

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

stranger, and said: I know you are Senator DASCHLE. I hate to interrupt. I know you are out there buying your groceries. I am just one person, but I want to thank you. I want to thank you for trying to fight for the minimum wage increase because I am a minimum wage worker. I have two jobs. I have no health insurance. I have a daughter who is very sick. You don't know me, and you may never see me again. I'm telling you, Senator DASCHLE, I need that money, without it I don't know what I am going to do.

You remember conversations like that. That brings life to charts like this.

It is very troubling to me that, as we fight over the minimum wage this year, we are fighting about that worker, working two jobs, trying to stay above the poverty line with a sick daughter. We are trying to decide in the Senate today whether we are going to make this worker wait another year and lose \$1,200 over that period of time in this era of economic growth and vitality.

What do we say to that man in that grocery store: Look, I am glad you are working two jobs. I am sorry your daughter is sick? We want you to stay off welfare? And while we have more and more people becoming billionaires in this country, we are going to make you wait 1 more year to get that full \$1 increase in minimum wage, even though it is \$3 below what it was in 1968?

I can't do that. I don't know how anybody can do that. But that is what we are asking. That is why we care so much about this fight now. We didn't have the chance to bring it up last year. We forced it on the bankruptcy bill. Now the House, because I believe we forced that action last year, has acted, as they should, on minimum wage. I have some real problems with the House-passed tax package, but they acted appropriately on the minimum wage.

Why, in Heaven's name, given the economic strength we have in this economy, given the extraordinary increase we have seen in income at just about all levels but the lowest, why would we make that man, or anybody like him, wait 3 years rather than 2 to get a \$1 increase so that he might be able to stay above the poverty line?

Recently, my State created 17,000 new jobs. Unemployment is lower now than it has been in 30 years. Yet we hear our colleagues say this somehow is going to hurt small business. This age-old argument has been so totally ripped apart by virtually every credible source. The Wall Street Journal, Business Week—hardly the mouthpiece of a liberal agenda—now say the 1996 predictions about job loss, the last time we increased the minimum wage, could not have been further from the truth. They were wrong. We have created more jobs in my State and in every State. Unemployment is lower, not higher. There is no question whatso-

ever, we can create more jobs and still provide dignity in the workplace.

Of what value is a job if you need four of them to survive? Of what value can a job be if you can't even buy health insurance for your children?

The other argument we hear so often is that minimum-wage workers are teenagers, or that they are part-time people, who pay for cars and CD players, who will be working in a high paying job someday. Again, the facts could not be more the opposite: Seventy percent of all minimum-wage workers are in their twenties or older; 60 percent of minimum-wage workers today are women in that age category; 40 percent of minimum-wage workers today are the sole breadwinners in their families.

You hear these arguments over and over again: The minimum wage costs jobs. These jobs are for teenagers. That is just bunk. There is absolutely no truth to these assertions that we hear over and over again. We are talking about people who walk up to me in grocery stores telling me about their kids, telling me they have more than two jobs, telling me that unless they get this increase in the minimum wage, they don't know how they are going to survive. What an irony—talk of survival in a period of unprecedented growth and prosperity.

I am hopeful that somehow over the course of the next couple of weeks we can reach an agreement. The House has acted on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis. The Senate ought to go to conference. We ought to resolve this minimum wage issue. But we ought to accept the fact that we have no real argument to ask that person or anybody else to wait 3 years for a \$1 increase in the minimum wage when they need it so badly right now. I am very hopeful that we can work out a procedural arrangement whereby every single person this year can count on a minimum wage increase within 2 years.

The average family now works an additional 265 hours a year just to maintain the same standard of living they had at the beginning of this decade. That is an additional 6 weeks a year that parents could be spending with their children that they are not. How much more in that direction should we be going? Three hundred hours more a year to maintain the status quo; 7 or 8 weeks a year that parents ought to be spending with their kids that they are now spending on a second or third job?

The distinguished Senator from Massachusetts and I, and so many of our colleagues, have said if we do anything this year, if we really mean what we say about economic justice and about dignity in the workplace and keeping people off welfare and addressing the real needs of working families, there is nothing more important than ensuring an increase in the minimum wage, this year, over 2 years. It ought to be over 1 year, but if we can't do it in 1 year, the compromise was, well, then let us at least try it in 2. If we can't do it in 2 years, I don't know how we turn to

those working those extra hours, those extra weeks, with any sense of compassion or understanding for their circumstances.

