

Lugar	Reed	Snowe
McCain	Reid	Specter
Mikulski	Roberts	Stabenow
Murkowski	Rockefeller	Stevens
Murray	Sarbanes	Talent
Nelson (FL)	Schumer	Voinovich
Nelson (NE)	Shelby	Warner
Pryor	Smith	Wyden

NAYS—20

Allard	Ensign	Miller
Allen	Enzi	Nickles
Burns	Gregg	Santorum
Chambliss	Inhofe	Sessions
Cornyn	Kyl	Sununu
Craig	Lott	Thomas
Crapo	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—2

Domenici Kerry

The amendment (No. 2937) was agreed to.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:45 p.m., recessed until 2:18 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. FRIST).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Idaho.

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, I may be witnessing a first to see our majority leader as the Presiding Officer at this moment. Welcome to the podium. We are pleased to have you there.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EVERYONE ACT—Continued

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, we are debating welfare reform. It is critical to our country that we do this and revitalize it. It is a major piece of legislation that has been very successful over the years, getting people out of welfare into a productive job in our economy.

I don't know who the historian was who once said it. He was an economist and a historian. He said, The greatest form of welfare in the world is a good job in the private sector—we know that to be a fact—a good well-paying job.

When you cannot find that, welfare in our country is that safety net we have designed and defined for those who truly need it, but recognizing that it is not a place to stay; it is a place to catch you if you fall, to help you, and to provide for you and your family, but only in the temporary form so we can get people off of welfare and back out into the private sector and into a job.

In a few moments, the Senator from Massachusetts is going to talk about jobs and level of pay in those jobs. I thought for just a few moments it would be appropriate as we talk about welfare and as we talk about jobs and how much we pay for jobs as a minimum wage, that we ought to talk about job creation in this country and how critically important it is.

Some have said our recovery out of this recession has been jobless. Well, that is not true. A lot of jobs are being created out there, and a lot of people

are now going back to work—not as rapidly as we had hoped they would, but certainly they are headed back to work.

NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY

But there is a dark cloud over the horizon, and that dark cloud is there today because the Congress of the United States, and the Senate in particular, a year ago denied this country a new national energy policy and the ability to begin to produce energy, once again.

We are no longer energy independent. That one driving force we had in the economic matrix that said we could produce something for less—because we had the great ingenuity of the American workforce and because the input of energy was less than anywhere else in the world, so we could produce it better and we could produce it for less cost—is no longer true today.

If you went out this morning to refuel your car before you headed to work, you paid at an all-time high level of gas prices. Why? Because the Senate of the United States denied this country a national energy policy.

We know it is happening. We have seen it headed in that direction for over 7 years. Many of us have pled on this floor to develop that policy to get us back into production. But, no, we are not into production, we are not producing at a level we could be and we should be. We are not creating all the kinds of alternative fuels we ought to be. Why? Because we have not established a national energy policy in the last 8 years.

The world has changed a great deal. We are now over half dependent on foreign sources of oil. Of course, there are many who will rush to the floor and point a finger at OPEC or point a finger at the political turmoil in Venezuela and say: Well, that is their problem, and it is their fault we are paying higher energy prices. Or we will have that proverbial group that will run out and point their finger at big oil.

Why don't we point the finger at the Senate, for once, which has denied this country a national energy policy? The Senator from New Mexico was on the floor a few moments ago, Mr. BINGAMAN. He worked 2 years ago to get one. I helped him, and we could not quite get there.

Then the other Senator from New Mexico did produce a policy, and we passed it in a bipartisan way. It went to the House, and we conferenced it, and the House passed the conference. It came back here. It fell apart. It fell apart for one little reason or another, but the bottom line was the politics of it. The Senate of the United States has again denied the consumer and the working man and woman the right to have an energy source and a competitive energy price to go to work on, or to work with when they get to work, or to have for recreation, or to have to heat their home, or to have to turn the lights on in their house, and to illuminate and energize the computer they use.

The driving force of the economy of this country is not the politics of the street today; it is the politics of energy. It always has been. When we have competitive, moderate-to-low energy prices, the American worker can produce and compete with any workforce in the world. But today we are slowly but surely denying them that.

Natural gas is at an all-time high. Gas at the pump is at an all-time high. Electricity prices in many areas around this country are at an all-time high. The great tragedy is, many of those prices are artificially inflated because of the politics of the issue, because this Senate has denied the American worker and the American consumer a national energy policy.

Now, some say, well, the wealthy are going to get wealthy off of this. What about the poor? Has anybody ever calculated that high energy prices impact poor people more than any other segment in our society?

If you are a household with an average annual income of \$50,000, you only spend about 4 percent of your income on energy. But if you are a household with an income between \$10,000 and \$24,000, you spend 13 percent; you spend a higher proportion of your total income on energy. If you are a household of \$10,000 or less, or at about 130-plus percent of poverty, you spend almost 30 percent of everything you make on energy—whether it is the gas you put in your car, or the throwing of a switch to illuminate the light bulb in your ceiling, or the heat for your home.

High energy prices impact poor people more, and yet we will still hear these great allegations on the floor that somebody is going to get rich off of energy.

No. Poor people are going to get poorer with higher energy prices. That is the impact and the reality of the problems we face.

The United States is making do now with a lot less energy on a per capita basis. Some say: We can just conserve our way out of this situation. We are doing a very good job in conservation today than we did, let's say, 20 years ago.

Let me give you a figure or two. In the last three decades, the U.S. economy has grown 126 percent, but energy use has grown only 30 percent. In other words, as our economy grows today, as a rate of a unit of production, we use less energy. Why? Efficiencies, new technologies. But as we grow, we are still going to need more energy. So the old argument about conserving your way out—and, oh, my goodness, if I have heard it once on the Senate floor in the last 6 years, I have heard it 2 or 3 times, that automobile fuel consumption has dropped 60 percent in that 20-year period. And we ought to be proud of that.

