

Let me close with another quote from Senator La Follette's inaugural speech on the floor of the Senate. He was responding to the argument that public sentiment had been whipped into an unreasonable hysteria over the question of whether the railroads controlled the Congress. His words seem quite apt to me as a response to those who argue on this floor that we really have no campaign finance problem in this country—and that the media and the groups that support reform exaggerate the impact of money on the legislative process. He said:

[I]t does not lie in the power of any or all of the magazines of the country or of the press, great as it is, to destroy, without justification, the confidence of the people in the American Congress. . . . It rests solely with the United States Senate to fix and maintain its own reputation for fidelity to public trust. It will be judged by the record. It can not repose in security upon its exalted position and the glorious heritage of its traditions. It is worse than folly to feel, or to profess to feel, indifferent with respect to public judgment. If public confidence is wanting in Congress, it is not of hasty growth, it is not the product of 'jaundiced journalism.' It is the result of years of disappointment and defeat.

Mr. President, the Senate must respect the public judgment and fix its reputation for fidelity to the public trust. It must let the solid bipartisan majority of this body that supports reform, work its will and pass a campaign finance reform bill this year. Until it does, Mr. President, I plan to Call the Bankroll. I'm going to acknowledge the 800 pound gorilla in this chamber, and I'm going to ask my colleagues to do the same. And then I'm going to see if we can't agree that it's time to show him the door.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VOINOVICH). The Senator from Minnesota.

SUPPORT FOR CALLING THE BANKROLL

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I would be proud, I say to my colleague, Senator FEINGOLD, to be his first recruit in calling the bankroll. I think it is extremely important. I also want to say, being a Senator from the Midwest, that we talk about the fighting La Follette, and we have a fighting Russ FEINGOLD from the State of Wisconsin, who I think is the Bob La Follette of this Senate. I thank him for his focus on what I believe is a core issue.

Mr. President, how much time do we have on our side in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Four minutes.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Might I ask, so that I know, if I suggest the absence of a quorum, does that time burn off on our part?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has to get unanimous consent that the quorum call not be counted against you.

PATIENT PROTECTION ACT

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I will take a couple of minutes, actually, to speak on our time. I want to make a connection between what my colleague from Wisconsin, Senator FEINGOLD, was saying about the mix of money and politics and all the ways in which big money undercuts representative democracy. I want to make a connection to a piece of legislation that we are trying to get out here on the floor, which is the Patient Protection Act. I say to my colleague from Wisconsin, who is calling the payroll, one of the things I want to do is maybe just come to the floor and present some data about contributions that come from parties on all sides of this question. But from my point of view, you have a health insurance industry that sort of really basically has made the effort to keep universal health care coverage and, for that matter, basic protection of patients, consumer protection, off of the agenda. I think it is our responsibility to put it back on the agenda.

I think we have reached a point in our country where the pendulum has swung too far in the direction of increasingly "corporatized" medicine, and it has become corporatized, bureaucratized. You have basically a few large insurance companies that own and control the majority of the managed care plans and, as a result of that, the consumers and the patients wonder where we fit in.

There are a series of Senators on the Democratic side—I certainly hope there will be an equal number on the Republican side—that are committed to bringing patient protection legislation to the floor. Some of my colleagues, such as Senators DURBIN, KENNEDY, I think BOXER, and certainly Senator DASCHLE have introduced a bill, and we were all speaking about this last night. We want to talk about ways in which there can be sensible consumer protection.

That is really what the issue is: Making sure our caregivers—our doctors and our nurses—are able to make decisions about the care we need as opposed to having the insurance industry decide; making sure you have a medicine that is not a monopoly medicine with the bottom line as the only line; making sure people don't find themselves, as employers shift from one plan to another, no longer able to take their child to a trusted family doctor; making sure families with children with illnesses are able to have access to the kind of specialty care that is the best care for their children; making sure there is an ombudsman program available so that advocates who are there, to whom people can go, do know what their rights are; making sure that when we have an external review process of the kind of decisions that are made, people have a place to make an appeal and they know the decision will be a fair decision—making sure, in other words, that we are able to obtain the best care for our families.

