

This plan will not work. If it was to work, then I'd have to become a Democrat . . .

That is a direct quote. KASICH is retiring from the House this year. Maybe he is doing it so he can reregister. It is quite clear that if he is a man of his word, he should become a Democrat because he was wrong in his prediction.

It is good once in a while to revisit history, to talk about what people said will happen, to go back and see what the record is.

Let's look at the record not in 1993, and what has transpired that has turned this economy on fire, but let's talk about the future. We in the minority believe in the future. We don't believe in the past, even though once in a while it is important that you look at history. We believe in the future. We believe the future in this country has been hampered, hindered, slowed down by the majority in the Congress, the Republican House, the Republican Senate.

We believe we should be able to have up-or-down votes and have a full debate without any restrictions. I know we have people who come and say: Sure, you can debate the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, but we are going to limit debate. We want you to have five amendments, and we will have five amendments.

Let's do it the way we have always done it in the Senate. Let's bring out the elementary and secondary education bill, complete it, vote on it, and go on to something else.

One of the actions we should take when we finish the debate on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is to provide money for modernizing our schools. We need new schools some places. We need to renovate schools in other places. This is important for our children.

We need to do something about the health care delivery system in this country. Forty-five million Americans have no health care. The greatest power in the history of the world, and we have 45 million people who can't go to the doctor when they are sick. That is an embarrassment. How can President Clinton go to the G-8 when we have 45 million people who have no health insurance? I, as a Member of the Senate, am not proud of that fact. That number is going up 1.5 million every year. Next year, it will be almost 47 million. We don't even talk about that anymore. We don't talk about the uninsured.

We are now talking about a small number of people who are insured. We are talking about the Patients' Bill of Rights. I am glad we are doing that. But we are ignoring the 45 million people. We need to pass a Patients' Bill of Rights so we have doctors again taking charge of patients, not a clerk in Baltimore determining whether or not someone can have an appendectomy or an MRI.

When I was a young man, my first elected job was to the board of trustees. I was elected to the board, and

later I became chairman. I was a young man. This was for the largest hospital district in Nevada. It was called the Southern Nevada Memorial Hospital. When I came there, over 40 percent of the seniors who came into our hospital had no health insurance. In those days, when you came to the hospital, you had your mother, brother, neighbor, or somebody else who had to sign and be responsible for that bill. If they didn't pay the bill, just as all hospitals in America would do, we would go after you with a vengeance. We would go after your wages, your car, your house. We had a very aggressive collection agency that would go after bills of seniors who did not pay.

When I was on the board of trustees, Medicare came to be. Bob Dole voted against that, and he was proud of that. Dick Arney said it was a bad idea. Medicare is not a perfect program—far from it—but it has given dignity to senior citizens because they don't have to beg for health care. When it came into being, prescription drugs weren't a big deal. Prescriptions did not keep people alive. They did not make people live more comfortable lives. Today, the average senior citizen gets 18 prescriptions filled every year. We can't have a program for senior citizens in health care that doesn't include prescription drugs. That is part of the future in the Democratic vision. We want prescription drug benefits in Medicare. We want prescription drugs to be more affordable for everybody.

There is a stereotype out there that someone who gets minimum wage is a teenager flipping hamburgers at McDonald's. Over 60 percent of the people who draw minimum wage are women, and for over 40 percent of those women, that is the only money they get for their families—nothing else. Minimum wage is not just for people flipping hamburgers at McDonald's; it is for people earning a living, keeping people off welfare. I think it would be nice if we increased the minimum wage. I believe people need dignity with work. The minimum wage is one of those things that does just that.

I come from the West. I remember with fondness that on my 12th birthday my parents ordered me a 12-gauge shotgun out of the Sears and Roebuck catalog. I was 12 years old, and I had a 12-gauge shotgun. They paid \$28 for it. I loved that gun. I still have it. I got the stock reworked. It was bolt action. I have been a police officer and I carried a gun. I have a lot of guns—a rifle, a shotgun, pistols. So I understand guns. But I still think it is not a bad idea if we have a law so that crazy people and felons can't buy guns.

What have we as Democrats been trying to do? We have been trying to close loopholes, saying that at pawnshops and gun shows where there are loopholes, where criminals and crazies buy these guns, we want to close those loopholes. We can't even vote on that. They keep stopping us. We don't have the opportunity to do that. As my

friend from North Dakota, Senator DORGAN, has said—he uses these one-liners—I don't believe you need an assault weapon to go deer hunting. If you do, you should find another hobby. Some of these comments on the gun safety issues reflect, I think, what the American people really think.

I could talk more, but I think it is too bad that we are here in morning business, not able to address some of these very important issues.