That is partly a work of the Senate, but that is also the new technologies and efficiencies. Per capita oil consumption is down 20 percent since 1978.

Industrial energy use is down 20 percent since 1978. So the reality is, we have done well.

But if you want to create 800,000 new jobs, then it is going to take energy to produce them. Because it is energy that drives the great economy of our country. And when it is high-priced energy, then the jobs become high priced. When the jobs become high priced, then we worry about those jobs leaving the United States.

Why hasn't the Senate of the United States put this relatively simple formula together, that high-cost energy creates a less competitive environment in which we can produce. If we are going to talk welfare—and we are and we should; and we are going to reform it—and we are going to talk minimum wage, and there is no reason why we should not talk minimum wage—then we have to talk about the economy of creating jobs at the same time.

The production tax credit we are talking about for the energy field alone would create 150,000 new jobs. As I said, the bill we have in front of us—that should pass unanimously in this Senate, but it cannot get there—will create literally between 670,000 and 800,000 new jobs during the initial phases of the development of that kind of energy.

My message to the consumer today: If you do not like the price of your energy bill this winter, if you do not like the price of gas at your pump, if you are worried about your job because it may be going overseas, because your production is less competitive today, pick up the phone and call your Senator. Ask him or her why—ask us why—we did not pass a national energy bill. There is nothing wrong with doing that. Because we should have done that. We should have started down that road of getting ourselves back into the production. But, oh, no, we are bound up in the politics of this business, and somehow we just cannot get there. And try as we have for the last 5 years, in a bipartisan way, we have worked to do so.

We have a bill before us now that ought to receive a nearly resounding unanimous vote, but it failed in the Senate. Our failure means the jobs of America's working men and women are at risk, the household automobile is now much more expensive to operate, and you will probably want to turn your thermostat down next winter if gas prices continue to go as high as they appear to be going.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VOINOVICH). The Senator from California.

AMENDMENT NO. 2945

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk on behalf of myself and Senator KENNEDY and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from California [Mrs. BOXER], for herself and Mr. KENNEDY, proposes an amendment numbered 2945.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to provide for an increase in the Federal minimum wage)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. . . . FAIR MINIMUM WAGE.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This section may be cited as the "Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2004".

(b) **INCREASE IN THE MINIMUM WAGE.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)) is amended to read as follows:

"(1) except as otherwise provided in this section, not less than—

"(A) \$5.85 an hour, beginning on the 60th day after the date of enactment of the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2004;

"(B) \$6.45 an hour, beginning 12 months after that 60th day; and

"(C) \$7.00 an hour, beginning 24 months after that 60th day;"

(2) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by paragraph (1) shall take effect 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

(c) **APPLICABILITY OF MINIMUM WAGE TO THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 6 of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 206) shall apply to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

(2) **TRANSITION.**—Notwithstanding paragraph (1), the minimum wage applicable to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands under section 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)) shall be—

(A) \$3.55 an hour, beginning on the 60th day after the date of enactment of this Act; and

(B) increased by \$0.50 an hour (or such lesser amount as may be necessary to equal the minimum wage under section 6(a)(1) of such Act), beginning 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act and every 6 months thereafter until the minimum wage applicable to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands under this subsection is equal to the minimum wage set forth in such section.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I am pleased to offer this amendment with my colleague from Massachusetts who is the true leader on the issue of trying to raise the minimum wage so that people who are trying to get into the workforce, get off of welfare and subsidy, will be able to actually support their families so that we actually reward work, and it is going to make a huge difference.

Before I go into my remarks, I do want to, however, respond to my friend who spoke about how important it is to call your Senators and ask them to pass that Energy bill that we killed. I hope when you call us, you will tell us not to pass that one. That one was a travesty of justice for consumers. It was a terrible bill if you care about the environment. And it was a terrible bill if you believe that there is already too much corporate welfare because there were huge subsidies to the nuclear industry.

There were huge subsidies by way of giving a liability waiver to those companies that made MTBE, which destroyed drinking water supplies all over the country. The Senate was sending this bill over to a conference committee, and it comes back with this liability waiver. It is a terrible bill.

Yes, there are places we could drill in this country, where the folks want it there and the oil is there. Off the Gulf of Mexico, near Louisiana, certain places in Alaska, it makes sense. But it does not make sense to pass an Energy bill that is back to the future because it doesn't understand that times have changed and just a couple of extra miles of fuel economy and fuel efficiency in our automobiles can mean that we will have fields and fields of energy in the future.

The last point I want to make—and then I want to talk about this amendment which is important to this bill—is that on April 25 or thereabouts, taxpayers are funding a court case where DICK CHENEY, the Vice President, is refusing to reveal who came into his office when he put together an energy report and worked on an Energy bill. It is outrageous that taxpayers have to go all the way to the Supreme Court, essentially, because they are paying for the defense of DICK CHENEY, and he refuses to reveal who met with him about the Energy bill, what they talked about, and what their interests were. We know Enron was in that meeting. That much we know. But I don't know who else was there.

So I just wanted to answer the Senator from Wyoming, Mr. CRAIG, because in my view, we did a great service to the people by not passing that particular Energy bill. Let's pass an Energy bill that is a good Energy bill.

Now, I want to get to the amendment I sent to the desk on behalf of myself and Senator KENNEDY and lay the groundwork for why it is so important to this welfare reform bill.

The last time the Federal minimum wage was raised it was \$4.25 an hour. In 1996, it was raised to \$5.15. It was over a 2-year period. So that is 8 years ago; 8 years ago we raised the Federal minimum wage. Those people at the bottom of the economic ladder are living on \$10,700 a year.

