

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

akin to not including a major form of treatment such as a surgical procedure when Medicare was established in 1965. It is absolutely unthinkable. Too many seniors lack dependable drug coverage and their health is being compromised. I am committed to providing Medicare coverage for prescription drugs, and promise to continue fighting for America's seniors. The Congress must move forward expeditiously to adopt legislation to accomplish this important objective.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FITZGERALD). The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. ROTH. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. ROTH and Mr. MOYNIHAN pertaining to the introduction of S. 2277 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MEASURE READ THE FIRST TIME—S. 2284

Mr. MOYNIHAN. Mr. President, I understand that S. 2284, introduced earlier today by Senator DASCHLE, and others, is at the desk, and I ask for its first reading.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill for the first time.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2284) to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage.

Mr. MOYNIHAN. I thank the always generous clerk.

I now ask for its second reading and object to my own request on behalf of the other side.

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

Mr. MOYNIHAN. If the distinguished Chair understands that, he understands more than I do. But the matter is now concluded. Once again, I suggest the absence of a quorum. And thank Heaven for Mr. Dove.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GORTON. 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. GORTON. Mr. President, what is the business before the Senate?

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business.

Mr. GORTON. With any time limitations?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There are none.

PIPELINE SAFETY

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, last week the city of Bellingham was the site of a Senate field hearing on pipeline safety. This hearing comes after the unspeakable tragedy that took place when three young boys were killed after a gasoline pipeline exploded in Bellingham on June 10.

I want to share with you my thoughts from the hearing and outline future congressional action as the Senate Commerce Committee prepares to reauthorize the Office of Pipeline Safety this year.

Unfortunately, my Senate Commerce Committee colleagues were unable to attend last Monday's hearing in Bellingham, but I believe the committee has no greater priority than to making sure the pipelines running underneath our schools, neighborhoods, churches, and senior centers are safe.

Pipeline safety concerns aren't unique to Washington. We're seeing States such as Texas, Wisconsin, Florida, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania respond to various local pipeline issues from oil spills and leaks to siting battles. In the last decade, there were 3,917 liquid fuel spills and natural gas leaks, averaging roughly one per day. These accidents resulted in 201 deaths, close to 3,000 injuries and \$778 million in property damage. And for the first time, a National Pipeline Safety Conference will be held in Washington, D.C. next month.

Though the sacrifice is one that no family and no community should have to make, the tragedy in Bellingham would be even worse if we did not learn from it and apply those lessons to try to prevent other accidents. To this end, last week's hearing was invaluable.

While the cause of the explosion remains under investigation, here's what we do know:

We know that many people in Bellingham were unaware that a pipeline was even running through their neighborhood.

We know that the Office of Pipeline Safety ignored enhanced safety requirements, including increased inspections inside pipes, in highly populated and environmentally sensitive areas as Congress required in 1992 and 1996.

We learned that cities through which the Olympic Pipelines Company line runs have tremendous concerns with the integrity of the pipelines, and have had problems getting information and cooperation from the company.

We know that the National Transportation Safety Board has criticized OPS for its poor record of responding to NTSB recommendations. NTSB Chairman Jim Hall has even said, "There's no indication that the Office of Pipeline Safety is in charge or that its regulations, its inspections, its assets, its staffing and its spirit are adequate to the task."

We know that right now, the power to oversee and regulate the safety of the millions of miles of pipelines running underneath our communities rests with the federal Office of Pipeline Safety under the supervision of the Department of Transportation. And in the case of implementing pipeline safety standards in Washington State they have failed miserably.

We learned that only a handful of States have the power to implement tougher safety standards, and when States are given this authority, their safety record is equal if not greater to that of OPS.

So, where does this leave us?

State government, local government, and citizen groups in Washington State were quick to answer the wake-up call from Bellingham and examine what they could do to improve pipeline safety. What they found was that while there are significant actions Washington can take to prevent and respond to accidents, such as improving the State's call-before-you-dig requirements, increasing public awareness, and training emergency response personnel, there is a lot the state cannot do with respect to prescribing safety standards because Federal law pre-empts state regulations.

Today is already March 23. We know this is going to be a short legislative year. Many will say we won't have the time to address this issue this year. I disagree. Congress is due to reauthorize the Office of Pipelines Safety and we've been told the administration will submit its proposal to Congress any day now.

Senator MURRAY and I are supporting legislation to give states greater authority in adopting tougher pipeline safety standards. Given the Office of Pipelines Safety's failure to make pipeline safety a priority, its reluctance to cede any authority to states, I feel we must move forward.

When I asked both the Office of Pipeline Safety and the NTSB last week to take a position on our pipeline legislation, the answer was less than clear. After listening to the painful and damaging testimony that scoured OPS's safety record and failure to comply with congressionally-mandated safety requirements, I was speechless at their unwillingness to relinquish oversight authority to the states. The State of Washington, the people of Bellingham and communities along the pipeline route are ready and capable of implementing tougher safety standards. I demand OPS to take a firm position on this pipeline legislation.

I also request that my good friend and colleague, Senator JOHN MCCAIN, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, schedule a vote on the various pipeline safety proposals.

As I have said before, this pipeline legislation may not be perfect, and I believe we need to do some more listening before we arrive at the final pipeline safety proposal. NTSB officials highlighted the complexities of regulating pipelines that pass through a