

very much to cardiovascular disease. We know the identification of one of the major changeable risk factors for cardiovascular disease—that is, high levels of cholesterol—is not covered by Medicare. Clearly, we ought to cover those kinds of screenings under Medicare.

The American Heart Association recommends that all Americans over the age of 20 receive cholesterol screening at least once every five years. But when an American turns 65 and enters the Medicare program, their coverage for cholesterol screenings stops. That makes no sense. We have tried in recent years to improve the Medicare coverage of preventive services. We now cover screenings for breast, cervical, colorectal and prostate cancer, testing for loss of bone mass, diabetes monitoring, vaccinations for the flu, pneumonia, and hepatitis B. Now we must provide Medicare coverage for cholesterol screenings as well.

I intend to introduce legislation that would add this important benefit to the menu of preventive services already covered by Medicare. I have just mentioned also the substantial amount of new research going on at the National Institutes of Health.

I confess that my passion about this issue comes from my family's experience—in the first case, a tragic experience. In the second case, we hope for an experience that will show us the miracles of research that are coming from the National Institutes of Health that provide new treatments and new remedies and new cures for some of these illnesses, including heart disease. We hope this will offer my family good news in the future; not just my family, every family. Every family is touched and is acquainted in some way with this issue of heart disease. As I indicated, it is America's number 1 killer.

I have been pleased to work with the American Heart Association, a wonderful organization of volunteers all across this country that does extraordinary work. I will continue to work with them and work with the heart and stroke coalition in the Congress to see if we can't continue to make progress in battling this dreaded disease that takes so many lives in our country.

AIRLINE SERVICE

Mr. DORGAN. Madam President, I rise to speak for a moment about the airlines and the airline service in our country. Last weekend, the National Mediation Board released Northwest Airlines and one of its unions, called AMFA, from the mediation service that was going on.

Now we are under a 30-day march to a potential labor strike and therefore shutdown of airline service. It is not just Northwest Airlines. We have a United Airlines dispute in front of the National Mediation Board. We have a Delta Airlines dispute there, and an American Airlines dispute.

What has happened in recent years with the airlines, not just with respect

to these labor issues, but with respect to the way the airlines have remade themselves since deregulation, is very troubling to me and should be very troubling to most of the traveling public in this country.

I mentioned earlier, today is Valentine's Day. I suggest for a moment that you might want to take a trip on Valentine's Day. If you want to go to Bismarck, ND—and if you say no because it is February, I would admonish you that Bismarck, ND, is a wonderful place and it is not all that cold in the winter—guess what the walk-up cost for a flight to Bismarck, ND, is—\$1,687. But assume your sweetheart is very special and you decide, I am not going to go Bismarck. I am going to Paris, France. Do you know the fare you can find to Paris, France today? It is not \$1,687. We have found walk-up fares to Paris, France, for \$406; or Los Angeles, \$510. So fly to Bismarck for \$1,687 or Paris, France, for \$406.

Ask yourself, what kind of a nutty scheme is this that these private companies have developed a pricing scheme that says: If you fly twice as far, we will charge you half as much. But if you fly half as far, we will charge you twice as much.

Using Bismarck again, if you have a hankering to see the largest cow on a hill overlooking New Salem, ND—the cow's name is Salem Sue, the world's largest cow—or to go to see Mickey Mouse at Disneyland in Los Angeles, you pay twice as much to go half as far to see the largest cow, or pay half as much to go twice as far to see Mickey Mouse. What kind of a nutty idea is that? Who on earth comes up with these pricing schemes? Deregulation comes up with pricing schemes that say, by the way, we are not going to regulate the airlines. They can compete aggressively between the big cities where a lot of people want to travel. That competition will drive down prices, and you have really nice prices among the large cities where people are traveling. Meanwhile, the rest of the folks get soaked with extraordinarily high prices and less service.

So what happened after deregulation is these major airlines decided they really liked each other a lot and started romancing each other and they merged. What used to be 11 airlines is now 7. They want to merge some more and they want to go from 7 to 3 airlines.