I don't know if my colleagues are aware of what it costs to rent an apartment, if you have a family, and you are trying to raise a family on this amount of money. I guess you might be lucky, in my neck of the woods, to try and get some sort of an apartment for \$800 a month or \$850, if you could even find one. You can't find it around here, a decent size place. That would use up the entire salary of someone living on the minimum wage.

I say to my colleagues, please support this. How can we expect people to live on this amount of money, to be able to afford rent, food, the minimum requirements for raising a family?

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

Mrs. BOXER. I am happy to yield.

Mr. REID. It is true, is it not, that 60 percent of the people who draw the minimum wage are women?

Mrs. BOXER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. REID. And for 40 percent of those women, that is the only money they get for them and their families?

Mrs. BOXER. My friend is accurate.

Mr. REID. So this is an issue that doesn't relate to kids at McDonald's flipping hamburgers. It relates to people supporting their families. I greatly admire the Senator for being the lead person on this amendment dealing with the minimum wage that will affect families in Nevada and around the rest of the country. Is that not true?

Mrs. BOXER. That is absolutely true. In my State we have a minimum wage that is higher than the Federal minimum wage, but there is no question that the Federal minimum wage is a benchmark number.

A poverty rate for a family of three in our country today is \$15,607. And for a family of four, it is \$18,850. So, yes, if you are a single mom or a single dad and you are working at a minimum-wage job, you are making less than people who are considered to be in poverty. What a travesty.

And even if you have two workers working at the minimum wage, you would barely get out of the poverty range. So we are talking about a severe deficiency in compassion. These days, we hear a lot about compassionate conservatives. I have seen a conservative side. I want to see the compassionate side on this particular vote.

How can anyone believe it is fair to keep the minimum wage where it has been for 8 years? It is not fair.

We are talking about a bill that seeks to lift people out of the darkest, deepest economic hole. We want to start them on their way to being able to take care of themselves and their families. You cannot lift yourself out of a deep economic hole on a minimum-wage job.

As my friend from Nevada points out, we used to think of the minimum wage—when I was a kid it was 50 cents an hour, and the kids took the minimum-wage jobs. What I used to work at when I was a kid was 50 cents an hour.

I am showing my age. Maybe I shouldn't do that. But we didn't look at families who were surviving on that. Today we are looking at families who are surviving on the minimum wage.

We can be sure of one thing: If we don't lift the minimum wage, people may move off of welfare into the workforce, but they will not move out of poverty.

Studies have shown that between half and three-quarters of those who are leaving welfare remain poor for up to 3 years. The courage that it takes to train yourself for work, to get up every day and not even to be able to afford to pay the rent—this isn't right.

Some may say: Senator, these minimum-wage jobs are just starter jobs. They are just a few months.

Studies prove that you may be stuck in that job for 3 years, and that is just average. You may be stuck in that job for 6 years. With the economic circumstances of the last 3 years, where we have seen a loss of 3 million private sector jobs, it isn't as if you have a tremendous array of jobs out there.

What will our amendment do? Our amendment will increase the Federal minimum wage to \$7 an hour in three steps over 2 years and 2 months. It would raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour today to \$5.85 an hour in 2 months, after enactment of this act, then to \$6.45 in another year, and then to \$7 a year after that. Even at that rate of \$7, you are barely able to survive. But at least we are moving the minimum wage toward a more livable wage.

Let me talk about California. My State stepped out and looked at the Federal minimum wage and said: This cannot be. This will not work in our State, where the rental costs are so high; where the food costs, even though we are the breadbasket of the world, are high; where the cost of transit is high. So in my State, the minimum wage today is \$6.75.

The States cannot do it alone. The Federal Government has to set the standard of compassion and fairness and make work an honorable endeavor.

The best social program is a job. I agree with that. I would much prefer that people work than not. But work has to be rewarded. You may ask: Senator BOXER, why does this bill matter since your State has a higher minimum wage of \$6.75? It is very clear. The Federal Government sets the floor for workers everywhere, and it is a guide to all States, including my State. Even a small increase to \$7 will help 393,000 workers in California, if California keeps the minimum wage at \$6.75.

Raising the minimum wage helps many more low-wage workers than just those earning the minimum wage because it does set the standard. You have heard that many cities and counties all over the country are casting what they call "livable wages," because they are looking at a minimum wage and realizing that it is really a sub-minimum wage; it isn't going to really work. Why not have a minimum wage that we can be proud of here? That is what Senator KENNEDY and I are trying to do today.

Let's look at what has happened in the area of poverty in our country. The poverty rate rose to 12.1 percent in America in 2002, from 11.7 percent in 2001. So this administration's economic policies, which caused the loss of so many private sector jobs, has seen an increase in poverty. And 1.7 million people have been added to the ranks of the poor, including many women and many children. You can be a compassionate conservative, a compassionate progressive, or a compassionate liberal, or anything you want to call yourself. Compassion is the name of the game. It will help our country. I will talk about that in a minute.

Let's look at what else has happened. First, you have 12.1 million children living in poverty today. In 2002, 34.6 million Americans were living in poverty. Think about that. I have 35 million people in my State, and 34 million Americans were in poverty in 2002. The whole State of California equals the number of people who were in poverty. That is an enormous number. My State, if it were a nation, would be the fifth largest in terms of its GDP. Imagine if every person in my State were in poverty. That is what we have. So we have 12 million children in poverty.

Let's look at something else. For the first time in many years, working Americans' wage growth is almost stagnant, while during the last term of the Clinton administration those wages grew. So what am I saying to you? We have seen an increase in poverty among women and children and families, we have seen an increase in the poverty rate, and we see wage growth that is almost stagnant.