One of the issues that tears into my heart every time I mention this is that we need to do a better job of helping kids to stay in school. I say to my friend from Minnesota, who was a college professor before he came here, at one of the very fine institutions of higher learning in America, Carleton College—and we have lots of them—I know the Senator from Minnesota got the best students. But there are a lot of the best students who didn't have the opportunity to come to his institution. A lot of them dropped out of school.

We have 3,000 children who drop out of high school every day in America and 500,000 a year. Every time a kid drops out of school, he or she is less than they could be. I have tried on the Senate floor, with my friend from New Mexico, Senator JEFF BINGAMAN, to pass legislation that would set up in the Department of Education a branch whose sole function in life would be to work on the dropout problems we have. The House passed it. Last year, it was defeated on a straight party line vote in this body.

I think we need to do something about that. I think we have the luxury of doing so. I think we should do something. I know my friend from Minnesota is an expert in this field. I talk about people having no health insurance and people who have health insurance treated poorly. What about the problems we have with mental health in this country? It is an ignored segment of our society. The Federal Government, I believe, has a role and obligation to do something about the many problems facing Americans today, not the least of which is 31,000 people who kill themselves every year. We have to better understand that. I wish we were debating some of these issues today.

I didn't want the day to go by, when we have time on the floor, without talking about some tough votes we have taken and how important it was that the 1993 Clinton Budget Deficit Reduction Act passed, how important it is to the history of this country, and how well we are doing as a result of that, and how much better we could do if we could vote on some of these issues I have outlined today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ENZI). The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

LET'S DO THE SENATE'S
BUSINESS

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I thank my colleague, Senator REID

from Nevada, for his really fine statement. One of the things I most appreciate about Senator REID is, his voice is a quiet voice, but it is a very firm and strong voice.

I come to the floor wondering why it is that on Tuesday morning at 11 o'clock we are in morning business, which means we can't really do the work of democracy. To me, the work of democracy is to focus on issues that are important to people's lives and to try to make a difference.

Mr. REID. If the Senator will yield, we have a very simple situation here. We in the minority believe we have the right to have a few judges approved by the Senate. Our dear friend from Michigan, Senator LEVIN, has had a judge pending for 1,200 days and he has not even had a hearing. We would like that person to have a hearing. Senator HARKIN from Iowa has had a judge pending who already had a hearing. We also believe we have some appropriations bills that need to move forward, and there are some strings on that. We want to work, but there are some things that we think, in fairness, we deserve. As a result of that, things have slowed down, which is too bad.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Unfortunately, I am well aware of the situation, and, again, I think we have reached a point where this is raw politics. People in the country this November can decide about what direction we should take. A calculation can be made that a Presidential race is coming up and we don't want to move any judges anymore, whether it is for the court of appeals or Federal district judges. But when there has been such a long wait, as a Democrat, I think it is important that Democrats draw the line and insist that some of these highly qualified men and women be able to serve in the judiciary.

I want to very briefly emphasize some of what was said this morning. I want to be out here on the floor of the Senate right now but not in morning business. I would like to be out here discussing a piece of legislation or with the ability to introduce an amendment to a piece of legislation that would make a positive difference in the lives of people in Minnesota and other people in the United States of America.

I was at a public hearing with Representative SHEILA JACKSON-LEE from Houston. It was in Houston in Harris County, which I think is about the fifth largest county in America. It was about the mental health of children. I will never forget the testimony of Matt, who directs the county correction system. He spoke within a law and order framework. He made it clear that he is a no-nonsense law and order person. But he also said people believe these kids who are locked up are locked up because they have done something bad. But the truth is—these are his statistics—about 40 percent of these kids are locked up because parents couldn't get mental help for them. There was nothing available.

I would like to be out on the floor of the Senate introducing legislation and passing legislation that would make it possible for these kids to get the help—so they wouldn't be locked up; so they could go on and live good lives.

There is a piece of legislation I have introduced with Senator DOMENICI called the Mental Health Equitable Treatment Act. I think it is shameful that there is for so many people who struggle with mental illness still such discrimination in coverage, and their illness is treated as if it is a moral failing when they don't get the coverage. When it comes to the stays in the hospital, physician visits, and what bills are covered, the coverage isn't there. They go without treatment. I would like to be on the floor of the Senate doing the business and work of democracy by trying to pass this legislation.

My colleague, Senator REID, said that a Patients' Bill of Rights is just but one step. I agree with him. I think it is important to people in the country to make sure that in this health care system they fit in; to make sure the providers fit in; and to make sure that the people who are denied access to care which they believe they need for themselves and their families have a right to appeal when there is some protection for them.

