

work, even into the next Congress, if necessary.

So I think that the suggestion by House Republicans in growing numbers and apparently being discussed by a number of Republican Senators on this side to do what we can do, that being welfare reform, and doing it separately makes a great deal of sense. I am absolutely convinced that if we are able to come to the Senate floor on a welfare reform package, that we can reach an agreement. I think we are very, very close, and I think that is something that clearly should be done.

We all know that Government cannot provide all the solutions to all of our problems all of the time. That is why I think that the consensus that is developed on welfare reform makes so much sense. We all agree that welfare reform requires work. The goal of welfare reform should be getting people off welfare. The goal of welfare reform should be ending welfare and putting people into jobs in the private sector and, when necessary, with some Government help and assistance.

First of all, we can all agree that real welfare reform is about work. We also, I think, all agree that welfare cannot be forever, that there has to be a time limit, there has to be a termination. I think we all understand that, if people think there is no end to what they may be receiving, in fact there will not be the incentives to move into the private sector in the work programs.

So, first, I think welfare has to have time limits. It has to be about work. But it also has to be, Mr. President, about protecting innocent children. I do not think there is anyone in this body who would say that we want to be so tough on work that we adversely affect innocent children who did not ask to be brought into this world. They are here in many cases as innocent victims. We ought to make sure that any reform also protects children while it is very tough on work requirements and very tough on the parents.

So I think we have a consensus that is right here. It is right at our fingertips. And there is no reason why we should not go ahead and do what is doable and what we can accomplish and then we can all take credit for it politically. This is an election year. I think that when we go back home and say that together Republicans and Democrats have worked out a plan to end welfare as we know it, the American people will say, "Thank goodness. They have gotten something accomplished."

I think there is a great deal of agreement on how to go about doing it. It is not total agreement. There are still major items that need to be worked out. But I think that it is very clear that we can accomplish this. I think every indication is that the President wants to sign a welfare reform bill but knows that the current Medicaid plan is not yet ready.

We have Republican Governors who just, apparently, yesterday, in talking with their Republican Senate col-

leagues, talked about the fact that they are very displeased with the Medicaid plan that has come out of the Senate Finance Committee, on which I serve. So if you have Democratic Governors saying, "Look, I don't think this is ready yet. We don't like it," and you have Republican Governors who have to run the program saying, "No, we don't think this product is what we want," that sends us a message. Let us set that aside, continue to work on it, but go forward with that which we can agree on. And that means the welfare plan.

I think, if we were able to separate it, we could get that accomplished. If we tie them together, we are dooming welfare reform to defeat. Maybe some people think that is a good idea politically because then we can blame the other side. They will blame us and everybody will blame each other. The American public outside Washington will say, "What are they talking about? They should be talking about getting something done, not blaming the other side for failure." Failure is not politically acceptable in the area that I come from. I think we do much better when we get something accomplished.

The Work First Act that we have, as Democrats, offered as part of this package, I think, is a major step in the right direction. Can it be further improved? Probably. I am willing to work in that regard. But I think it makes some principal points that I think are the essence of real reform. Assistance is conditional. It is not really an entitlement. People have to be able to move into the work force or perform community service. That is real reform. It is limited. There is an actual time limit on how long a person or their family can be on welfare. The general consensus is that 5 years is an acceptable amount over a lifetime. We know it cannot be forever, and our bill says that.

It requires teen parents—which is a major problem—to live at home or live in an adult setting. Children who are having children cannot be left on their own without adult supervision. Our legislation requires a teen parent to live at home and to attend school as a condition to receiving welfare benefits. But we also say that to the innocent child, and many of them are babies out there, that we are going to guarantee that there be child care and health care for those children.

I want to be as tough as I possibly can on the parent because they are the ones who brought the child into the world. They have a responsibility. They have to live up to it. But there are the innocent children that we, as a society, have to say we are going to reach out to and make sure they are given child care so the parent can go to work and they are going to have health care so they can remain healthy and growing children.