From the end of 1996 to the end of 2000, full-time workers saw their usual weekly earnings grow faster than inflation, and those gains in real wages were evident for both higher and lower wage workers. In fact, the lowest earning 10 percent of the workers saw their wages increase 2 percent greater than inflation. So before the Bush administration, we saw this wonderful real wage growth—wages that were going up faster than inflation. In contrast, from the end of 2000 until the end of 2003, real weekly earnings for working-class Americans stagnated. The lowest 10 percent of American workers have seen their wages go up by 0.2 percent; whereas, before, they went up 2.1 percent. Now it is 0.2 percent. So people are working harder and they are just not getting ahead at all.

Again, whether we call ourselves conservatives, moderates, or liberals, that doesn't matter to me. I just think the word "compassion" comes into it. Also, a word that has to come into this—or two words—are "smart policy." Why is it smart policy? I will get into that.

One of the arguments you hear against raising the minimum wage—and you hear it every time—is don't raise the minimum wage because it is going to hurt employers. We have heard that since the very first day I was working in a minimum-wage job at 50 cents an hour. What if Congress in the past decided to just hold firm at 50 cents an hour? I am sure Senator KENNEDY heard the same arguments all those years ago, when people came to the floor and said 50 cents an hour is enough, and don't raise the minimum wage because it will be a burden to employers.

The truth is that we have seen in the history of the greatest country in the world, when you raise the minimum wage, everyone does better. Workers perform better. They are more productive. Business does better. They are more productive. Their profit margins go up. So let us not hear the same old,

same old, same old words from the past that, oh, it is a burden on everyone. No, it has proven to be an economic stimulus.

There is another theory I would like to test with my colleagues who have supported tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans. If you are a millionaire, you are going to get back \$120,000 a year. Think about that, folks. If you are a millionaire, under the Bush tax cut, you will get a cut in taxes of \$120,000 a year. A minimum-wage earner today, working full time, 8 hours a day, 6 or 7 days a week, earns \$10,800 a year. So my calculation is that this year's tax cut for millionaires is 11 times the yearly income of a full-time minimum-wage worker.

What are we doing? Why are we here? I admire the folks in the upper income brackets, and I happen to know a lot of them in California. Do you know what they say to me? They say: Senator, you make sure everyone is brought along. When everybody is brought along, we do better. First, we feel better about ourselves and our country, but we do better. Why do we do better? Because the people who will get this increase—the \$7 an hour—are going to spend that money in the economy. It is a no-brainer.

My colleagues can make every argument about how giving back \$120,000 a year to the wealthiest among us will stimulate the economy. They call it "trickle down." They love trickle down when it applies to the wealthy. Oh, give it to the wealthy; they will go out and spend it. The fact is, the wealthiest people already have the refrigerator or two; they already have the two homes or three; they already have the yachts. They already have what they need. They are not going to go out and spend it. They probably will sock it away.

The bottom line is, when a worker gets another couple of bucks in his pocket and has to support his or her family, they will go to the store on the corner and spend the money, and it is going to give a boost to this economy. So let us not say that trickle down only works when you give to the rich. Let's also admit that the fact is, when you give to the middle class—and that is what I support, middle-class tax cuts and tax cuts to the working poor—you are really going to drive consumer spending. We know that low-income workers and moderate-income workers put their earnings right back into this economy, and they don't even have time to think about it because they have to buy clothes for the kids and food for the table. They will spend 100 percent of that increase; whereas, the wealthier taxpayers are unlikely to put that windfall back into the consumer-driven economy.

To just sum up my remarks—and I know the Senator from Massachusetts is going to add mightily to these arguments—let me say this. We are doing a welfare bill. Everybody wants to see people get off welfare and go to work. Every one of us should also want to

make sure that when people get into the workforce and they work hard, their work is rewarded, their work means something, and they won't be stuck in poverty forever if they are stuck in a minimum-wage job.

Let us show not only our compassion, let us show our respect for work; let us show our understanding of economics.

I have a degree in economics. Granted, it was a long time ago. I was a stockbroker and it was a long time ago.

I know when you put money in the hands of people who need to spend it, it is going right back into the economy. This particular amendment has all the attributes we should all want to see. It will be a stimulus to the economy. It will get people out of poverty. It will set a standard for the rest of the States. It is fair, it is overdue, and the time is now.

I commend my colleague from Massachusetts. This is his initiative. He knows how much I care about this issue and is willing to share it with me. I am so honored to have my name associated with this amendment. I am very hopeful we can come together today and adopt it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, first, there is no doubt we are going to have a vote on minimum wage sometime, maybe on this bill or at least on some other bill. It is one thing to ask for an agreement to vote on a nongermane amendment—the majority party has the responsibility of getting work done, although we are cognizant of the fact we do not get anything done in this body if it is not bipartisan. We want to move this legislation along because it is so important to moving people out of poverty.

As I said yesterday, some are on the edge of society, out of sight and out of mind, if they are on welfare. They are never going to move out of poverty if they are on welfare.

As I said yesterday, and the Senator from Massachusetts misunderstood me, if you are ever going to move out of poverty, you have to be in the world of work. Being in the world of work does not automatically, even with an increase in the minimum wage, guarantee you are going to be out of poverty, but at least you have a chance of moving out of poverty; whereas on welfare you are destined to a lifetime of poverty.

We are interested in moving this legislation along, and it would help a little bit reaching some understanding of voting on these amendments if we knew we were going to get this bill done and help the people who need to be helped.

The point I want to make in regard to this amendment, and it is also in conjunction with the offering of nongermane amendments on other bills I have had before this Senate by the other party, is it seems to me they are

always missing the point. They are always getting the cart before the horse.