I ask whether or not it could be a bipartisan goal that we sign and pass a measure before Mother's Day this year. What better opportunity to tell those women who make up 40 percent of the minimum wage workforce and who head households that we are going to give you some help. We are going to do all we can to keep you off welfare. We are going to try to put a little more dignity into the workplace, and we are going to provide the kind of economic justice we all say is important to us.

I have admired Bob Dole for a lot of reasons, but one thing he once said, while he was the Republican leader, is something we ought to remember again and again. He said:

I never thought the Republican Party would stand for squeezing every nickel out of the minimum wage.

That wasn't something Senator KENNEDY or I said or anybody else on our side said. That was the Republican leader who said it wasn't the role of the Republican Party to squeeze every nickel out of the minimum wage.

I hope the majority will not squeeze every last nickel from this minimum wage either. I hope they will join us. I hope they will remember the families below the poverty line. I hope they will remember where we are and from where we have come, when it comes to dignity, economic justice, and the minimum wage today. I hope they will join us in passing this 2-year bill before Mother's Day.

Let's sign it into law. Let's send the right message.

Mr. KENNEDY. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. DASCHLE. I am happy to yield to the senior Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Does the Senator agree with me that here we are on Thursday afternoon, early afternoon, 2:45, most Americans are out working. The Senate, as I understand the schedule, will not be voting until next week on Tuesday. It is Thursday afternoon. Does the Senator agree that we have an opportunity to debate this this afternoon, and, if there were additional questions, we could debate it on Friday where, again, most Americans are working? We could stay here, doing our business, and then vote sometime on Friday or Friday afternoon, that we could dispose of this issue in a timely way? Will the Senator not agree with me that someone who bears a responsibility—as well as the majority leader, in terms of a schedule—that this particular issue could be easily disposed of this afternoon, or on tomorrow, without interrupting the Senate schedule?

Mr. DASCHLE. The distinguished Senator from Massachusetts is absolutely right. We have declared now an end of official business. We are in morning business this afternoon. We are not going to be in session tomorrow. We will be taking up the flag

amendment on Monday and voting on it on Tuesday. But we are told there is not time to bring this matter to the floor. Yet tomorrow is a perfectly opportune time for us to be debating and talking about this. We would love nothing more than to have a good debate. Let's talk about whether or not this affects jobs. Let's talk about whether or not this is for teenagers or for working mothers and working families. Let's entertain amendments.

The fact is, we wouldn't have debated this last year were it not for the extraordinary efforts made by the Senator from Massachusetts who offered this amendment to a bankruptcy bill. That is what triggered the action in the Senate. I believe that is what triggered the action in the House. Now we are in a situation where we are prepared to split the bankruptcy conference from the minimum wage conference. But unless we have a vehicle with which to go to conference, it is very hard for us to conference a minimum wage that has never been considered in the Senate.

How can we go to conference without a vehicle? That is unheard of. I think Daniel Webster would be rolling over in his grave trying to understand what the modern Senate has done to the process. The process, as I used to understand it is you pass a bill in the Senate, you pass it in the House, it goes to conference, you work out the differences, and you bring it back. We haven't passed a minimum wage bill in the House.

The distinguished Senator is right. We are introducing this bill. We could bring it up today. We could have a vote on it tomorrow.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, if the Senator will yield, this is an issue on which I believe every Member of this body has voted at one time or another. It is not an extraordinary, complex issue, as issues go that we deal with. This is a rather basic issue and a rather fundamental issue. As the leader pointed out, it is basically a question of whether we are going to respect the dignity of those who want to work and can work, who are willing to work 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year.

Institutionally, we have voted, if my memory serves me correctly, over the history of this, probably 10 to 14 times. It is not a new issue. Members know what the dimensions of this particular question are really about.

The Senator, as I understand it, would agree with me that it wouldn't take a very long period of time to permit the Senate to express its will on whether they believe there should be an increase in the minimum wage.

As I understand the leader's position, he introduced this legislation. It is 50 cents this year; it is 50 cents next year. If we don't see this increase, we will see that the increase we provided in the 1996-1997 period will effectively be wiped out. It will be about the lowest period in the history of the country in terms of the purchasing power of the

minimum wage at a time perhaps of greatest prosperity.

