

votes today. The next vote will occur on Tuesday, at 2:15 p.m.

Mr. President, let me again thank you for your courtesy, and that of the clerks, who listened to me intently. I understand there may be some more morning business time available. I invite my colleagues to engage in the debate on the subject of ANWR at any time they appear on the floor, in my office, or outside.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### NUCLEAR WASTE STORAGE

Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I alert my colleagues that an extraordinary thing happened yesterday in the House of Representatives. The House accepted the Senate bill on nuclear waste without amending the Senate bill.

As the occupant of the Chair knows, oftentimes the House has a little difference of opinion on what is good for the country. The bill we passed in the Senate on nuclear waste had certainly a vigorous debate in this body. There were 64 votes recorded for the legislation which would resolve what to do with our high-level nuclear waste and how to proceed with the dilemma associated with the reality that the Federal Government had entered into a contract in 1998 to take this waste from the electric-power-generating units that were dependent on nuclear energy. This is the high-level rods that have partially reduced their energy capacity and have to be stored. We have had this continued buildup of high-level waste adjacent to our reactors.

The significance of this is that this industry contributes about 20 percent of our power generation in this country. There are those who don't favor nuclear energy and, as a consequence, would like to see the nuclear industry come to an end. But they accept no responsibility for where the power is going to be made up. Clearly, if you lose a significant portion, you will have to make it up someplace else.

The point of this was to try to come to grips with a couple of things. One is that the ratepayers have paid the Federal Government \$15 billion over an extended period of time to take the waste in 1998. The second issue is the cost to the taxpayers because since the Federal Government has failed to meet the terms of the contract and honor the sanctity of the contract agreement, there are damages and litigation from the power companies to the Federal Government. That cost is estimated to be somewhere in the area of \$40 to \$80 billion to the taxpayer in legal fees as-

sociated with these claims that only the court will finally adjudicate.

By passing the Senate bill in the House—I believe the vote was 275—indeed, it moved the issue closer to a resolve. Many in this body would like to not address it. That is irresponsible, both from the standpoint of the taxpayer and from the standpoint of the sanctity of a contractual commitment. If we don't do it, somebody else is going to have to do it on a later watch.

The difficulty is, nobody wants the nuclear waste. But if you throw it up in the air, it is going to come down somewhere.

France reprocesses theirs. The French learned something in 1973, during the Arab oil embargo. They learned that they would never be held hostage by the Mideast oil barons and be subservient to whatever the dictates of those oil nations were and what it cost the French economy in 1973. As a consequence, they proceeded towards the development of a nuclear power capability second to none. About 92 percent France's power is generated by nuclear energy. They have addressed the issue of the waste by reprocessing it through recycling, recovering the plutonium, putting it back in the reactors, and recovering the residue. The residue, after you take the high-level plutonium out, has a very short life. It is called vitrification.

In any event, we are stuck still. We can't resolve what to do with our waste. But we have a bill that has moved out of the House. It is our bill. I have every belief it will go down to the White House. We will have to see if the President wants to reconsider his veto threat in view of the energy crisis we have in this country now and the fact that the administration does not have an energy policy, let alone the willingness to address its responsibility under the contractual terms to accept the waste. If the administration chooses to veto it, we have the opportunity for a veto override. In this body, we are two votes short.

I encourage my colleagues, particularly over this weekend as they go home, to recognize that this issue is going to be revisited in this body. If they have nuclear reactors in their State and they don't support a veto override, they are going to have to wear the badge, the identification of being with those who want to keep the waste in their State. That is where it will stay. It will stay in temporary storage near the reactors that are overcrowded and that were not designed for long-term storage. It will never get out of their State unless we come together and move this legislation, if the President does not sign it now that it has gone through the House and Senate.

Unfortunately, this would put the waste ultimately in Nevada where we have had 50 years of nuclear testing out in the desert, an area that has already been pretty heavily polluted. We have spent over \$7 billion in Nevada at Yucca Mountain where we are building

a permanent repository. Quite naturally, the Nevadans, my colleagues, will throw themselves down on the railroad track to keep this from happening.

But the point is, you have to put it somewhere. In my State of Alaska, we don't currently have any reactors.