I would like to pass meaningful patient protection legislation. I would like the floor right now involved in that debate.

I introduced a bill for the Service Employees International Union. It is a great union. I was at a press conference with Andy Stearn, the president, and other members of the union. This is a union that knows how to organize workers. It is the fastest growing union in America. Probably 70 or 75 percent of the membership is women. Probably 70 or 75 percent of the membership is people of color. It is a piece of legislation that I think speaks to the No. 1 concern of people around the country; that is, health security for themselves and their families.

What we basically say in this legislation is, as a national community, here is what we can agree upon—that there should be health care benefits for the people we represent that is as good as we have in Congress. I am determined to introduce a resolution and have a vote on that proposition that the people we represent should have the same health security that we have.

In that legislation, we agree nationally, as a community, that health care coverage should be affordable; that when you have an income below \$20,000, you pay 0.5 percent and no more of your annual income; between \$25,000 and \$50,000, you pay no more than 5 percent of your income per year; and over \$50,000 a year, you would never pay more than 7 percent of your annual income.

Part of the problem with health care is not just the 44 million or 45 million who are uninsured, but all of the people when it comes to paying deductibles

and fees just can't afford it any longer. Too many people are not old enough for Medicare. Even if they are, they can't afford prescription drug coverage. They are too poor for medical assistance. Even if they are, it is by no means comprehensive. They are not lucky enough to work for an employer that can provide them with affordable coverage.

We also say nationally that we, as a national community, we agree there should be good patient protection legislation.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I would be pleased to yield.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Senator for his leadership. I say to those listening to this debate that Senator WELLSTONE of Minnesota has been a consistent voice on the floor of the Senate on the issue of health care. Many of us visit that issue and believe it is important. He has dedicated his life in Congress and the Senate to champion the cause of good health care for all Americans and is recognized nationally for his leadership on issues such as coverage of those who suffer from mental illness.

To put the agenda of the Senate in perspective for a moment, because the Senator raises an important question about 40 million Americans who have no health insurance, and many who are underinsured today, and the fact that this Congress refuses to even debate the issue or discuss the issue when we reach out for a good program that Senator KENNEDY, Senator WELLSTONE, and I supported to extend health insurance coverage to children of working families in many States, and reaching out in other areas, but we seem to be reluctant to address what most American families have to address every single day—the lack of security, and the lack of peace of mind when it comes to health insurance—I would like the Senator from Minnesota to comment on the fact that we are in possibly one of the greatest periods of prosperity in the history of the United States. We are talking about surpluses under the budget that may reach \$2 trillion. The only suggestion from the Republican side of the aisle is that we should use \$1 trillion of the surplus—almost half the surplus—to give tax breaks to the wealthiest people in America rather than addressing working families who are uninsured and people who are looking for the peace of mind by having some protection when it comes to basic health care.

Will the Senator from Minnesota reflect on what we have done on the floor of the Senate over the last 2 weeks in the context of what I consider the high priority he has raised?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I say to my colleague from Illinois that any time he wants to raise such a question, continue to do so. He got a little ahead of me. This is exactly where I want to go.

To finish this proposal on this legislation and what I like about it—then I

will talk about this in a broader context—we are saying to States within this framework, go ahead and decide how you want to do this. Once we agree on universal coverage, once we have agreed it will be affordable with good benefits and patient protection for all citizens, then States decide how they want to do it—one insurer, the employer pays, pay or play, we decentralize. I think it makes all the sense in the world.

Then the question is, What is the cost? Over the first 4 years, as you phase it in, it would be \$100 billion. If you are looking at the total cost over 10 years, it would be \$700 billion a year. That is not even a third of the projected surplus. So the question becomes, What are our priorities?

I argue, based on conversations and meetings I have had with Minnesotans—some people do not agree with this point of view, but I say honestly that I do no damage to the truth on the floor of the Senate or any other time. I hope when we summarize all of the discussions from people about how to reduce poverty, how to have good welfare reform, how to have a stable middle class, how to make sure our country does well in the international economy, how to make sure our children have opportunities, how to make sure we can reduce the violence—over and over and over again, the focus is on a good education, good health care, and a good job. That is on what people are focused.

There are two questions. I don't want to monopolize the floor. But one of them has to do with priorities. I think what happened during the last couple of weeks is, frankly, that there has been a major ideological debate, not, in some ways, dissimilar to what happened in 1981. To the extent that you are now going to have new tax cuts disproportionately benefiting, by the way, people at the very top—I am not totally against some tax cuts. In fact, I think some tax, targeted tax cuts make a lot of sense, especially focused on working families and the priorities of our families in the country. But if you are going to basically erode the revenue base, and you are going to say over the next 10 years here is \$800 billion or \$900 billion, no longer from this floor any kind of investment in children, education health care, prescription drug benefits so people can afford those benefits, but instead it is going to be tax cuts disproportionately helping those people who are already the very top of the economic ladder, then you are doing two things.