Does the Senator find that is something that is difficult to explain to people back in his own State of South Dakota, as I do in Massachusetts, and who wonder why we aren't willing to take some action?

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, the Senator is so right. This is a \$2,000 increase. That \$2,000 increase is probably made, in the case of many American entrepreneurs, in a matter of moments, minutes, or hours. We are talking about a \$2,000 increase over the course of a couple of years. That is what we are talking about. These people are already struggling to retain some form of dignity in the workplace. They are determined not to go back on welfare. They are determined to try to find ways to ensure that their children have the quality of life we all dream about as Americans.

As the Senator said, how ironic it is that at a time when we have more billionaires in this country than we have ever had in our Nation's history, at a time when income has gone up exponentially for the top 20 percent of those in this country, at that very time we see potentially the lowest level of purchasing power the minimum wage has ever brought about in our Nation's history. What an incredible irony that is.

The Senator is absolutely right. I appreciate his calling attention to that.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, if the Senator will yield for a question, something perplexes me.

Is the Senate in session tomorrow?

Mr. DASCHLE. The Senate is not in session tomorrow.

Mr. BAUCUS. Are there going to be votes on Monday?

Mr. DASCHLE. There are not any votes on Monday. We will not have any votes now until Tuesday afternoon.

Mr. BAUCUS. Has the Senate had many votes lately on Mondays or Fridays?

Mr. DASCHLE. I do not recall the last time we had a vote on Monday or Friday.

Mr. BAUCUS. Is there any reason the Senate cannot meet, do its business, and vote on matters of importance on Mondays and Fridays?

Mr. DASCHLE. The Senator from Montana raises a very good point. It used to be that we considered a workweek working 5 days. The workweek is becoming more and more 3 days. Not only that; our work periods are only 3 weeks. Then there is no workweek at all. It is a remarkable juxtaposition.

First of all, we have a limited time each week. Then we have these periods for which there is no legislative work. Then we are told we don't have time to bring up the minimum wage. We don't have time to bring up issues that are of importance to families all across this country.

The Senator is absolutely right.

Mr. BAUCUS. Maybe the Senator can answer another question.

I think the Senator may have a good answer for this. But I don't. Why is it

that the Senate spends so much time debating campaign contributions and campaign expenses at such astronomical and almost exponential rates so they can get elected but doesn't want to be here to do the Nation's work?

Can the Senator explain that discrepancy?

Mr. DASCHLE. I wish I could. All I know is that if you take what it costs to get elected to the Senate and divide it over the number of legislative days, it comes out to millions of dollars per day. It is a remarkable change in the circumstances we face since I have come to the Senate.

Mr. BAUCUS. Isn't it true that people at home who elect us want us to do the Nation's work? Isn't that what the people at home expect us to do?

Mr. DASCHLE. We are talking about minimum-wage workers working 40 hours and sometimes 80 hours a week. If we are not in session long enough to address the concerns they have, it seems to me, we will have a lot of explaining to do to a lot of those people who are wondering: If they are working that long, why can't we work a 5-day week?

Mr. BAUCUS. Didn't we just get a pay raise that went into effect this year?

Mr. DASCHLE. It was a cost-of-living increase.

Mr. BAUCUS. It went into effect this year.

I compliment the Senator. I compliment both Senators for what they want to do. I want to join them. To me, it is a tragedy that the Senate is not doing the Nation's work, particularly on an issue such as the minimum wage. I commend the Senators.

Mr. DASCHLE. The Senator makes a good point. I defended the cost-of-living adjustment. I think there are times when we have to recognize we want people in public service. But if we want to bring about the kind of cost-of-living increases that we understand we need at our salary level, I think everyone would also understand the need for a cost-of-living adjustment for minimum-wage workers to at least stay equal to the poverty line, and to at least give them some encouragement not to go back on welfare.

I appreciate very much the Senator from Montana pointing out that matter.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I see others who wish to address the Senate.

On this issue of the scope of what we are talking about and increasing the minimum wage 50 cents and 50 cents, as I understand it, all Americans combined earn about \$4.2 trillion per year. The impact of a \$1 wage increase over 2 years would be one-fifth of 1 percent of the national payroll. This is effectively what we are talking about.