As chairman of the Energy Committee, my responsibility is to try to address this national problem, with a resolve. What we have, obviously, is this legislation that has passed both the House and the Senate. It will be back. It will be revisited. I encourage my colleagues to recognize that we have a responsibility to address this on our watch. If we put it off, somebody else is going to have to address it. It is going to cost the taxpayer more. Now is the time, since we finally have a bill that has gone through the House and Senate.

The interesting thing is, had the House taken up our bill and amended it, we would be hopelessly lost because there would be a filibuster on appointment of conferees. It would take 9 days or something like that. It could not be done.

That didn't happen in the House. I commend the Speaker, Denny Hastert, for keeping a commitment. I commend our leader, Senator LOTT, who made a commitment that we were going to bring this up. Not only did we bring it up but we passed it.

I alert my colleagues, again, what goes around comes around. We are going to get this back. If you are against it, you had better come up with something else that is a better idea. Otherwise, it will stay in your State. If you want to get it out of your State in a permanent repository, you had better get behind this bill, if we have to go for a veto override.

I thank the Chair and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, are we in morning business at this time?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business, and the Senator from Idaho controls 60 minutes.

#### ENERGY CRISIS

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, earlier today I came to the floor, as did several of my colleagues, to discuss what I believe is now nearing a crisis in our country; that is, the tremendous runup in the price of energy that we have watched for well over 3 months creep up on the reader boards at the local gas station or in fuel bills for those in homes heated with fuel oil.

A lot of Americans are scratching their heads and saying: What is happening? Last year, at this time out in

Northern Virginia, I purchased regular gasoline for 78 cents a gallon. There was a bit of a price war going on at that time that probably bid the price down 10 or 12 cents, but there is no question that America's driving public a year ago was paying at least 100 percent less, in some instances, than they are paying today.

It is right and reasonable to ask why? What has happened? What happened is obvious to many who watched the energy issue. I serve on the Energy Committee. For the last several years, we have become quite nervous about the fact that we as Americans have grown increasingly dependent on foreign sources of crude oil to fuel the economy of this country. Several speakers on the floor today, and over the past several days, have talked about a dependency that has gone up from 30-plus percent in the 1970s to over 55 percent today for oil flowing in from outside the United States.

Why is that happening? Why don't we have a policy stopping it? Why are all these things happening at a time when our economy is doing so well?

This morning I joined some of my colleagues to discuss some of the whys. This country, for at least the last 8 years, has been without an energy policy. When the current Secretary of Energy, Bill Richardson, came to that seat, I asked him in his confirmation hearing: If we don't have an energy program, can't we at least have an energy policy that looks at all aspects of the energy basket—both, of course, crude oil for the hydrocarbons and for all that it provides for our country, a recognition of electrical generation in this country, both nuclear, hydro, and certainly coal fired and oil fired? He assured me that would be the case.

Of course, today, that simply isn't the case. In the budgets this Department of Energy has presented to this Congress in the last 2 years, there has been a tremendous increase in the money the Clinton-Gore administration has wanted to allocate for solar and wind, but they have constantly dropped the research dollars on hydro production or clean coal production for the use of coal in the firing of our electrical generating facilities.

While all of that has been going on, there has been something else that I find fascinating and extremely disturbing: a progressive effort to lock up exploration and development of our public lands and public areas where the last of our oil reserves exist. The administration has not tried to encourage domestic production. In most instances, they have openly discouraged it or they have set the environmental bar so high that no one company can afford to jump over it.

Over the course of the last 5 or 6 years, we have seen a tremendous number of our production companies leave this country. In fact, the CEO of one company sat in my office 5 years ago in a rather embarrassing way saying: Senator, after having been in this country

drilling, developing, and producing oil and gas for almost 100 years, my company is being forced to leave the United States if we want to stay profitable or productive.

Of course, that company did largely go overseas. That is an American company and they will be producing oil and gas. But they are, in most instances, producing for a foreign government, and they don't control their supply. Most importantly, that supply is not a U.S. supply. It is a foreign supply being brought into this country, dramatically changing our balance of trade. Of course, many of those nations are members of OPEC or are other oil-producing nations that are, in part, causing the problems our consumers are currently experiencing.