The bill before the Senate 2 weeks ago was a bipartisan bill that Senator BAUCUS and I worked out. It came out of our committee with all the Democrats supporting it. It encourages the creation of jobs in manufacturing by reducing the tax on manufacturing because that high tax on manufacturing is a disincentive to the creation of jobs. And it happens to be an incentive to outsourcing of jobs.

Also, because there is a tariff against some of our products going into Europe, this would eliminate that tariff so we could be competitive. OK, that legislation is a bipartisan approach to creating jobs in manufacturing. So what does the other party do? They offer an amendment dealing with overtime regulations.

They get the cart before the horse because the first thing we have to do is create jobs for people to get overtime. That legislation stalled because of nongermane amendments.

Now we have what is a legitimate subject of discussion—but somewhere else—increasing the minimum wage. That has been a legitimate point of discussion since the 1920s, and it has been the law in this country since 1938. Nobody denies that is a worthy subject of discussion. Again, another example of getting the cart before the horse is that we are talking about getting people who are on welfare, not working, a job. Let's get them in the world of work.

We have Members on the other side of the aisle stalling this legislation with nongermane amendments.

We have to put the priorities where the priorities ought to be: to help people get jobs and keep jobs so that all these other issues that are coming up will be applicable to more workers.

I am going to address for a short time this issue of the situation of people on welfare and our opportunities to move them to work to emphasize the success of that program in the legislation we have had on the books since 1996 and to see if we cannot improve that legislation in the bill that is before the Senate and move forward with another 8 years of success of moving people from welfare to work, giving them an opportunity to move up the economic ladder.

The families who go on welfare are, obviously, very vulnerable and fragile families. They not only need a job, but they need support in moving from welfare to work. We are not going to dump them out in the cold cruel world of work. Legislation that is already on the books and is going to be improved by this bill is going to enhance their support. We have already demonstrated that with one overwhelming vote on more money for childcare. I have heard that a long time from that side of the aisle, as we have heard from a lot of Republicans. One would think they would want to pass this legislation to give people on welfare who are moving

into work the support they need to get there. This legislation does it. But the shenanigans on the other side with nongermane amendments are holding that up.

The average family on welfare has two children, and that average family is headed by a young woman. Most of these families are African American or Hispanic. Half of these families have a child under the age of 6, and we take into consideration in this legislation specific needs of families with children under 6.

The women who head these families are desperately poor. That is what welfare does for people, it keeps them in poverty. These women who have these families, besides being desperately poor and, contrary to the way the argument over minimum wage was characterized, they are not working. That is why it is so important to get this legislation passed before you worry about minimum wage because we have to give them the support so they can get out there in the world of work so they can get the minimum wage in the first place.

States are reporting to us that the majority of adults on welfare are not doing anything. In other words, they are not working and maybe not doing anything that will lead to work, as we are trying to help them do through this infrastructure of support, of helping with job training and education, with substance abuse and other problems families might have because it is quite obvious in the world of welfare, it is not a way to achieve self-sufficiency. Many of these adult recipients are not ready for full-time work, so discussions about working 40 hours do not really apply to this population. In fact, for a while the argument over welfare reform focused on President Bush's proposal to require adult recipients on welfare to be engaged in work activities for 40 hours a week. That outraged my Democratic colleagues, that the administration would propose raising the hours of activity, including work, to 40 hours. Just as if out there in the world of work it isn't assumed, not anything less than 40 hours a week, for the most part. So it is somewhat ironic that we are here discussing a 40-hour work week scenario because, as I said, most of these adults on welfare are not working at all and if they are working they are surely not working full time.

These are adults, and again they are mainly women, with multiple and often coexisting barriers to work. They may be the victims of domestic abuse. They may have substance abuse problems. Add all that together and you have people who need services that this legislation provides to get them ready to go to work. So you worry about this person. Are they getting a minimum wage at this level or at that level? That is why this discussion over minimum wage is just a little confusing to me, as legitimate as it is for Congress to discuss the minimum wage, because we have set the minimum wage since

1938. But in connection with these people, they oftentimes are not earning any wage. But they are people who need services if they are ever going to get that job.

I am hopeful we will be able to work something out on minimum wage, and that we can complete our work on this welfare bill. I think people on the other side of the aisle, if they could indicate to us finality on this legislation, there can be some accommodation. Because families in need are waiting for us to get this done. It is a very successful program that started in 1996 and we need to continue it. This legislation fine-tunes it; it improves it; it strengthens it. We spend more money to do a better job of support for people who need to go to work.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I see the Senator from Massachusetts, who would like to speak on this amendment. I will be very brief.

The chairman of the committee is a good friend of mine. We have worked very closely together on most legislation. This is one bill where we are not working together as closely because we have somewhat different points of view.

I appreciate the chairman's view that this side of the aisle is attempting to drag things out a little bit. The fact is, our side is willing to have a vote on this amendment and on other amendments. We will enter time agreements. There is no attempt to delay at all. In fact, when I was sitting here yesterday I think the Senator from Massachusetts suggested 20 minutes for a time agreement. That is, he would agree to a vote in 20 minutes. I am not going to put words in the mouth of the good Senator as to how many minutes he would like in the time agreement now, but the point is we are willing to have votes and to vote very quickly on all these amendments. We are not holding up anything.

It is also interesting to note when this welfare reform bill came up for debate in 1995, there were 40 recorded votes on the floor. I think we have had one thus far in the reauthorization debate. I think better legislation results when amendments are offered, when they are debated, and when they are voted on. This way, Senators can decide whether they want to vote for or against a particular amendment.