What happened through all these mergers? They retreated into the regional hubs, such as Minneapolis, Denver, Atlanta—you name it; they have retreated to regional hubs where one airline will control 50 percent, 70 percent, 80 percent of the hub traffic. The result is that a dominant airline controlling the hub traffic sets its own prices, and those prices are outrageous.

Now, here is the point: We now have outrageous prices for people in sparsely populated areas in the country. We have a system of deregulation in which the airlines have become unregulated

monopolies in regional hubs, and now we have a circumstance where United decided it wants to buy USAir, and American wants to buy TWA because TWA is going to be in bankruptcy, and it has been there twice. Delta is talking about buying Continental, and Northwest will soon be involved in the mix. They want to condense this down to three big airline carriers. Now, that is not competition where I come from. That is kind of an economic cholesterol that clogs the economic veins of the free market system in this country. We need to stop that.

I am considering legislation that would set up a moratorium on airline mergers above a certain size for a couple years so we can take a breath and understand what this means to the American consumers. The answer of what it means to the American consumers is quite clear to me. Some are rewarded with lower fares—if you are in the large markets where there is competition, while others are paying extraordinary prices to fly in small markets where there is less service and higher prices.

United says it wants to buy USAir. That combination means a bigger company with more market control. American says TWA is failing and it wants to buy TWA. More market control. The TWA thing—if I might just describe the circumstance—is, in my judgment, byzantine. It was purchased by Carl Icahn in a hostile takeover in the 1980s. I said this is unhealthy to put an airline company into these hostile takeover wars, with junk bonds and everything. Guess what the problem with TWA is? At the moment, Mr. Icahn, after having been through two bankruptcies with TWA, has an agreement post bankruptcy to sell seats on TWA at a 45-percent discount from the lowest public fare. This Icahn-TWA deal, termed the "caribou agreement," remains in effect through 2003. Mr. Icahn is vigorously contesting the bankruptcy proceeding because if the assets are sold, the company will cease to exist.

What kind of a deal is that when airlines become pawns in hostile takeovers and then you get sweetheart deals coming out of bankruptcy that impose that kind of burden on the back of TWA?

It doesn't look to me as though the public interest has been defined at all in these machinations. The point is, when airlines have become bigger and bigger and have retreated into dominant hubs, if there is a strike or lockout and the airline ceases operating, it is not like it was 30 years ago when, if your airline shut down, you had other airlines. In North Dakota, we had five different companies flying jet airplanes into our State. Now we have one, and we just got a second recently with a regional jet.

The point is, when an airline shuts down now, when you have dominance in a certain hub, entire parts of the country will be left with no airline service at all. Those airlines and their

employees have dramatically changed the circumstances of collective bargaining. There is someone else who must be at their table, and that is the American traveling public because their interests are at stake. A strike or lockout will affect their interests in a very dramatic way.

I wanted to make this point for a couple reasons. One, I think these proposed mergers fly directly in the face of public interest and ought not to be allowed. That is No. 1. We ought to stop this. We don't need to go to three airlines. That is, in my judgment, moving in the wrong direction. That is not in the public interest. We need more competition, not more concentration.

No. 2, and my final point, is when you have the kind of disputes that now exist before the National Mediation Board and the threatened disruptions of airline service, it will be devastating to the public and to this country's economy if you have entire regions with no air service at all. We went through a strike with the dominant carrier in our region about 2 and a half years ago and it was devastating. We can't let that happen again. There are four carriers with cases in front of the mediation board, one of which was just released. I say to those carriers and to the labor unions, because you have remade yourself in a different circumstance, with dominance in hubs all across this country, you have a different responsibility than you used to have in collective bargaining. You have a responsibility to the American public that didn't previously exist. This is not business as usual. There is another interest that must be seated at your table, and that is the public interest.

Understand that those of us in Congress, those who are strong supporters of businesses and strong supporters of unions, understand it is most important that we are supporters of the public interest, the people we represent, and supporters of the larger national interests in this country.

With what happened to the airline industry, the massive concentration and the critical dominance in regional hubs, these labor disputes are very troubling to me and to many others. They must not—I repeat—result in the shutdown of critically needed airline service to parts of this country that can ill afford to have that happen.