I have found it fascinating over the last several years as we have watched this administration refuse to acknowledge our vast reserves of oil and gas, offshore, and in Alaska. The Senator from Alaska, chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, was on the floor to speak for the last hour about one of the great remaining reserves in northern Alaska that could be tapped, and tapped in a sound and safe environmental way so the beautiful area would not be damaged. Literally, tens of thousands of barrels a day of oil could be produced from that region of our country and brought into the lower 48 to be refined and sold.

The Rocky Mountain overthrust belt in my area of the country is largely now off limits to further exploration and production. Yet in the 1970s and the early 1980s a lot of the new domestic production in our country came from the overthrust belt areas of Wyoming and Colorado.

We have seen the Clinton administration recently announced a ban on any future exploration of many areas of the Outer Continental Shelf, where some of the largest oil reserves exist today, all in the name of the environment. Even though some of the great new technologies have allowed the kind of development in the Gulf of Mexico and other areas where the chance of a spill is almost nonexistent today. In fact, the greatest concern for a spill is not drilling and development and transfer onshore of crude oil; it is the shipping in the great supertankers from all around the world. That is where the greater risk to our oceans exist, not offshore oil production. Yet this administration, all in the name of the environment, says, no, we will not develop our offshore capabilities.

In 1996, the administration resorted to the little-used Antiquities Act. I mentioned that earlier this morning. They made 23 billion tons of low-sulphur mineable coal off limits to production in southern Utah. The U.S. Forest Service issued road construction policies designed to restrict the energy industry's ability to explore for gas and oil on Forest Service lands. The Clinton-Gore administration has vetoed legislation that would have

opened the coastal plain, as I mentioned, in the remote Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, where an estimated 16 billion barrels of domestic oil may be found.

The administration has ignored a report prepared by the National Petroleum Council requested by the Energy Secretary explaining how the Nation can increase production and use of domestic natural gas resources from about 22 trillion cubic feet per year to more than 30 trillion cubic feet per year over the next 10 to 12 years.

Doable? Yes. Environmentally sound? Yes. A clean fuel source? Yes. Then why aren't we doing it? Because we have an administration that is hostile to the idea of actually producing in this country and providing for this country, and their 8 years of record clearly show that.

The Clinton-Gore administration has shown little interest in solving these kinds of domestic problems and, as a result, as I mentioned earlier, we have watched our dependence on foreign crude tick up to 56 percent of our total crude demand. The price last year of a barrel of crude was around \$10 and peaked last week at somewhere near \$34 a barrel.

Did we see it coming? You bet we did. Has the administration known it? Yes, they have. On two different occasions, and in two very well-developed reports over the last several years, that message has been so clearly sent to this administration.

Why would they ignore it? There are probably a lot of reasons, and I have already expressed some of those reasons why this country cannot use its energy resources.

Yesterday, my distinguished friend from West Virginia, Senator ROBERT BYRD, spoke eloquently on the floor on this very subject. Of course, his State of West Virginia is a great coal State, a great producing State. The United States has the world's largest demonstrated coal reserve base and accounts for more than 90 percent of our total fossil energy reserve. In other words, we have more coal than any other country. Yet we have an administration that truly wants to deny the use of it or the development of technologies that will cause it to be burned in an ever increasingly clean way.

At the present rate of recovery and use, U.S. coal reserves can last us for more than 270 years. Let me repeat that. For 270 years, we can be self-sufficient at our current level of coal consumption. Of course, we all know the technology that will develop over that period of time that might well make the use of fossil fuels unnecessary at some point in the distant future.

Coal is used to generate over 56 percent of our electrical supply and about 88 percent of the Midwest's electrical needs. Coal use for electrical power has risen more than 250 percent since 1970, while sulfur dioxide emissions has decreased to 21 percent below the 1970 level.

While there has been a dramatic increase in the use of coal, there has been a dramatic drop in coal-fired emissions. Why? Technology, the application of technology, the kind of combustion technology that has continued to drive down emissions and make continued use of coal economically attractive.

Why shouldn't we be putting more research dollars into even better technology? Of course, we should, but it does not show up in this administration's budget. Not at all. They want windmills and solar cells. The last I checked, to provide electricity for Los Angeles with solar energy, one has to cover the whole State of Arizona with solar panels. President Clinton, don't you understand that would be environmentally unsound? It would not make a lot of sense and would not be a very, shall we say, aesthetically valuable thing to do.

