

The bill is full of hassle-creating provisions, some reasonable, and some prone to abuse by aggressive creditors trying to get paid at the expense of others. In a thicket of compromises, Congress is losing sight of the goal of making sure that most debtors pay their bills while offering a fresh start to those who honestly can't.

That is the Wall Street Journal analysis.

This amendment will preserve the fresh start for those debtors who honestly can't make it because they are drowning in medical debt.

My colleague from Alabama said this is a bankruptcy bill. It only deals with the bankruptcy code and bankruptcy court reform, including banking measures targeted at credit card companies that Senator WELLSTONE suggested is inappropriate.

Why is it inappropriate? If the point of this legislation is to reduce bankruptcy, then it would seem to me that we might want to take a look at the big banks and credit cards that have been pushing for their legislation. They are the only ones pushing for this legislation. You are hard pressed to find a bankruptcy judge that supports this legislation. You are hard pressed to find a bankruptcy law professor, a bankruptcy expert of any kind, anywhere, any place in the U.S.A. that backs this bill. This bill was written for the lender. It is that simple.

That is why this piece of legislation doesn't hold them accountable. It has basically been written for them.

It is ridiculous on its face that this legislation divorces irresponsible behavior of the credit card companies from the high number of bankruptcies. All of the evidence points to the fact that lenders and their poor practices are a big part of the problem. It is outrageous that we don't confront them. There isn't a parent in this country that is not well aware of the ways in which these credit card companies are constantly pushing these loans onto our children or onto our grandchildren. Everybody knows we are bombarded with it all the time.

Both the House and Senate bills basically give a free ride to banks and credit card companies that deserve much of the blame for the high number of bankruptcies because of their loose credit standards. But even the Senate bill does very little to address this issue. There is a minor disclosure provision, and that is it. It is pathetic. Lenders should not be rewarded for reckless lending.

Where is the blame? If we are holding the debtors accountable, why aren't we holding the lenders accountable?

Again, I want to make the argument one more time. I think we know the answer. This legislation has the support of a lot of people, and the President says he supports it. As a matter of fact, there are going to be precious few votes against cloture.

I am going to come back out here next week again and try to delay this bill. I am not arguing one-to-one correlation of any one Senator's vote on

this legislation, but at an institutional level in terms of, if you will, where the mobilization of bias is. It seems to me it is crystal clear that this legislation is a tribute to the power and clout of the financial service industry in Washington. Let's call it what it is. This legislation is a tribute to the power and the financial might of the industry that has plowed millions and millions of dollars into this Congress.

Why has Congress come down so hard on ordinary folks who are down on their luck? Why is it that this legislation is so skewed towards the interest of big banks and big credit card companies?

I think the people who are going to be affected in a very harsh way are the 50 percent who file for bankruptcy because of medical bills. It is a double whammy—a medical bill you can't afford to pay, and maybe you can't work because of your illness or sickness or maybe it is your child's sickness or illness. A large part of the rest are people who are either out of work or because of the dramatic rise in single adult households by women because of divorce with children.

Do you want to say these people are deadbeats? I think these families just do not have these million-dollar lobbyists representing them. They do not get hundreds of thousands of dollars in soft money such as either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. They do not spend their days hanging outside the Senate Chamber to bend a Member's ear. I think what happened is the industry just got to us first.

The truth is—and I will conclude on this note—outside this building there is hardly any support for this legislation. It is a bad bill. It punishes the vulnerable and rewards the big banks and credit card companies for their poor practices.

I will tell you something. I am just trying to delay this, and then we will do it again next week. There are going to be very few votes, but I will say, even to my colleague from Iowa, who I insist is probably one of the best Senators in the Senate—I believe that; otherwise, I would not say it—this bill makes no sense to me. First of all, it made no sense to me when we started on this issue a number of years ago because the arguments were sort of outpaced by the data because all the bankruptcies supposedly were taking place. We were chasing a problem that did not exist, according to all the studies.

Now we are heading into difficult times. We are heading into hard economic times. More people are losing their jobs and medical costs are going up. We are going to make it hard for people to rebuild their lives. We are going to make it hard for people to rebuild their financial lives.

This piece of legislation is too one-sided, and it is too harsh. I will tell you, it is just testimony to the power of this industry. I do not do any damage to the truth when I say that when I am in a coffee shop in Minnesota, I do

not—I repeat this again—have people running up to me saying: Please, Senator WELLSTONE, pass that bankruptcy "reform" bill because we think you ought to go after all the deadbeats and all the people cheating, although you have no evidence to support that you have a lot of cheaters—not when 50 percent of the people who file it do so because of medical bills, with more and more people losing their jobs, and, as I say, the most dramatic rise is among single adult women who head households.

People do not come up to me and say: Please, do that. They want to talk about the health care costs going up. They want to talk about a fair price, if they are farming. They want to talk about their children and education. They want to talk about the struggle to find a good job that pays a good wage so they can support their families. They want to talk about the costs of higher education. They want to talk about their concern that they will not have a pension. That is what they want to talk about.