As I travel around Minnesota—and around the country, for that matter—I find it astounding the number of people, the number of families, that fall between the cracks. The number of people—even if you are old enough for Medicare, it is not comprehensive. Seniors from Minnesota can't afford the prescription drug costs. It does nothing about catastrophic expenses at the end of your life. If you are ill and you have to be in a nursing home, almost everything you make is basically going to be taken away; there will be nothing left.

That is one of the things that strikes terror in the hearts of elderly people—or people aren't poor enough for medical assistance, which is by no means comprehensive enough; or people aren't lucky enough to be working for an employer that can provide them with good coverage.

To boot, what happens right now is that people who have the coverage find that with this medicine that we have, it is just going so far in the direction of becoming a bottom-line medicine that consumers are basically left in the dust.

We want to have some sensible protection for consumers. We want to bring it to the floor of the Senate. And we want to have a debate on this legislation.

The majority party—the Republican Party—leadership has taken to the situation that they want to be able to sign off on amendments we introduce. But that is not the way it works. It is not a question of some Senators telling other Senators what amendments are the right amendments to introduce. We should have the full-scale debate. We should be able to come out here with amendments. We should be able to come out here with amendments that provide consumers with more rights to make sure that people have access to the care they need; to make sure the decisions are made by qualified providers; to make sure the bottom line is not the only line; to make sure this is not an insensitive medical system; to make sure that people do not go without the kind of care they need. We want to do that.

We are committed to making this fight, and, if necessary, I think what you are going to see happen over the next week and beyond is that we are going to, one way or another, have a debate about this critically important issue.

As long as I am talking about health care, I would like to say also that I think the other central issue is the way in which the insurance industry is taking universal health care coverage off the table. We need to put it back on the table. I can't think of an issue that is more important to families in our country.

Mr. President, might I ask how much time we have left?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has exceeded his time.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Presiding Officer for his patience. I ask

unanimous consent, without anybody on the floor, that I be allowed an additional 10 minutes to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, this is a real pleasure, because one of the problems we have had out here on the floor of the Senate is not enough time to be able to focus on issues that are terribly important, that we really believe ought to be part of this debate and part of the discussion.

As long as I see the Chair, the Senator from Ohio, presiding, I would like to thank him for what I think is really his focus, or at least part of his work, which is the importance of what we do in making sure that, even before kindergarten, we do well by our children.

I would really like to say before the Senate that I hope we will get back soon to a focus on the family issue. I don't think it is all, I say to the Presiding Officer, Government policy. But I do think it is a combination of public sector and private sector and community volunteer work. It should be a marriage made in Heaven, where we really bring people together and we as a nation achieve the following goal. To me, this is the most important goal. I think this should be the central goal of the public policy of the Senate and the House of Representatives. I think this is where the Federal Government can matter, where we can be a real player. It is pre-K.

We ought to make it our goal that every child prekindergarten—she knows the alphabet, he knows colors and shapes and sizes; she knows how to spell her name; he knows his telephone number; and each and every one of them has been read to live; and each and every one of the children in our country comes to kindergarten and has that readiness to learn—they have, I say to the Presiding Officer, that spark of learning that he saw as Governor when he visited elementary school; they have that.

There are just too many children who, by kindergarten, are way behind, and they fall further behind, and then they run into difficulty.

I just want to say I really am disappointed that, in spite of all the studies, in spite of all the reports, in spite of a White House conference, in spite of all of the media coverage—and to a certain extent there is a part of me with some anger that says maybe in spite of the hype—that we have not centered our attention on what it is we could do here in the Senate and in the House of Representatives to enrich the lives of children in our country, to make sure that somehow we can renew our national vow of equal opportunity for every child. From my point of view, I think there is probably no more important focus.