Somehow they are caught in this mythical illusion: Pop up a solar cell, put a propeller on the end of a stick, tie a generator to it, and the world is going to light up. We simply know that is not the case when it comes to the kinds of energy we need to fuel our households and drive our industries. That kind of energy has to be of large capacity. It has to have the ability to peak and supply our needs during high-demand periods. Of course, it says little for the need of America's farmers and ranchers when they go to the pump this year to find out their energy costs have now doubled.

What about nuclear? Nuclear drives 20 percent of our electrical needs, and yet this administration is the most antinuclear administration in the history of this country. They have on every occasion attempted to block the effective storage of nuclear waste, high-level waste, the kind that comes from nuclear generation of electricity. They are basically saying to the electricity industry, the power industry, at least the generating industry: Don't build any more nuclear plants, even though there are no emissions from such plants. If you want to strive to get to the clean air standards that we want in our unattainment areas, you cannot do it any other way than to assure that we at least maintain the 20 percent of our electricity being generated by nuclear power.

What does that mean? It means we have to bring newer reactors online, safer reactors with new technology. Yet this administration will not invest in the necessary research.

In November of 1999, the Environmental Protection Agency sued several coal-burning utilities claiming they made major modifications in their facilities without applying for new source review permits. Utilities maintain that the modifications fell within the routine maintenance provisions that had been provided and grandfathered into the Clean Air Act in 1990.

What kind of a message does a central government send to the generating

industries of this Nation? It tells them: We will not stick by the rules; we will not play by the rules; we are interested in politics at this moment, EPA politics, environmental politics; we are not interested in the pocketbooks of the consumer or, more important, the strength of the economy, even though the utility industries are providing ever cleaner sources of energy.

EPA is discussing the notion that new-source review should include voluntary regulation of CO<sub>2</sub>, which is not a poisonous gas and which is not regulated under the Clean Air Act. President Clinton, don't you understand that you cannot keep beating this economy and our energy supplies over the head with these silly notions and expect the economy to remain productive?

EPA recently changed the toxic release inventory, or the TRI, to require electric utilities to report chemical release data. The level at which reporting is required for mercury was lowered by an order of magnitude. In making these changes, EPA presented no studies or supporting rationale for why nearby communities should suddenly be concerned about such releases. Nevertheless, the reports will be widely published, thereby placing utilities at the top of the "dirty" facilities list.

Again I say to the President: From where are you coming? What is the game? Because it appears you are attempting to game this issue.

In 1993, EPA staff concluded that coal combustion waste, or fly ash, bottom ash, slag waste, or other combustion products, from electric utility generation do not warrant hazardous waste regulation. Yet, EPA at the behest of the environmental community seems to be about to overrule the staff recommendation. The story goes on and on.

Here is the other message. Out in my area of the country, a very large portion of the electric generating capacity comes from hydropower. We dam up rivers and we put generators in the face of the dams and we generate large quantities of renewable clean electricity.

Ever since Secretary Babbitt took office, he has been running around the country trying to find a dam to blow up. On numerous occasions, he said: I would like to blow up a really big dam. That is what the Secretary of Interior wants as his legacy. What kind of a legacy is that? I think it is called a cave man mentality legacy. Give everybody a candle and send them to a cave? Come on, Bruce Babbitt. You know the tremendous value of clean hydroelectric generation. Some 15 to 18 percent of our market blend today is hydro.

In my area, it is much larger than that. Do we need to modify our dams to save fish? Do we need to make them operate more efficiently with new technology? Absolutely we do. And we are doing that. Already we are putting in new fish-friendly turbines at Bonne-

ville Dam at the lower end of the Columbia River. We are going to work our way up the Columbia-Snake Rivers system and that marvelous hydro facility that fuels the States of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. No, Mr. Babbitt, we "ain't" going to blow up any really big dams.

It is going to be kind of refreshing when that man leaves office to leave that silly mentality by the wayside.

Technology? Yes, you bet. Bring on the new technology. But shouldn't we be encouraging clean fuel, renewable resource technology of the kind that is so abundant in the West today?