No. 1, there is no standard of fairness in terms of who gets the tax relief and who gets the help. But even more importantly than that, you are eroding the revenue base, making it impossible for Government through public policy to make a positive difference in the lives of people.

If you believe when it comes to education—whether it be pre-K, whether it be affordable child care, whether it be

what we can do K through 12, whether it would be higher education and spending for Pell grants, or when it comes to health care, or when it comes to a whole range of issues that affect people's lives in this way—if you believe that there is nothing the Government can or should do, fine. But that philosophy works well when you own your own large corporation and you are wealthy; it doesn't work for most people.

Talk to veterans about veterans' health care; talk to families about child care; talk to families about health care; talk to families about higher education; talk to families about affordable housing; talk to families about how they believe life can be better for themselves and their children. They don't believe for a moment that there is nothing we can or should do that would make a difference. Their discouragement is all too often that we don't seem to be on their side, and we don't seem to be speaking to them or including them.

We were in morning business at 11 o'clock this morning. The Republicans don't want to go forward with Federal judges. They don't want to have opportunities for amendments. They do not want to have opportunities for debate. They do not want to talk about minimum wage. They don't want to talk about affordable prescription drug costs. They don't want to talk about patient protections. They don't want to talk about health security for families or about a commitment to early childhood development. They don't want to talk about a lot of these issues. Therefore, I think the Senate is not doing the work for enough people.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I would be pleased to yield.

Mr. DURBIN. The Senator has come to this floor repeatedly and discussed concerns that I hear in Illinois and that the Senator from Minnesota hears in Minnesota from working families and middle-income families trying to do their business. They get up and go to work every morning. They think ahead for their children. They want to realize and live the American dream. The Senator in the parlance of politicians feels the pain of families and their anxieties about their future. It appears that the Senate in the last 2 weeks feels the pain of the wealthy people in America.

For those who think I overstate the case, this is an analysis of the tax cuts that have been proposed over the last 2 weeks in the Senate and the people who benefit from them.

The Republicans proposed that we take over \$1 trillion—over half of the surplus for the next 10 years—and give it in tax cuts to the wealthiest of Americans. We analyzed their tax cut package. Democrats support tax cuts. The Senator from Minnesota talked about tax cuts so people can deduct the cost of college education; so people can

deduct and have a credit for quality day care for their kids; for long-term care for their aging parents; for prescription drug benefits. The Republicans focused on the estate tax and a few other taxes.

I would like to ask the Senator from Minnesota to comment on this distribution chart because we analyzed the Republican tax cut. Who are the winners and who are the losers? The good news is that everybody gets a tax cut under the Republican plan.

But look at the tax cut. If you happen to make less than \$13,000 a year—these are people of minimum wage—the tax cut is worth \$24 a year, or two bucks a month.

Move up to \$12,400 in income. You are going to see \$82 a year, or about seven bucks a month. Now you get up to people making \$40,000 a year. We are up to about \$11 a month, or \$131 a year. If you are up to \$65,000, these folks are going to see a tax cut of about \$16 or \$17 a month under the Republican plan.

Fast forward and jump with me, if you will, to the top 1 percent of wage earners in America. People making over \$300,000 a year—people in the gallery don't have to raise their hands—folks who are making over \$300,000 a year are going to see an annual tax cut from a Republican proposal of \$23,000 a year. On average, these people make over \$900,000 a year, \$75,000 a month. And the Republicans have proposed giving them an additional \$2,000 a month in disposable income. For what? For what?

I can tell Members what these working families would do with \$2,000 a month. It is fairly predictable. They would be paying for the kids' college education. They would be buying health insurance to make sure they are covered. They would be paying for quality day care. They would be taking care of an aging parent. That is what working families would do with a tax break. That is what Democrats support.

The Republicans say no; give the biggest tax cut to those who are making the most money. The response? Well, Senator, you don't understand. These people are paying too much in taxes. People making under \$50,000 a year can use some tax relief, too. They are paying payroll taxes and facing a lot of problems every month.

The Republicans, frankly, won't listen to this. I want the Senator from Minnesota to comment on this distribution chart on his proposals of what we could be doing to help working families across this country.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, this brings into sharp focus yet another issue that should be our priority, that the majority party, the Republican Party, refuses to take up. That is campaign finance reform.