If the leader has given up the floor, I ask for recognition on my own right.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I see others who desire to be recognized. But

I want to at this time join with our leader, Senator DASCHLE, in the introduction of this measure. He has pointed out that it is 50 cents this year and 50 cents next year. That is a very modest increase.

We have been debating this issue for the last 2½ years. We have been denied the opportunity to bring this up to the Senate. We have been told by Republican leadership, day in and day out, that we haven't the time to debate this issue, that this is a complex issue that will impact inflation, that it will impact employment.

These are very important macroeconomic issues. We need time to debate.

Let the record show that our Democratic leader and others introduced this measure this afternoon. We are prepared this afternoon, on a Thursday in late March, to consider this legislation and deal with amendments, as we have done day in and day out over the period of the last 2 and a half years since we introduced minimum wage legislation. But we are prepared to deal with those arguments and finally take action.

We are being denied the opportunity as elected officials of our respective States to be able to have a vote on the increase in the minimum wage because of process, because of procedures, and because of the rules of the Senate. That is so today. But it isn't always going to be that way. As the leader pointed out, we are strongly committed to getting a vote on this measure as soon as we possibly can. We would like to do it in an orderly way so Members can participate in the debate and offer amendments. We can reach a final resolution. But if we are denied that opportunity, we are going to find a way or means to insist that the Senate address this particular issue.

I will just take a few moments to review exactly where we are in terms of the people about whom we are talking and those who would be the beneficiaries of this particular action.

We have taken action at other times in our history in order to provide for and to say to those who are working at different levels of our economy 40 hours a week for 52 weeks of the year that they are not going to have to live in poverty. That is what this is all about.

Are we going to say in the United States of America that men and women who work 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year, who play by the rules, are not going to have to live in poverty in the year 2000 and 2001, when we have this extraordinary prosperity? We say yes; the other side says no. That is a principal difference between our two parties on this issue. The American people ought to understand it.

If TOM DASCHLE were the majority leader, we would be debating and acting on this issue this afternoon in the Senate. But we are not. We are denied it because of the Republican position. Our leader has pointed out, all Mem-

bers, Republicans and Democrats, were quite willing, without delay, without any kind of prolonged debate, to take the cost-of-living index increase of \$4,600 without delay, which is what our Republican friends want us to do, delay the increase of the \$1 minimum wage over 3 years. We didn't hear any of them say during the debate on the increase in the cost of living of \$4,600: Spread that out.

No, no, no, we took that quickly.

We want for those working, who are needy and who are poor and who are struggling, we are saying we will spread out your increase of \$1 over 3 years. How does anyone dignify that position?

We can see what has happened. The bottom fifth of families have fallen behind some 6 percent. This is from 1979 through 1999, over the last 20 years. Middle-income families are working harder. Generally, additional members of the family are going into the workforce. These middle-income families have seen a 5 percent increase in income. But most of them are working longer.

The United States of America today has workers working over 50 hours more a year than any other industrial society in the world. They are working harder and barely hanging on. Look what has happened to the top 5 percent of income families, those earning \$246,000 versus the bottom 20 percent earning \$12,500. Of the bottom 20 percent, many are minimum wage earners, with incomes of \$10,000 or less.

Look what has been happening in the workforce during this period. People have always said the real issue in question for wage increase is productivity. There must be an increase in productivity for a wage increase. Look what has happened regarding productivity and the American worker. The real value of the minimum wage drops as productivity grows. We have had one of the greatest spurts in American productivity in the history of this Nation by American workers in recent years. At the same time, the real value of the minimum wage has collapsed. We have a dramatic increase in productivity, with more goods being produced by these workers, and they are still getting paid less and less.

What is the possible justification for that? Every indicator we have—the size of employment, the impact on inflation, the issues of productivity—all come to the same conclusion, that this Nation at this time as never before can afford an increase in the minimum wage. That is what this is about.

Finally, as the leader has pointed out, we have found now in order to get some action in the House of Representatives in the Senate of the United States, our Republican leader said we are going to "piddle" out an increase in the minimum wage over 3 years. We will take 3 years. However, we will provide \$75 billion in unpaid for tax expenditures.

I hope we don't hear from the other side about being responsible economi-

cally. Mr. President, that is \$75 billion for 3 years.