I could talk a good deal more about this, but what I hope we accomplish is a reduction in the overall fuel cost of this country by eliminating the 4.3-cent Gore tax. That is right, that is AL GORE's tax. He is the one who sat in the Chair and broke the tie and caused the tax to become law. I want him to get the credit for raising the cost of energy in this country by that vote.

Here is something else I want to close with today that is added frustration as to why this country finds itself increasingly in an energy dilemma. The Clinton-Gore administration embraces the Kyoto Protocol. What is the Kyoto Protocol? It is the misguided result of concern by scientists around the world—and by all of us—that our world may be getting warmer as a result of the generation of greenhouse gases.

We all know that we have phenomenal long-term cycles in our country of warming and cooling. Once upon a time ago, there was an ice age. Prior to that, there was a warm period. Those 5,000- to 10,000-year cycles are very evident throughout geologic time. We know, as a fact, we get warmer. We know, as a fact, we get colder. Right now we are getting warmer.

The question is, Does the presence of man on the globe and what we are doing to our climate cause us to get warmer or does it cause us to get a little warmer under a normal warming cycle? We don't know that yet. Yet this administration, in the absence of science, and in the full-blown presentation of world environmental politics, said: Let me tell you what we are going to do. We are going to put all kinds of restrictions on the United States and other developed nations. We are going to tax the use of hydrocarbons. We want those lessened in their use. To do that, we are going to drive up the cost. AL GORE thinks the internal combustion engine is a really bad idea. He's said so on numerous occasions.

But what they did not recognize was the double kind of impact that would result from driving up the costs through taxes and limiting production at a time when the world was not ready to shift away from conventional forms of energy.

The Kyoto Protocol would require the United States to vastly reduce the use of oil, natural gas and coal, and achieve emission reduction standards when, frankly, the rest of the world

would not have to play—or at least the rest of the newly developing world that will be the largest generators of greenhouse gases.

Thank goodness this Senate, in July of 1997, stood up, in a very bipartisan way, and said: No, Mr. President. No, Mr. Vice President. Your idea and the protocol is wrongheaded. We are going to stand together as a nation. More importantly, we are going to convince the rest of the world to go with us. If we are going to develop this kind of policy, we will all share equally.

What we ought to be doing, with our tremendous talents, is developing the technology for the rest of the world to use to clean up their air and to clean up their water. We should not ask them to sacrifice. We should not ask the people of developing nations to live with less than we have simply because we do not want them to use their resources for the purpose of advancing their economies. Yet that is exactly what this President and this Vice President have said by the proposal of and the endorsement of the Kyoto Protocol.

Our Senate said no, on a vote of 95-0. Thank goodness we did. It had a chilling effect. In fact, I have not heard AL GORE mention Kyoto once in the last 6 months. Why? Because he knows he has created a tremendous liability for himself politically, when the American public really understands what would have happened if the protocol had become law, and those kinds of standards and those kinds of taxes had been placed on the American consumer on the eve of a dramatic runup in the cost of crude oil that has resulted from our OPEC neighbors getting their political act together.

We will be back next week. Stay tuned.

On Monday of this coming week, on the 27th, the OPEC nations meet. Bill Richardson has been running around, all over the world, with his tin cup, begging them to turn on the oil. They turned them off 6, 8 months ago—or turned them down by several millions of barrels of production a day. They may open them a little bit. But my guess is, their goal is to keep crude oil prices well above \$20 a barrel, which means the price at the pump will remain high. It may come down some this summer—and I hope it does. I hope we can jawbone them. I hope we can convince them, through good foreign policy, that wise economic policy dictates that they ought to increase production.

Yesterday, the House spoke very clearly. It said to the OPEC nations: If we are going to provide for your defense, as we have in the past, maybe you need to help us provide for some of our energy needs. All of that is a part, in combination, of what we ought to be involved in and what we ought to be talking about. I think our consumers would expect nothing less of us because, clearly, energy policy is a Government responsibility in this country, especially if there is policy that is neg-

ative in its impact on the ability of the private sector to produce an abundant source of low-cost energy to the consuming public.