What in the world is the Senate doing making this a priority? The folks with the clout, with the power, and with the money got here first. I think that is what this is all about. I am going to continue to oppose this legislation.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ELECTING JERI THOMSON AS SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I send a resolution to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 129) electing Jeri Thomson as Secretary of the Senate.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the resolution?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, the resolution is agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 129) reads as follows:

S. RES. 129

Resolved, That Jeri Thomson be, and she is hereby, elected Secretary of the Senate, effective July 12, 2001.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH TO
THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Secretary-elect will present herself to the podium for the taking of the oath.

The Honorable Jeri Thomson, escorted by the Honorable TOM DASCHLE and the Honorable TRENT LOTT, advanced to the desk of the President pro tempore; the oath prescribed by law was administered to her by the President pro tempore.

[Applause, Senators rising.]

NOTIFYING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ELECTION OF JERI THOMSON AS SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I send a resolution to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 130) notifying the House of Representatives of the election of a Secretary of the Senate.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the resolution?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, the resolution is agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 130) reads as follows:

S. RES. 130

Resolved, That the House of Representatives be notified of the election of the Honorable Jeri Thomson as Secretary of the Senate.

NOTIFICATION TO THE PRESIDENT

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I send a third resolution to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 131) notifying the President of the United States of the election of a Secretary of the Senate.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the resolution?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to and the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, the resolution is agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 131) reads as follows:

S. RES. 131

Resolved, That the President of the United States be notified of the election of the Honorable Jeri Thomson as Secretary of the Senate.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I might take a moment to speak on behalf of what I know is the entire Senate body but in particular the Democratic caucus in congratulating Jeri Thomson. She has been a professional's professional for the last 30 years.

She has served, as most of our colleagues know, as the Executive Assistant/Democratic Representative in the Office of the U.S. Senate Sergeant at Arms. Her responsibilities included managing all institutional issues for the Senate leader and all Democratic Senators. She had the responsibilities for all the plans and the implementation of the issues conferences and other events for the Democratic caucus and managed all aspects of participation by Democratic Senators in the national party conventions.

But that is just the latest in a series of responsibilities that she has had that go back now almost three decades.

She was the Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Senate from 1989 to 1995. She served as the Chief Operating Officer of the Secretary of the Senate, managing 12 departments with approximately 250 staff members. Her responsibilities at that time included budgeting, policy and program development, and implementation of human resources management. The administrative reform and modernization programs were under her responsibility as well.

Prior to serving in that capacity, she was a senior staff member to Senator John Tunney; special assistant to the Sergeant at Arms; and the Deputy Director of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Jeri received her bachelor of arts from the University of Washington. She was Kodak fellow at Harvard University's program for senior managers in government. She was selected as one of the 100 top data processors in government, industry, and academia for her work in automating the legislative processes and procedures in the Senate in 1993.

That is her resume. What you don't know in reading the resume is what kind of person she is. I know of no more dedicated person in the Halls of Congress than Jeri Thomson. I know of no one I have had a greater joy working with than Jeri Thomson. I know of no one who loves this institution more than Jeri Thomson. I know of no one who has greater respect among our colleagues in the Senate than Jeri Thomson.

It should come as no surprise that Jeri Thomson is now our Secretary of the Senate. I commend her for all she has done. I thank her for what she has now agreed to do. I wish her well as she begins this very important new responsibility.

I might add that her family, David James and two daughters, Kaitlin and Kristin, and mother Louise are all here to help celebrate this momentous occasion. We welcome Jeri's family. We thank them for being a part of this celebration and we wish them and Jeri well as they begin.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I certainly join the distinguished Democratic leader in congratulating Jeri Thomson on her selection and election to be the Secretary of the Senate. I know that Senator DASCHLE, as majority leader, will have a very effective Secretary of the Senate in this fine person and that she will do her typical nonpartisan, fair and efficient job in this role.

We know Jeri. She has been here a long time. She is one of the institutions, if I might say—except for age, of course—of the Senate. She has always been very fair and very reasonable in her dealings with the Republicans in the Senate. We appreciate that. We know that is the way that she will proceed in the future. This is a very important role. If you go back and look at the history of the Senate, Senator BYRD certainly can tell us that this is a position we have had for years. The first Secretary was chosen on April 8, 1789, two days after the Senate achieved its first quorum for business. It is a very important role in the functioning of the Senate—the paperwork, administratively, the computers, the people serving here in the Chamber. There are so many important roles that that position requires careful consideration of, and work and development. I know she will do that.

I urge Jeri Thomson to do as I urged her predecessor, Gary Sisco, in that position, to make sure you do such a job that when you leave the position, the office and the position will be even better than it was when you took it over. I know you will do that. We extend to you our best wishes and our cooperation.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California is recognized.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I offer my personal congratulations and all good wishes to Jeri. I think she is going to be a superb Secretary of the Senate. What most people don't know about Jeri Thomson is that not only is she a talented professional, but she is a very nice person. She and I had knee surgery at approximately the same time, and I really never had a better friend during that period. She sent me books to read, made phone calls, even sent me a special pillow that could be used to help the pain from one knee to another. It was a wonderful gesture.

In the course of discussions about our relative injuries, over the past almost year now, I have come to know her very well. This is truly a distinguished woman because it is very hard to be an excellent professional and also to take the time that is necessary to reach out a hand to make someone feel a little bit better.

Jeri, you are all of the above. Congratulations and godspeed.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.