The Senator from Iowa and myself work very closely, as I said. But I want to make the record clear that there is nobody on this side holding up passage of this bill in any way. We are willing to enter into time agreements on any amendments that may be offered.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, first I thank my good friend from California, Senator BOXER, for offering this amendment. It is one I feel strongly

about and support strongly. I thank our ranking leader on the Finance Committee, Senator BAUCUS, for his support. I will make a brief comment to my friend, and he is my friend, the chairman of the Finance Committee, about his concerns and objections to considering the minimum-wage increase on this bill that is an attempt to move people off welfare into work.

In reviewing the legislation that is before us, I would like to direct the chairman and those Members of the Senate who feel this amendment is not relevant to the underlying bill, page 4 of the committee's report where we have the Secretary, Tommy Thompson, talking about:

The most humane social program is a healthy and independent family that has a capacity and ability to have a good, paying job.

This is the Secretary of HHS testifying in favor of the overall legislation. He is talking about having a good-paying job.

We know a minimum wage job today is not a good-paying job. The Boxer-Kennedy amendment will make it closer to a good-paying job.

Then it continues, on page 12, the reason for change:

The Committee bill provides for States to continue their successful efforts to move welfare recipients into good jobs.

What are good jobs? The minimum wage jobs at \$5.15 or the jobs at \$7 an hour? States have directed considerable resources into moving welfare recipients into meaningful employment. That is what we are talking about, meaningful employment. This is what the Secretary of HHS said. This is the reason for change in the committee bill. That is what it is all about.

Then continue on to page 21:

The Committee bill recognizes the success received by TANF and the Work First programs are a result of a sustained emphasis on adult attachment to the workforce.

"Attachment to the workforce" means having a paycheck, a decent job.

I believe this legislation is directly relevant to the underlying theme of the legislation. But I say to my friend from Iowa, if he wants to give me a time agreement on a separate bill and give us the assurance we will be able to consider it by the first of May, as an independent bill here on the floor of the Senate, with a time limit, I would be glad to urge my friend and colleague from California to withdraw the amendment and take that, if that is agreeable to the Senator. We are not trying to hold the bill down.

I will propose a time limit on my amendment. It is now 10 after 3. I propose unanimous consent that we vote on this amendment at 3:30.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. GRASSLEY. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. KENNEDY. That is in another 20 minutes. The point has been made about how this legislation is slowing

the bill down. We indicated we are prepared to vote, at least in 20 minutes, on this legislation. We were prepared yesterday to vote on it. The problem is, it has been now 7 years, 7 years where we have been denied the right to vote on it.

Mrs. BOXER. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. KENNEDY. I yield to the Senator.

Mrs. BOXER. I am sure the Senator would be happy to agree to a 5-minute limit. The Senator from Iowa gets up and says this is a noble thing to raise the minimum wage, but you are holding up the welfare bill.

We will vote on this in 60 seconds from now. The American people are for this. Does my friend agree the American people are fairminded and for this?

Mr. KENNEDY. The Senator is correct. The American people understand fairness. They believe if you work 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year, you should not have to live in poverty in the richest country in the world. The American people understand that is basically what we are talking about, fairness and respect for people who are doing a day's work. The American people are overwhelmingly in favor of an increase in the minimum wage, and for actually a good deal higher wage than the one we are proposing.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, will my friend yield for another question?

Mr. KENNEDY. Yes.

Mrs. BOXER. We are charged with giving pay increases to the Federal workforce. We do it every year, do we not?

Mr. KENNEDY. The Senator is absolutely correct.

Mrs. BOXER. Our colleagues accept it. I do not know of anyone who does not accept the automatic adjustment in their pay.

Mr. KENNEDY. The Senator is correct.

Mrs. BOXER. Does the Senator not think it is an outrage? We work hard and we make a decent living. We get an automatic cost-of-living adjustment unless we stop it. Yet the same people who take a cost-of-living adjustment for themselves won't give a small increase to the people at the bottom of the ladder who are trying so hard to make something of themselves and rise above problems, illness, and poverty—sometimes for generations—and want to be able to get into the workforce.

My colleague says Tommy Thompson says it is important that these be good jobs. I wonder if any of our colleagues could live on \$10,800 a year. I do not think they could. I do not think so.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Senator for her comments.

I want to point out a few facts on the increase in the minimum wage.

This is the second longest period in the history of the minimum wage that Congress has ignored the plight of low-wage earners. The first time President Bush signed a minimum wage increase was in 1989. That was after 12 years of

inaction. It has been 7 years since the last increase. It is long past time for Congress to prioritize the lowest workers.

Let me give you a chart that makes the point which the Senator from California and I have tried to make over a period of time in this debate. Here we have people who are working hard but losing ground with the real value of the minimum wage. If we were to take effectively the year 2000 and use that as the equivalent, the minimum wage in 1966 would have been \$8.50. Even though now at \$5.15 an hour, its purchasing power using 2000 dollars would be \$4.98, which would be one the lowest levels it has been in the history of the minimum wage unless we increase it. Even going up to \$7, it will still be lower than it was from 1968 until 1980, a period of some 12 years. This is a very modest increase without which we will reach the bottom in terms of real purchasing power.

Let us take another indicator in terms of what the minimum wage is in relationship to a family of three. This is the red line representing what the poverty line has been, and that is for a family of three earning slightly below \$16,000. This is the poverty. This represents the value of the minimum wage which we show for a family of three—well below the poverty line.

Let us ask ourselves, What about those people receiving the minimum wage? Are they working? If we go from 1979 to the year 2000 and look at the minimum wage—this is the bottom 40 percent of U.S. family income—we find these workers in the bottom 40 percent are working more than 400 hours. The average worker in this country is working longer than any other industrial nation in the world. These are hard-working people who are trying to make do the best they can.

We find African Americans are working even longer and harder. Hispanics are working even longer and harder. These are minimum wage workers in the bottom percentile. They are working long and working hard trying to make ends meet. And they can't do it.