This is an issue that will not go away because every day, when the consumer goes to the gas pump, and sticks his or her credit card in it, and pulls out 10, 12, 15, 20 gallons of gas, they are going to feel the impact. If you go out to buy new carpeting, if you go out, as a farmer, to buy pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides—all with a hydrocarbon base—you are going to find out that this runup in cost is having a dramatic impact on the economy and, ultimately, could have an impact on the lifestyle of all American citizens.

We must act. I hope we act both with short-term and long-term policy that is sensible, environmentally sound, but recognizes that energy abundance in this country has been the key to our tremendous economic successes down through the decades.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VOINOVICH). The Democratic leader.

#### THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, today the distinguished and esteemed Senator from Massachusetts and I are reintroducing the Democratic proposal to raise the minimum wage.

For those familiar with the legislation, they know that our legislation—the bill being reintroduced this afternoon—raises the minimum wage by \$1 over 2 years, to \$6.15 an hour. It is a modest but badly needed bill. It is overdue. It has already passed in the House, as most of our colleagues know, by an overwhelming margin, with strong bipartisan support. It deserves equally strong and bipartisan support in this Chamber.

Among the many people who support our proposal are America's religious leaders—the U.S. Catholic Conference, the United Church of Christ, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the American Friends Service Committee, the Unitarian Association of Congregations, the Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church, and many more religious organizations. There are Republicans and Democrats in this coalition of religious leaders, and all have joined together in supporting the effort to raise the minimum wage by \$1 an hour over 2 years.

A job isn't only a source of income. A job, frankly, is a source of pride—or it should be. The Catholic Conference tells us that the minimum wage ought to reflect the principles of human dignity and economic justice. That is what it ought to reflect. There ought to be more to a minimum wage than simply what pay you get. There ought to be a sense of dignity and a sense of pride and a sense of accomplishment. There ought to be a feeling of goodwill in a workplace. But today's minimum wage precludes much of that. The U.S. Catholic Conference is right, the min-

imum wage today denies dignity, it denies economic justice.

When you adjust the increased cost of living, the real value of the minimum wage today is almost \$2.50 below what it was in 1968. This chart reflects, very graphically, what we are talking about. This shows the value of the minimum wage over the years.

We started in 1968, with a value of the minimum wage, in today's dollars, at \$7.66. But look what has happened. We come down now to the year 2000, and we have a minimum wage value of slightly over \$5.

But look what has been happening to the trendline representing the value of the minimum wage, in the last couple years. While there have been peaks the trend is actually going down. Next year, the value of the increase, in constant dollars, will be \$4.90—almost \$3 below what it was 30 years ago.

Is it any wonder people are working two and three jobs? Is it any wonder we have lost some of the value, some of the dignity, some of the economic justice that was concomitant with the minimum wage of 30 years ago?

What is remarkable is that all we are asking with this increase is to bring it to \$5.85 next year. This proposal, as you can see, is still below the value of the minimum wage in 1968. That is what is disconcerting. If we do not raise the minimum wage by the end of the year, every single penny of the value of the 1996 increase will be erased by increases in the cost of living.

As the chart shows, at one time we were able to increase the value of the minimum wage. Now, we would like to bring the wage back to its value in 1996. But look what happens. If we do not raise the wage, we will have eliminated entirely the previous increases of the minimum wage.

I think people ought to remember, all we are trying to do is to maintain virtually the status quo. We are not even able to bring it up to where it should be. So forget economic justice, dignity—working families are living in poverty.

The Senate passed the welfare reform legislation several years ago. We said we want to dignify work. We want to reward work. We want to ensure that people who work get the rewards that otherwise they would get on welfare. Look what has happened. As the minimum wage continues to decline, the poverty line continues to go up. So even with the minimum wage increase, minimum wage workers are going to be below the poverty line. How does that reward work? How does that keep people off welfare? If this gap continues to spread, where is the economic justice?

Under our proposal, a full-time minimum-wage worker would earn \$12,792 a year. That is an increase of \$2,000. That doesn't sound like a lot of money. As I noted, right now minimum wage workers are below the poverty line. But the fact is, \$2,000 would buy 7 months of groceries for a family of four.

I was in a grocery store not long ago. Somebody came up to me, a total