a cultural divide here somewhere, that good economic news, good news for American families, creates seizures on Wall Street? Do they not connect with this country at all? Dropping unemployment is good news. When unemployment goes down, you would expect people on Wall Street to celebrate a bit. When economic growth rates are up, you would expect Wall Street to believe that is good for our country.

Get a life, would you, in New York City. Get a life about these things. Why is it every time we get a piece of good news, the folks on Wall Street have a seizure? Why is there a chasm

between Wall Street and Main Street about what Wall Street believes is a fundamentally unsound policy for them? I want to come and speak about that at some length, because it seems to me this is out of step with what we need for our country in terms of economic growth and opportunity. If every time we begin to see some progress in creating the kind of economic growth we need, not 2.2 percent a year, not 2.5 percent a year, but more robust economic growth that produces the jobs and opportunity—if every time that happens we see the bond market go into a pretzel stance and have a seizure of some sort, there is something fundamentally wrong with what is going on in this country. But if the first obligation and the first important fight for us as Democrats is to create an economy that expands and grows and provides opportunities for working families, we have a range of other policies that we believe are important that help accomplish that.

We put together, with the help of a lot of people over a period of a year in the Senate and then working together with Members of the U.S. House, and then with the White House, an agenda that is called "families-first." It is called families-first because, when everything is settled, when all the dust begins to settle and the day is done, the question of whether we have been successful as a country is measured by whether we have done something that improves the lives of American families. Have we increased the standard of living in this country?

First, we believe, in a families-first agenda that there is a responsibility for Government. Government has a responsibility to balance the budget, pay for what it consumes, not leave a legacy for its grandchildren to pay for what their grandparents consume.

There is a right way and a wrong way to balance the budget. We believe the budget ought to be balanced with hard choices, the right way. The budget deficit has come down very, very substantially in the last 3 years, and that is because a lot of folks in this Chamber have been willing to make tough decisions. We would reach out and hope for cooperation with others, to say, yes, balancing the budget matters, and it is one of the first items on our agenda.

Second, economic opportunity: We stand for helping small businesses thrive and create jobs in our country, and pursue policies to make that happen. People who risk their economic livelihood, go to work in the morning, keep their businesses open all day, and who are trying to make a profit, they matter to this country. They provide jobs in this country. And we want policies that are friendly to that kind of investment and that kind of commitment that Americans make in creating jobs and building businesses.

Investing in our communities, in the infrastructure, building the roads, building the infrastructure this country needs, repairing the infrastructure,