If I were to think about the kind of issues we talk about all the time—solvency for Social Security; where are we going to be as a nation in 1050? Are we

going to have a productive, high-moral, skilled workforce? What about Medicare expenses? How do we reduce violence in our communities, violence in homes, violence in schools, violence out in the neighborhood?—each and every time, I make the argument, the most important thing we could do would be to make an investment in the health and skills and intellect and character of our children. To me, that would start with pre-K.

The tragedy of it all—it is a tragedy because we are talking about people's lives—is we have not focused on that agenda at all. We don't even have but about 50 percent of the kids who qualify for Head Start receiving assistance; and, if it is early Head Start, pre-3-year-olds. I think it is naive. It is just a couple of percentage points. I don't think it is even 10 percent. If you move beyond low-income and you look at working families, we are lucky if 20 percent of the families that could use some assistance, some investment that would help them find good child care for their children, get any assistance at all. And then, if you move beyond that and you talk about the wages of child care workers, who do the most important work, it is deplorable the kind of wages we pay.

On the floor of the Senate, I argue that this ought to be our priority. I argue that it doesn't—it cannot make us comfortable that at the same time the economy is humming along, we have about one out of every four children under the age of three growing up poor, and about one out of every two children of color under the age of three growing up poor in our country. We ought to make that a big part of our agenda—children's education, health care coverage, patient protection rights, universal health care coverage.

Finally, I will finish by going back to what Senator FEINGOLD said.

I will make sure he is not lonely and out here alone. I will help him call that bankroll, because we ought to put reform right at the top of our agenda.

We ought to talk about the mix of money and politics. We ought to talk about the ways in which big money dominates politics. We ought to understand the fact that the reason people have become disillusioned with politics is not because they don't care about the issues that are important to their lives. People care deeply and desperately about being able to earn a decent living, giving their children the care they deserve and need, about livable communities, and about being able to do well by their kids. People care about all those issues and more. They care deeply and desperately.

However, they also believe that their concerns are of little concern in the Nation's Capitol, where politics is so dominated by the big money, by the investors, by the givers, by the heavy hitters. They believe if you pay, you play; and if you don't pay, you don't play.

We ought to make reform and the way money has turned elections into

auctions and severely undercutting representative democracy, where each and every man and woman should count as one and no more than one—that is not the case—we ought to make that the central issue.

I heard Senators FEINGOLD, DURBIN, BOXER, KENNEDY and Senator DASCHLE speaking. We intend to bring these issues to the floor, along with one other issue that is near and dear to my heart: That is what has now become an economic tragedy—family farmers are being driven off the land. When will they get a fair price? When will they have a fair and open market? When do we take action against the conglomerates that basically dominate the market? When do we take antitrust action?

I heard my colleague talking about Senator LaFollette. When do we take on the economic interests? When will we be there on the side of children, on the side of education, on the side of decent health care, on the side of reform, on the side of working people, on the side of producers?

We ought to be there. All these issues are interrelated. These are the issues that we will insist be part of the agenda of this Senate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GREGG). The Senator from Missouri.

SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE'S E-COMMERCE FORUM

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, over the past several weeks, much of the discussion and debate in the Senate has focused on high technology and its impact on our everyday lives, particularly with regard to its pivotal role in our economy. We heard about the potential problems related to Y2K computer failures and the need to guard against unreasonable liability in the event that Main Street small businesses, through no fault of their own, become the targets of frivolous lawsuits. In short, we have been preoccupied with the dawn of the 21st century and what we can do to help sustain the robust economic growth that has been fueled by as many remarkable breakthroughs in computer technologies and computer-related services as we could possibly imagine.

Last Thursday, a new reality dawned when I saw a copy of a study on electronic commerce, or e-commerce as business conducted over the Internet is known. Many Members got a jolt from the story entitled "Net's Economic Impact Zooms." A study shows \$301 billion was generated in revenue in 1998, and it produced 1.2 million jobs. The findings were reported in the USA Today and were drawn from a study conducted by the Center for Research and Electronic Commerce at the University of Texas and Cisco Systems.

Frankly, I, too, was shocked but in good company because the figures exceeded the wildest expectations of the experts. To add a little more perspective from that study, consider that