We have seen over the period of the last 3 years the increase in the number of people who are living in poverty. It was 31 million in the year 2000. In 2002, it is more than 34 million. There is a direct result of this administration's economic policy. Three million more Americans are living in poverty. That represents today more than 34 million people living in poverty, including 12 million children. More than 400,000 children today are living in poverty compared to the year 2000. We have had no increase in the minimum wage. We are trying to do something about it.

This bill does nothing in terms of raising the income of some of these families. This proposal will make a difference in terms of income.

We will probably have those come on the floor as they usually do and say, Senator, this is very interesting, but we know if we raise the minimum wage

we are going to see the result of increasing unemployment. There will be two reasons in opposition. I have been debating minimum wage increases since I have been in the Senate. These are the two standard ones.

First they say if you raise the minimum wage, we will see an increase in unemployment. That is not true. We can show it. I will reference the figures.

Second, the last issue is inflation. I will address that quickly because I want to get to the real issue; that is, what is happening to these families who are living in poverty. That is the real issue; particularly what is happening to the children who are living in poverty.

That is the real issue. What is happening to them in terms of hunger is the real issue. Let us get rid of these issues quickly; that is, increasing the minimum wage does not cause unemployment. We increased it in September 1996, and we increased it in 1997.

This red column is where unemployment was in January of 1998. That is obviously almost 2 years after the increase in 1996 and a few months after the increase in 1997. These are fairly significant figures in terms of unemployment.

Look at the national figure—5.2 percent in 1996, 4.7 percent in 1997, and 4.7 in 1998. That is exactly the same 4.7 percent. That is after the last increase in the minimum wage.

It was true among African Americans.

You will hear the argument: That is fine, generally, but the Senator and Senator BOXER don't understand this has a particular adverse impact on African Americans. That is not true. This chart shows, looking back to 1996 and the last major increases, unemployment virtually remained stable. That is true with regard to the Hispanics and it is true with regard to teens. Let us dismiss that argument in terms of unemployment.

The other issue they will raise is, Well, this increase in the minimum wage is going to be an inflator in terms of our economy.

Listen to this: This increase in the minimum wage represents less than one-fifth of 1 percent of wages of all workers in the country. Inflator? I hope they are going to have a better argument than that. They can't make the argument, although they will try. They will say: Add that increase to minimum wage and you will get inflation; and, think of all the people who will pay with inflation. You will increase unemployment among minorities. All of those arguments have been answered in spades. There is no economic argument in opposition to this unless you are trying to squeeze these workers even harder in order to try and exploit them even further.

I will point out the real issue and its impact on the most vulnerable population. We know today that America's children are more likely to live in poverty than Americans in any other age

group. The U.S. child poverty rate is substantially higher, two to three times higher, than that of most other major western industrial nations. Isn't that a fine situation?

Mr. SANTORUM. Will the Senator yield?

Mr. KENNEDY. I will be happy to yield. After 5 or 6 minutes more of my presentation, I will be glad to yield for questions.

The child poverty rate is substantially higher, two to three times higher than most other western industrial nations. Reducing child poverty is one of the best investments Americans can make in their Nation's future.

More children will enter school ready to learn; we will have more successful schools; there will be fewer school dropouts; we will have better child health with less strain on the hospitals and public health systems; we will have less stress on the juvenile justice system; we will have less child hunger and malnutrition.

The fact is, the number of children living in poverty and the number of children going hungry every single day has increased significantly over the period of the last 3 years.

The bottom line is, 3 million children have parents who would benefit from a minimum wage increase. We have an opportunity to do something about the 12 million American children living in poverty and the 400,000 children more living in poverty today than were living in poverty 2 years ago. We can make a difference because so many of these children are living in families with minimum wage earnings. That is the issue.

We hear the arguments on the other side, and we can answer those in terms of inflation and unemployment. Those questions have been answered. I will not take the time unless we are challenged on the issues, including historical unemployment figures and all the rest.

This is about children. It is about women. As I mentioned, and then I will yield to my friend from Pennsylvania, this issue is about women because 61 percent of those who earn the minimum wage are women. It is about children. We know that 3 million children live in families whose parent is working in a minimum wage job. So it is about women and children. It is about civil rights because a great number of these minimum wage workers are men and women of color. It is about fairness because Americans understand if you want to work 40 hours a week and can work 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, you should not have to live in poverty. Americans understand that.

The final point I make, these minimum wage workers are men and women of dignity and pride. Too often around here we say: Minimum wage workers, we have other things to do. These are some of the hardest working, most decent men and women we have in this country, who take a sense of pride in the work they do, which is me-

nial, tough, repetitive work—cleaning out the buildings of American industry, also working as assistants to teachers, working in nursing homes, looking after the elderly people of this country. This is hard, difficult, challenging work, but they take a sense of pride in it.

We have refused to increase the minimum wage now for 7 years. As I have pointed out, this chart shows the history of the increases in the minimum wage. It is not a partisan matter. Going back to 1938, we have the increases under President Roosevelt and President Truman. President Eisenhower increased the minimum wage in 1955. President Kennedy did it in 1961; Lyndon Johnson in 1966; President Ford did it in 1974 three different times, for 1974, 1975, and 1976. President Carter, a Republican, did it. President Carter, in 1977; President Bush I did it in 1989; President Clinton in 1996.

This has been a bipartisan effort. That is why it is so difficult for many to understand why those on the other side have refused the opportunity to even get a vote. I welcome the chance that we will have this time to get a vote.

I point out, and then I will yield to the Senator from Pennsylvania, what moving up to \$7 an hour means to a family earning the minimum wage. It is the equivalent of 2 years of childcare. It is more than 2 years of health care for that family. It is full tuition for a community college degree. It is a year and a half of heat and electricity. It is more than a year of groceries, and more than 9 months of rent. It is real money for real people who are working hard, playing by the rules, and are waiting for this body to take some action.