I say to the airlines and to the unions: Sit at that table and bargain. I am a big supporter of collective bargaining. Bargain and reach an agreement. Understand that the empty chair next to your discussion is a chair that represents the public interest, and that chair is not filled by someone who is sitting there as part of that discussion, but they are in that room overlooking those negotiations. Resolve these issues and keep that service from the company and its employees provided to the American people.

I hope my colleagues will join me in expressing loudly that having this country go to three major airline car-

riers is a step backward, not forward. It is a step toward concentration, not competition. It plugs the arteries of the free market system in a very unhealthy way for this country.

I will speak at a future time about concentration, and not just in the airline industry. I am concerned about what is happening in a range of industries in this country where there is concentration and antitrust behavior that ought to be troubling to the American people and this Congress.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to proceed for 12 minutes.

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

The Senator from Maine is recognized.

(The remarks of Ms. COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 326 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

CAPITOL VISITORS CENTER

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I can remember traveling home a day in July two and a half years ago when I learned on the radio that two Capitol policemen, Detective John Gibson and Officer Jacob Chestnut, had been murdered in the Capitol.

When there is a loss of life, it affects us all; but, these men were in the line of fire and prevented other people from being killed.

I also had a particular affinity toward Detective John Gibson because of the assistance he provided at a function when my wife took ill. He, in a very heroic fashion, exercised good judgment in helping with the medical problems my wife was experiencing. A short time after he gallantly helped my wife, he was murdered.

Furthermore, the deaths of Detective Gibson and Officer Chestnut were painful for me because I was a Capitol policeman. I put myself through law school working in the Capitol as a police officer.

The reason I mention these events is that I was stunned Monday to read that the visitors center that we as Members of the Senate and the House rushed forward to do something about following the murders of these two men was now grinding to, if not a halt, a slowdown. I rise today to express my serious concern and extreme disappointment with recent reports that construction of the much needed Cap-

itol visitors center may fall further behind schedule. In fact, the way things have been going, we must ask ourselves if the project will ever be completed.

On the front page of Monday's edition of Roll Call, the Hill newspaper, the headline read: "Visitors Center Funds 'Lagging,' Officials Say \$65 Million Short of Goal With Clock Ticking."

After all that has transpired, after all the statements we have heard on this floor and the floor of the House, I am ashamed we have found ourselves in this predicament. Any further delay in construction of the much needed Capitol visitors center must be prevented. We must take action as quickly as possible.

Every night I leave my office in the Capitol to go home, I exit through the memorial door. It is called the memorial door because there are two plaques on the wall commemorating Officer Chestnut and Detective Gibson. I see their faces each night as I walk out the door.

In response to these murders, many Members renewed our call for the construction of the visitors center which has been talked about for years. I can remember talking about this project when I was the chairman of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Committee. When I was chairman, we cleared the cars off the east front of the Capitol. There are very few automobiles out there now, but we did it, for security and the fact that it was an eyesore. Unfortunately, it's still an eyesore—that blacktop on the East side of the Capitol of the United States. The only superpower left in the world and we have an ugly blacktop out here. More important than the visual aspect, however, are the safety concerns. The reason Chestnut and Gibson were killed, in my opinion, is that they had no protection. A madman with a gun rushed through the door and shot Chestnut. Gibson valiantly came forward to protect a Member and others from being shot, and he was killed. A visitors center would enhance safety for these fine men and women who guard us. Men and women who guard the thousands of Americans who come to this building every day.

In addition to that, we always see people lined up out there on the east side of the Capitol waiting to get into the building. We see them during the spring and summer months. We see them during the fall months when school is out. Even during the winter months, they line up for blocks. People from all over America—from Nevada, Montana, Maine—come to Washington to visit the Capitol. They are forced—I say "forced" because there is no place else to go—to stand outside in the elements, whether it is raining, snowing, or 100 degrees, without the benefit of restrooms, a place to get something to eat, or a place to get something to drink. The Capitol visitors center would allow the Capitol Police to better protect themselves and all of us