I am not making a one-to-one correlation between what any Senator says on the floor or how he or she votes or the position he or she takes on an issue. I am talking about the overall

bias of big money and the way in which it dominates politics. When people see this chart and hear the distribution of who benefits and who does not, the benefits are in inverse relationship to need. It violates every standard of fairness people have. People are all for some tax relief, if it is for families, if it speaks to the concerns of working families.

This chart is, to most people, a little outrageous. This feeds into the skepticism that people have. Most people would say that is exactly what the majority party is all about. The folks they represent are the folks who can; they are the heavy hitters. They are the contributors, the players, the investors. They are the ones who have the clout. They are the ones who hire the lobbyists. They are the ones who know how, who march on Washington every day. The rest are left out.

By the way, all too often, people unfortunately have that perception of both parties. What we have seen over the last week or 2 weeks only reinforces the skepticism and cynicism people have about who gets represented in the Senate and who doesn't.

I say to my colleague from Illinois, there is another issue. The issue is, above and beyond not meeting any standard of fairness, and above and beyond huge benefits but in inverse relationship to need, there is another issue. I believe part of what the majority party is doing—and, by the way, every Republican has a first amendment right to believe this is the right thing to do for the country—is essentially eroding the revenue base, giving away \$1 trillion in money so when it comes to health security for families, when it comes to long-term care for our parents or our grandparents or when it comes to how you can help a child so he or she by kindergarten can come ready to learn and does not fall behind and can do well in school, they don't believe there is anything the Government should be doing. I don't agree. I don't think most of the people in the country agree. I think in that sense that is clearly where the differences between the two parties make a difference.

I am a critic of the timidity of our own party quite often. The differences right now between Democrats and Republicans make a real difference in the lives of people in this country.

I conclude by mentioning another issue. I want to make sure I don't do this in a cheap shot, bashing way. I don't want to. There is a bitter irony because we will have an appropriations bill on the floor—maybe—this week where we will be raising our salaries and, by the way, what is tricky for me is our salaries are above the Federal employees, including support staff who work hard. I am not interested in bashing away at people. But we are not interested in raising the minimum wage. We don't want to raise the minimum wage for people. If there is one proposition that people in the country agree

on, people ought to be able to make enough of a wage so they can support their families and give their children the care they know their children need and deserve.

We are now at the point where we want to have a minimum wage bill on the floor; we want to raise the minimum wage. I say to Senator DURBIN, 75 to 80 percent of the people in the country believe that is the right thing to do.

Disproportionately, it is women in the workforce out there every day, people who are working 40 hours a week, almost 52 weeks a year, still poor in America, and still can't support their families. We are going to have an appropriations bill out here where we are going to be raising our wages—and we don't do badly—but this Senate, this Republican majority, is not willing to even entertain a debate and let us vote on whether or not we think we should raise the minimum wage.

These are big issues because they crucially affect the quality or lack of quality of the lives of the people we represent.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I will be pleased to yield.

Mr. DURBIN. This chart shows what is happening to families of three trying to survive on a minimum wage. There are lots of people trying to live while earning a minimum wage. It usually means multiple jobs. There are 350,000 in Illinois alone who get up and go to work for a minimum wage. They usually have a second job. One of my friends who works in the Watertower Place across the street from the hotel I stay in Chicago—she is a great friend of mine—is trying to take care of an aging mother. She has two jobs. She works in a parking garage as an attendant and then when she gets off that job she is a hostess in a restaurant. This lady works harder than most of us who think we are hard workers, and she is working for a little bit above the minimum wage.

What we see on this chart, I say to Senator WELLSTONE, is when we judge what the poverty line is in America, look what happened in about the year 1989. All of a sudden the minimum wage fell below the poverty line. Those of us who wanted to make sure people who get up and work hard every day get a decent paycheck and a chance to have a livable wage have asked to raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$6.15 an hour over a 2-year period of time. I guarantee you will not live a life of luxury at \$6.15 an hour, but you may be able to take care of some basic needs such as school uniforms for the kids, and shoes, maybe a decent place to live, a safer and cleaner place to live. Yet we cannot seem to get that issue before the Congress.

Republican leadership—in what has been a departure from the past where they said this is a bipartisan issue—has now said this is a partisan issue. Re-

publicans oppose a minimum wage increase. The Democrats support it and the Republicans have stopped us.

I will give an example. If I'm not mistaken, Governor Bush from Texas, his position is States ought to be able to opt out of the minimum wage increase. That is what he would do. So you would have certain pockets in the United States which would not have a minimum wage increase. That is cold comfort for people who get up and go to work and try to keep things together for their family. But the Senator from Minnesota is correct. The minimum wage has been plummeting in its buying power. Congress has the authority to take care of that issue. Congress has refused.