That wasn't good enough for the House of Representatives. Do you know what they said? We will give you 2 years, but we have \$122 billion in unpaid-for tax cuts where 94 percent of the benefits go to the top fifth. Is that not interesting? We have to take care of the small little mom-and-pop stores; we have to help them out. We are interested in doing that. We would work with our Republican friends in terms of the mom-and-pop stores. Our Democratic leader indicated a willingness to do that. We did it in the last minimum wage increase. We are glad to take modest steps in order to be able to do that. We heard we are going to have some tax expenditures in order to protect the mom-and-pop stores. Except under this tax cut, mom-and-pop stores aren't helped; 94 percent goes to the top fifth.

Maybe that goes over in some areas of the country, but we want our friends on the other side to know this issue will not go away.

When we have that kind of action that has been taken previously, a delayed minimum wage increase spread out over 3 years, added to a \$75 billion in unpaid-for tax expenditures, it makes me wonder. How many times have we come on the floor of the Senate saying: Let's do something about Head Start; let's do something about immunization, or on mental health. How much will it cost? Is it paid for? Is it paid for? Is it paid for? Well, you are not getting that, Senator.

I don't know what happened to that particular position where we have now \$75 billion and \$122 billion in play, holding that minimum wage hostage to benefit the wealthiest individuals in this country.

Can we justify that? Is it a position that is defensible? I don't believe so. It is wrong. Fundamentally, it is wrong.

This issue is basically a women's issue because the majority of those who receive the minimum wage are women. It is a children's issue because many women who are receiving the minimum wage have children. This is about the quality of life. As the Council of Economic Advisers has pointed out, the children in minimum-wage families spend 22 hours a week less with their parents than they did 20 years ago.

When we talk about the minimum wage, it is a family issue. It is a civil rights issue because many of the people who earn the minimum wage are people of color. And it is a fairness issue because it says in the United States we stand for men and women who work hard, play by the rules, and they ought not to live in poverty. We believe the overwhelming majority of Americans support it.

I thank our leader for bringing this matter to the Senate again and for all of the leadership he has provided. I am proud to stand with some of my colleagues on this side who have stood for

that kind of increase and for the brave few on the other side who have joined. As the leader has pointed out, we will have this issue up one way or the other. It will come back again and again and again until we get fairness in our society for working men and women.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I hope people listened to the words of the Senator from Massachusetts. He couldn't be more right on; namely, it is the right thing to do. Purely and simply, it is the right thing to do. For that reason only I urge Members of the Senate and my colleagues to take requisite action to get to the issue, pass the minimum wage, and do the right thing, which is pass this very significant increase in minimum wage.

TRIBUTE TO SEAN-MICHAEL MILES

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I want to pay tribute to a young man, Sean-Michael Miles. Slightly over a year ago, his life was taken tragically in an automobile accident in Bozeman, MT, while he was home celebrating the Christmas holidays with his family. Everyone privileged to know Sean was touched by his contagious zest for life. He was among the very best to emerge from our State, from "The Last Best Place." He was a shining star. He is my friend.

Sean's father and I grew up as neighbors. We went to school together and remained close friends ever since. I might add, Sean's grandmother, affectionately known as Granny Miles, was one of my baby sitters. I know this family well. Their strength and love for one another is an inspiration to all of us who know them. Sean-Michael's future was as bright as one could imagine. He graduated at the top of his class in Bozeman High School in 1997 and was selected by his classmates to deliver the commencement address. That same address, filled with familiar compassion for our Native American heritage, is still talked about today. Such was its honesty, its power, its celebration of promise.

At Princeton University, where Sean was in his second year, he was admired as an exceptional writer, an accomplished artist and musician. Perhaps a classmate put it best: Sean was totally brilliant and completely humble, a cool combination.

Following his graduation from Princeton, Sean intended to return to his beloved Montana and commit himself to a career dedicated to writing and the preservation of our last remaining wildlands. Sean enjoyed considerable gifts, and was truly living up to them.

Sean wanted to make the world a better place, and believed completely that one person can truly make a difference. There was no cynicism in his life. He befriended the friendless, and

remembered the forgotten. Above all, he was making a difference. It is a loss beyond Montana's boundaries as well. Professor John McPhee of Princeton echoed such sentiments:

By my lights, Sean-Michael Miles was the best that we can do—bright, responsive, hardworking, clear in expression, clear in thought, and with a personality immediately likable, immediately demanding respect. We will all miss him terribly.