We also want to make sure that at times when there is a recession they

are not left high and dry, that funding will be available for child care and for health care. We want to give the States all the flexibility they need. What works in my State of Louisiana may not be acceptable in California or New York or Florida or any of the other States. What they do in their States may not fit my State. So we want to give the Governors in the States a tremendous amount of flexibility.

I think the bottom line in all of this is that we have a program that can change the welfare system in our country to bring about real reform and at the same time save a great deal of money. Our plan is projected to save nearly \$50 billion. That is real reform. At the same time, it protects the needs of innocent children. So we have a good program.

So I urge today that as part of the family-first agenda that we have put out on the table—one ingredient is the welfare reform package—but my plea to our colleagues is to not let other issues doom welfare reform to defeat, do not tie welfare to things that we do not have an agreement on. I think that would be a very, very serious mistake.

I think our Finance Committee has done some good work, quite frankly, in a bipartisan fashion. The chairman of the committee, Senator ROTH, was able to work with those of us on the Democratic side to add some amendments to the package that make it a better package, one that is more acceptable to the administration and one that can actually become law with a few additional minor changes.

But the only way we can fail in this effort is to desire failure. I think, unfortunately, there are some in the Congress who would like to see that happen. I suggest that that is not the way to go. So let us get on with what we can accomplish, do what we can do, and then I think the American public will be able to say that Congress had the opportunity to do what was right, met that challenge, and did exactly that in welfare reform, a good place to start. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 10 minutes in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. COVERDELL. I reserve the right to object. Parliamentary inquiry. It is my understanding that at 9:40—no objection.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, is it all right to proceed?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized for 10 minutes.

MINIMUM WAGE AND HEALTH INSURANCE LEGISLATION

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. I think our business is relatively easy here, or ought to be. I really think there are

only two things we ought to do from the side of the aisle that I represent. We are interested in paycheck security, health care security, retirement security. Those have a variety of things that go along with them which we think are important for family values, for family safety, and obviously family security.

I think there are two pieces of legislation that ought to be signed into law by the President, ought to be passed out of this body. There is no reason why they cannot be. I stand here this morning as the junior Senator from West Virginia in some sense of frustration and wonderment, really putting myself in the place of American citizens wondering why it is not more certain and why there is not a more clear course.

I think if either of these bills fails to pass this session of Congress, both Houses, and on to the President, then I think the American people have real reason to wonder why they put us here. I speak, of course, of two pieces of legislation which we have already passed. The first one was passed the other day, the minimum wage increase. There was a 74 to 24 vote on that. Some might say, well, that was not as strong as it appeared because minimum wage was encased in a small business package, had that title. But there cannot be any doubt about the fact that the minimum wage increase did pass. It has passed the Senate. So has the Kennedy-Kassebaum health insurance bill, more properly the Kassebaum-Kennedy health insurance bill that passed by 100 to 0.

I really think it is embarrassing to our body, to all 100 of us, that there is a real cloud of uncertainty as to whether or not these are going to become law. They have passed through here. The plot keeps thickening as we hear about efforts to delay, to entangle these pieces of legislation, to complicate them. Each of these pieces, of course, have enormous benefits for millions of hard-working American families. Therefore, it seems to me incontrovertible that the good will on both sides should prevail.

On our side, we talk about putting families first. I think they are three good words, it is a good phrase. It is clear. It is what we mean. It means enacting the minimum wage increase and it means enacting the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill.

In West Virginia tens of thousands of wage earners, in fact, 24 percent of all our wage earners in the State, will benefit from the minimum wage law. I am not necessarily happy to say that that many of them would be affected, but that is what I have to say because that is the fact. Over two-thirds of them are adults, and most of them are women, many of them, most of them, have responsibilities for children.