Instead of dealing with a minimum wage and giving people basically \$1 an hour increase, which comes out to about \$2,000 a year if my math is correct, here we decide to give \$2,000 a month in tax breaks to people making over \$300,000 a year. We cannot give \$2,000 a year to people who work hard every single day, but we can give folks making over \$300,000 a year under the Republican tax break plan, a \$23,000-a-year tax cut—almost \$2,000 a month. Those are the priorities. Those are the differences.

I think we try our best to feel the pain of working families. The Republicans feel the pain of the wealthy, the pain they must go through every day trying to decide what to do with another \$2,000 when they have a paycheck coming in of \$25,000 a month. What anguish, what pain, what frustration it must be to try to figure out another mutual fund or another vacation place.

How about the families worried about having a few bucks in the bank and paying for their kids' education?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I say to my colleague—and I am breaking my promise on last words, but on the whole issue of Governor Bush, talking about compassionate conservatism, I have no doubt he says it with sincerity. I am fond of this old Yiddish proverb—I think it is a Yiddish proverb—about how you cannot dance at two weddings at the same time. Frankly, you can talk about compassion. But the other problem is you cannot make a difference unless you are willing to, in fact, reach into your pocket and invest some resources.

My colleague mentioned minimum wage. It occurred to me that one of the truly awful things is there are two groups of citizens we say we care the most about—let's talk about compassion—the very young children and the elderly, the people who built the country with the strength of their backs, who now, toward the end of their lives, may be struggling because of illness. Think about it for a moment, I say to my colleague from Illinois. Let's talk wages and then let's talk investment. The men and women who take care of small children, who work in child care, or take care of elderly people—either home-based care or nursing homes—are the most miserably paid workers in our

country. We devalue the work of adults who take care of small children. We devalue the work of adults who take care of the elderly and those people struggling toward the end of their lives. They have the lowest wages and the worst—among the worst—benefits.

Raising the minimum wage would help. It would make a difference. So would affordable health care coverage. We could make a difference, I say to my colleague from Illinois, and we should. But we do not.

Is there any wonder at the turnover in both of these fields? I know in child care there is a 40-percent turnover every year, because if you graduate from school, college, you probably are going to have a debt. If you want to work in the child care field, you are looking at a \$9-an-hour job maybe with no health care benefits, or a \$7-an-hour job. The same goes for home-based care or for nursing homes.

My final point. The problem with this chart is that you are talking about the top 1 percent getting the lion's share of all of these tax benefits. You are also talking about eroding the revenue base over the next decade to the point where, in certain decisive areas of life, we will not be able to make the investment. I want to shout this from the mountaintop on the floor of the Senate and finish with these words.

When it comes to child care, if you want to talk compassion and you talk so much about small children and you care so much that there is nurturing care and they are challenged and come to school ready to learn, this is not going to be done on the cheap. This is going to require real investment if we are serious.

When it comes to the elderly—I went through this with my parents. Now I will be critical of us for a moment. I am all for tax credits. It is fine. But both my mom and dad had Parkinson's. We moved them to Northfield. We actually lived here and we moved them to Northfield, MN, to try to keep them at home. We did. We kept them at home for a long time. It got to the point where we would spend the night with them, our children would, and then we were just exhausted.

I sent a note out. It was the best day I ever had teaching at Carelton. I was desperate. I sent a note out to students and I said: Here is the situation with my parents. My dad in particular, he was from Ukraine, then Russia, and speaks 10 languages fluently and I think you would enjoy him. But we need some help. Would anybody be interested in spending the night?

The next day I got 170 letters back from students saying they would be more than willing to help. It was wonderful. Then at the very end he fell and broke his hip and we no longer could keep them at home.

But my point is, home-based care, enabling people to stay at home as long as possible, live with dignity, it is not done on a tax credit of \$3,000. It is a lot more expensive than that. But if we are

serious about this, we are going to have to make some investment. I can think of a better use of \$1 trillion over the next decade for our country, the United States of America, than tax cuts that disproportionately go to the top 1 percent of the wealthy. I think we can do better for people like my mom and dad, who are no longer alive today. And I know we can do better for these small children.

Mr. DURBIN. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. WELLSTONE. I yield.

Mr. DURBIN. I say to the Senator, he may recall we asked the Members of the Senate to take their choice, make a pick, make a decision. That is what we are sent here to do, cast a vote. Senator DODD stood up on day care and said: Shouldn't we help working families who are struggling to find a safe, quality place to leave their kids when they are off to work so they can have peace of mind and the children can grow in a positive learning environment, a safe environment?