Sean enjoyed a way with words. I would like to share a small piece of his brilliant work.

After climbing atop a remote buffalo jump, he discovered the "drive lines" that the Native tribes of our region used centuries ago to funnel herds of bison over the cliff's edge. Looking out beyond that edge, toward the vast expanse of the Absoorka Beartooth Wilderness, Sean wrote:

Whenever I think of the changes sweeping over Montana like a spring storm, a lump forms in my throat. My first breath was drawn from mountain air.

Yet I know that this land may pay a price for being beautiful, as change advances, carrying with it the prospect of loss. It is a land I desperately love. It is a part of me. It hurts so much to care so much. Yet as a Westerner, I am invited to breathe it all in deeply each day.

Despite change and loss, a drive line containing wisdom offered through memories stretches before me. For now I am satisfied to walk along its path, eyes fixed on what remains a geography of hope.

Sean-Michael Miles was proud to live his entire life surrounded by the majestic spine of mountains that he fondly referred to with the Blackfeet phrase, "the backbone of the world."

Sean's death casts a dark shadow over the future of those of us who knew and loved him. Yet it is the light he offers that we commemorate today.

I have risen today to announce that I will create a fellowship in Sean's name that will focus on the conservation issues that were so dear to him. I am also pleased and honored to announce that the first Congressional Fellow serving in this prestigious position will be Sean's beloved sister Michelle. Her younger sister, Shaleen, once served as Democratic page on the floor of the Senate. So today, Michelle, who is sitting behind me, I welcome you to my staff, and I know that you bring with you your brother's finest qualities. May the legacy of Sean-Michael Miles, who walked with the silent feet of reverence through the wilds, forever serve as a source of inspiration for generations to come.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, prescription drugs currently constitute the largest out-of-pocket health care cost for seniors. Over 85 percent of Medicare beneficiaries take at least one prescription medicine, and the average senior fills eighteen prescriptions per year.

Because prescription drug coverage was not a standard part of health insurance when Medicare was enacted 35 years ago, many seniors must pay for the high cost of prescription drugs out of their own pockets. We are now facing a crisis of monumental proportion for many older Americans.

The simple fact is, the high cost of today's modern medicines and the absence of Medicare coverage have placed needed medications out of reach for too many seniors. Most older Americans must juggle daily costs like groceries and utilities with paying for medicine. They are being forced to compromise by buying only a portion of the needed medications, too often making their treatment regimens incorrect and ineffective. Without the proper medication and dosage for conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart problems, seniors may find themselves faced with even more costly hospitalizations and compromised health.

Recently, I received a letter from Reverend Lois Congdon of Decatur Georgia. Reverend Congdon wrote to me about her impending retirement. She told of her expensive drug treatment costs and the coverage she was currently receiving under her employer-based insurance plan. Without her current salary, and once she is placed on Medicare, Reverend Congdon will no longer be able to afford her expensive prescription drugs. Even supplemental prescription coverage such as medigap offers only limited benefits and is too expensive for most seniors. Currently only one-fourth of Medicare enrollees have supplemental drug insurance and the number of firms offering such coverage has declined by 25 percent in the last four years alone.

Last month, I cosponsored legislation to provide similar prescription drug coverage for military retirees. The bill would enable military retirees over age 65 to use the National mail order pharmacy program for drug coverage. However, affordable prescription drug coverage is a benefit that all seniors should be able to obtain, not just armed service men and women. Seniors make up 12 percent of our nation's population and they purchase over one-third of all prescription drugs in America. Most older Americans live on fixed incomes of \$15,000 a year which is adjusted slightly for inflation each year. However, for far too long, the rate of increase in prescription drug costs has exceeded the rate of inflation. This situation has created a need more urgent than ever to strengthen the Medicare Program with a prescription drug plan, and thereby protect millions of American seniors from more costly hospitalizations and treatments.

Expanding Medicare by adding a prescription drug benefit will bring the program in line with the realities of modern medicine. Prescription drug coverage is essential to the delivery of 21st century medicine. These medicines keep people healthy, independent, and out of the hospital. To not include prescription benefits in Medicare today is