I had a remarkable conversation, at least to me, last week with one of these people who is a graduate, lives in a small community in West Virginia, who is a graduate of the University of

Indiana, has a B.A. from the University of Indiana, and moved to West Virginia because she liked the lifestyle. She works as a waitress. She has a 10-year-old girl, her husband has left her, and child support is minimal. She can now earn \$2.13 an hour because of the tipping matter under the present law we have passed here in the Senate. So her salary—as she said, tips do make up the difference. If you do allow that to happen, then, in fact, she could go from \$8,500 a year to \$10,700 a year. When you add on top of that the earned income tax credit for which she is eligible, she could make \$3,000 plus from that, which would put her above the poverty level.

Now, that is a momentous fact, taking a program already existing, and the minimum wage which we passed, that we take a woman who lives in poverty, officially, a proud person, well-educated, interested in the arts, with a brilliant 10-year-old daughter, who I had a chance to talk with, who is an exceptional gymnast, for whom she can do nothing because there is no margin whatever in her life financially, being able to help her. She brings to mind, and many others who I have talked to who are working, who are not on welfare, who are working because of their desire to achieve self-esteem through work rather than being on welfare.

I cannot understand why there would be any reason to either block the appointment of conferees, or whatever it would be, to keep the minimum wage bill from passing. It means an enormous amount to people in my State and every single State, most of whom are adult, most of whom are women, most of whom have children.

Then, I think, finally, there is no excuse if the Congress fails to pass the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill. We said from the very beginning, after the failure of the Clinton health care bill, that we should concentrate on what we can agree on. That is what we started out with on Kassebaum-Kennedy, concentrating on what we can agree on. We have to do it incrementally. I understand that and I applaud that. This is a bill on which we so agreed. In fact, the vote was 100 to 0.

Then MSA's, medical savings accounts, was put in in the House and put in over here in a rather odd manner at the last moment. That we did not agree on. Everything else we did agree on. Now that is being, I think, sort of relegated to the possibility of a bill that will not pass this Congress because of the disagreement on that. On the other hand, there was an agreement at the beginning. The whole spirit of everything was that we would agree with what we could agree on, and we did so in such a magnificent form that we passed it 100 to 0 here.

We should do that, putting families first, which means getting back to the basics of the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill and getting this bill into law. If it means we have to take a moratorium on our August recess, I do not care

what it takes, we ought to be able to pass the minimum wage bill and the Kassebaum-Kennedy health insurance bill.

It is a "no brainer," Mr. President. I submit that with all sincerity, two pieces of legislation, and there are many more that I have in mind, but here are two pieces of legislation, both of which have passed by overwhelming margins in this body, both of which can be conferred successfully, if we only have the will to do so, both of which would enormously help put American working families first.

I yield the floor.

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry. Is it appropriate for me to begin 20 minutes, which was to be under my control?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes.

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Mr. COVERDELL. Mr. President, I had an interesting presentation here this morning, built around what apparently is going to be a Presidential campaign theme, putting families first. Mr. President, we cannot but be reminded of a book written by President Clinton and Vice President GORE which was a prelude to the 1992 Presidential campaign. The book, Mr. President, was entitled "Putting People First," very, very familiar to this new theme we have heard here this morning, putting families first.

I will read from this publication, "Putting People First," now almost some 4 years old, a very interesting piece on page 15 of "Putting People First." It says, "Middle-class tax fairness." Now, this was the President's "contract with America," putting people first.

He says, "Middle-class tax fairness: We will lower the tax burden on middle-class Americans by asking the very wealthy to pay their fair share." I repeat, "We will lower the tax burden on middle-class Americans * * * Middle-class taxpayers will have a choice between a children's tax credit or a significant reduction in their income tax rate."

It goes on to say, on page 101 "Treat families right," in this book entitled "Put People First." It says, "Grant additional tax relief to families with children."

Mr. President, since the publication of the book and the election of President Clinton, the average American family is paying somewhere around \$2,000 to \$2,600 in additional taxes out of their checking account as a result of the election of President Clinton. Corporate taxes are up 55.4 percent and personal taxes are up 25.3 percent. In other words, the exact opposite has occurred since the publication of the President's book, "Putting People First."

It does begin to raise some pretty serious questions as to what do they mean when they say "Put families first." If they mean the same thing