He said: Instead of giving a tax break of \$23,000 a year to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans, why don't we talk about targeting tax cuts so families can have more of a tax credit to pay for day care? He took another step the Senator from Minnesota, I am sure, remembers. Senator DODD said: What about those families where the mother, for example, decides to stay home and raise the kids? Shouldn't we be encouraging that family? They are making an economic sacrifice for the good of their children. Shouldn't they have a tax break?

I agree with him. My wife stayed at home. I am glad she did. I guess we did not buy all the things we could have in life, but we sure ended up with three good kids, thanks to her hard work. She stayed home and helped raise those kids.

A lot of families make that decision, that economic sacrifice. Shouldn't our Tax Code help those mothers? Frankly, we are going to help you whatever your choice. Whether you go to work and need help with day care or stay home with your children, we are going to give you tax relief targeted to those families. The Republicans said: No, no, that is not a priority. Here is the priority. The priority is giving to people who make an average income of \$900,000 a year about \$2,000 more a month to figure out what they are going to do with it.

That is the difference. That is what the debate came down to.

The Senator from Minnesota, as he talks about long-term care, touches my heart, too. My mother passed away a few years ago. Thank goodness, she was able to stay independent for a long period of time, usually watching her son on C-SPAN and calling him in the evening to correct him on some of the things he said. I understand what families go through when they start making these decisions—and they are heartbreaking decisions—about their parents and grandparents. We believe

tax breaks should be available to those families who want to take care of their parents and grandparents, who are willing to sacrifice. But not on the Republican side. They are more concerned about this estate tax which, as my colleague from Minnesota says, disproportionately helps the very wealthiest people in the United States.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I say to my colleague, I remember the amendment well because I offered it with Senator DODD. But there was one other important feature to it. It was a refundable tax credit. It was going to provide some help for those families who did not come under \$30,000, which is critically important.

I say the same thing about higher education. If we want to do tax credits, make sure they are refundable. Again, think of our community college students. I have reached the conclusion that the nontraditional students have become the traditional students. I have reached the conclusion that the majority of students today in higher education are no longer 18 and 19 living in a dorm. The majority are 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, going back to school, many of them women, many of them with children. And, again, I can think of a better use of this money than a tax break for the top 1 percent of the population.

I far prefer to be out here on the floor passing legislation which will assure affordable higher education, affordable child care, and make a real investment in health care than some of these other areas.

Mr. DURBIN. If the Senator will yield before he yields the floor, most of us in the Chamber are well aware of Senator WELLSTONE's background. Having been involved in teaching in Minnesota and higher education in his professional career before his election, he understands, if not better than most of us, what higher education is about, what it offers, and also what it costs.

The Senator from Minnesota raises another point. We offered an alternative to this estate tax break which comes down to \$23,000 a year for the wealthiest Americans. We said we are going to help for the very first time in America working middle-income families. We are going to allow them to deduct the cost of college education expenses from their income taxes. It is not a major deduction, but it helps. It said, for example, up to \$12,000 a year could be deducted, and it would be treated in the 28-percent rate, which means a little over \$3,000 a year.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The time for the minority has expired.

Mr. DURBIN. Is anyone seeking recognition on the floor?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes, there is. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I thank the senior Senator from Wyoming. I thank him for all his efforts in organizing information to be shared with fellow Senators and with the American public.

BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I am compelled every once in a while to come to the floor to let people know what is happening. I know there are people watching the work of the Senate, and I know those people do not have, for the most part, a program or a scorecard. It is pretty hard to follow the rules of what is going on around here without that.

I make an attempt partly to explain to myself what is going on and take the opportunity to share it with other people who might be interested and might be listening.

Right now, we are in the closing days of a race for the U.S. President. It does not really have a lot to do with this body; it has a lot to do with our interaction with the administrative branch. Sometimes it is easier for rhetoric to invade the Chambers and to appear to be the most important thing we are doing.

What we ought to be doing is the appropriations bills for this Nation. We handle in excess of \$1.8 trillion. That is how much we spend on behalf of the American public. We ought to be debating that. We are not. We cannot get unanimous consent to proceed to a debate on an appropriations bill. We cannot move forward to talk about the \$1.8 trillion of appropriations for this country.

Instead, we have debate on things that we have debated, things that have been decided, for the most part, and, on some occasions, with some finality. Instead, we have people in this Chamber who would rather rehash votes we have already taken and retake them again. I guess the plot is to put fellow Members in a bad light in their constituency: They have already voted on these issues once, let's get them to vote again, and that will be progress for this country. You have to be kidding me.

The appropriations for this country are the important things that need to come before this body. They are the things about which we ought to be talking right now, and we ought to be talking about them in some detail. Pretty quickly we are going to run out of time. October 1 is the start of the new fiscal year for this country, and that is when we need to have the appropriations finished. That is when they start spending next year's money. That is when we hope and pray they will be spending it with the conciseness all of us envision.

When we are relegated to not being able to proceed on an appropriations bill because we cannot reach unanimous consent, we cannot debate in detail. Later, we are going to have to make massive decisions on this money, and in fact it is my belief the minority would prefer to have the President negotiating these things instead of the way our forefathers envisioned it: that Congress would come up with the mechanism and the plan and the votes to pass appropriations bills that the executive branch would administer.

That is not how it is working. The longer we push this process, the more it will be a nonvoted mediated expenditure without looking at the details. The amendments are the way the details get into this appropriations process, and it is not going to happen because we are shoving everything back through this process. We are keeping the appropriations of this Nation from being debated. We are not being allowed to proceed to the debate on important appropriations bills. Instead, we are hearing the rhetoric about how we should have minimum wage, Patients' Bill of Rights, education, and the other important things on which we have already worked, on which we have already voted that are in conference committee. Those conference committees should be finishing.

I will tell you what happened on the Patients' Bill of Rights. I am on the conference committee for the Patients' Bill of Rights. It is one of the toughest jobs I have had in my life. A number of us on the committee have spent from about 1 to 6 hours a day working on it, and it is largely nonscheduled time. When somebody discovers a place where there might be a negotiation breakthrough, we get together and talk about it. We work out words. We meet with the House folks, and we try to come to a conclusion.

We did that for months and months. Yet we hear on the floor of the delay in getting the Patients' Bill of Rights done. We were making major breakthroughs on the Patients' Bill of Rights. The Democrats in this Chamber bailed out of the process and said: Let's go back to the original House version. Sure, we have spent 3 or 4 months making important changes in this. I don't think they ever said that on the floor. But we had made 3 or 4 months of important changes in major areas. We had virtually wrapped up those areas as being much better than either the House or the Senate bill. That is what a conference committee is about. That is what a conference committee is supposed to do. We were in the process of doing that.

The only thing I can conclude from the Democrats going back to the original version of the Patients' Bill of Rights on the House side was that they could see we were making progress that the country would like, and they wanted to keep an issue instead. That is not how Government is supposed to be done. That is not the way we are supposed to do it.

We have debated these issues. We are working on these issues. But there is a desire to keep things as an issue instead of a solution, and I can't tell the Senate how much that dismays me.

There are a few other bills that could come up in this process, too. We are working on the elementary and secondary education authorization. It is done once every 5 years. The bill has come out of committee. It has been to the floor. We have debated it a few times. The amendments that are

brought for that bill are not education amendments. It is all of these other ones that the Democrats would like to vote on and vote on and vote on again because that keeps them as an issue. What we need to do is get some finality to the education issue. We need to have some agreement between both sides that we will talk about education, that we will make education decisions, that we will make education in this country better for every student in elementary and secondary schools. We have to do that. That is our obligation. That is our assignment. That is what America is counting on.

We can't get that job done if we keep going back and making political statements about issues on which we have already voted. If there is a vote and you want to use it against somebody, you can put the spin on it and use it against them. You don't have to have five votes on the same issue to spin it that way. That isn't how elections ought to be working in this country, but it does say something about how elections do work in this country.

The voters are more discriminating than that. They are able to tell the rhetoric from their desires. As I travel Wyoming—and I am back there almost every weekend—our whole delegation usually goes out on Friday because we don't have votes here, and we travel the State. In Wyoming that means by car. I have traveled 300, 500 miles on a weekend. The average town in Wyoming is about 250 people. The exciting thing about visiting those towns is you get to talk to about 80 percent of the people. You get a pretty good feel for what your constituents think we ought to be doing. They do think we ought to be doing the appropriations process in detail and getting it wrapped up.

They also think that some of the votes we have taken lately are very important from a fairness standpoint. One of those issues is the death tax. Practically everybody in Wyoming understands that death is a terrible thing and when you accompany death with a tax bill, it is even worse. That doesn't affect everybody in Wyoming. Those people understand that the death tax does not affect everybody in Wyoming. But they see a basic fairness issue where it does affect other people, and it affects the businesses for which they work. If the small business they work for has to sell off part of it for death taxes and can no longer function and goes out of business, it is their job. They understand that. It is the same with the farms and ranches in Wyoming and the rest of the country. If you have to sell off a significant part of your ranch or farm to pay the death tax, you may not have an economic remainder left. When that happens, you don't have the same culture in this country, and you do not have the same jobs. People lose their jobs. So they see the basic fairness issue of making sure that death is not a taxable event.

The bill that is out there for the President to make his decision on