I yield the floor.

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I think the Senator from Massachusetts makes an important point about what we should be doing to reduce poverty.

The Senator from Massachusetts made statements that increasing the minimum wage has an impact on child poverty. I have not seen a chart that indicates that. If the Senator could put up the chart when the minimum wage increases went into effect, my question is—we are on the welfare reform bill. This welfare reform bill has had a dramatic impact on child poverty. In fact, if you look at the chart, it shows the increases in the minimum wage—I will have a chart that compares with that; we have dueling charts that work in concert. The Senator shows where the minimum wage was at very high levels that happened to be in about this area. I am using Black child poverty, but obviously that is the worst case scenario. During the highest level of poverty among African Americans, we had a high minimum wage.

All throughout this time—in fact, as you suggested, the minimum wage actually came down in real value—what else came down? The rate of Black child poverty.

Now, I would not suggest that the minimum wage was necessarily tied to that. What I would suggest is what happened was a fundamental change in welfare policy that started in the mid-1990s and accelerated in 1996 by the Federal Government and has resulted in a huge decline in poverty, irrespective of what the minimum wage is.

I make the argument that if the Senator wants to do something about helping child poverty, we should pass this welfare bill. Maybe there is a time and place to have the argument with respect to minimum wage, but I do not believe the evidence supports that increasing the minimum wage has any discernible impact on the poverty level, certainly among African American children and, I argue, across the board among children in general.

Finally, the point I want to make, since—

Mr. KENNEDY. Is that a question? I am about to yield the floor generally, if you could get to the question. What is the question? I would be glad to answer.

Mr. SANTORUM. I thank the Senator. I want to make the point in the last 10 years, the child poverty rate has declined almost 30 percent. During that time there was one increase in the minimum wage, but there was a dramatic change in welfare.

I ask the Senator, does he have any information that shows that the minimum wage actually does result in a decrease in child poverty? I think I have very conclusive evidence that changes in welfare policy have a dramatic impact on the reductions in child poverty.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, the fact is self-evident and should be to all Members. We do not need charts. If you are making \$5.50 an hour and you are the principal bread winner in the family with a child, that child will live in poverty. You can have all the charts in the world, but that is self-evident. That ought to be a given.

We do not have to dispute that. I hope we would not have to dispute that. Those are the hard, difficult facts.

The issues about the variance in terms of child poverty, obviously, when we have the dramatic expansion as during the period of the 1990s under President Clinton, we saw the creation of 22 million jobs. We saw that spill over into a reduction of child poverty. That is the answer. The fact is we have not seen that.

In the last 3 years, we have seen a growth in poverty in the total number of people who are living in poverty, including children, because we have lost 3 million jobs—effectively maybe 2 million overall—but 2 million jobs. The fact is, the new jobs that are being created are paying about 25 percent less than those they are replacing.

With all respect to the Senator, the idea that at \$5.15 an hour when you have a child or two children they are not going to be living in poverty escapes me completely. I do not think we

need any chart to show that. That is fairly self-evident.

I do not know what the situation is in Pennsylvania, but I do know in the other States I have visited in recent times, people cannot make it. At \$5.15 an hour, how is a parent going to be able to go out and rent an apartment and provide food for their children? That does not make sense.

The fact is, almost half of the new jobs that were being created for those who have moved off welfare now have disappeared. That is a different issue, and we could debate that, and I would be glad to. That is not what this amendment is about.

This amendment is relevant to the underlying issue. As I have raised before with Secretary Thompson, the purpose of this bill is to try to get people into somewhat decent jobs.

We raised this over 2½ years, up to \$7 an hour, almost a living wage. We think in this country, at this time, this is something that is called for, and we are prepared to move ahead with it.

I see the manager on this bill. We can either take some more time or we can try to move toward whatever outcome the floor managers would want. If we want some additional debate on it, we are glad to do so. But if you want to move toward a conclusion of it, we are glad to do so as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I believe the Senator from Massachusetts is insincere about moving forward on both this minimum wage increase as well as moving forward on this bill. I will offer a unanimous consent request to do just that.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that tomorrow morning, at a time to be determined by the majority leader, after consultation with the Democratic leader, the Senate proceed to back-to-back votes, first in relation to a Republican minimum wage amendment, to be followed by a vote in relation to the Boxer amendment, with no second degrees in order to either amendment; provided further that the bill then be limited to germane amendments, and at 9:30 a.m., on Thursday, April 1, the substitute amendment be agreed to, the bill be read a third time, and the Senate proceed to a vote on passage of the bill, with no intervening action or debate. Finally, I ask consent that following passage of the bill, the Senate insist on its amendment, request a conference with the House, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate.

Before the Senator from Massachusetts comments on this request, I would suggest what this unanimous consent request says is the Senator from Massachusetts will have a vote on his amendment, the Republicans will have a vote on a side-by-side amendment, we will go to final passage on this bill, with germane amendments being offered and voted on in between

that time; and after passage of the bill, this bill will go to conference, and we will have an opportunity for the House and the Senate to work their will and to actually get this welfare reauthorization passed for another 6-year period.

So if the Senator from Massachusetts is sincere about getting the minimum wage increase voted on here in the Senate, and not holding up this piece of legislation, I would hope he would be willing to accept this unanimous consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for commenting on my sincerity because I indicated yesterday I was interested in a 15-minute time limitation on this amendment, and it was objected to by the Senator from Iowa. We indicated we were willing to vote at 3:30 today, and it was objected to.

So now the Senator, if he wants to amend that request—since these are directly related to the issues of employment—to include an amendment with a 1-hour time limitation on the issue of overtime, an amendment with a 1-hour time limitation in terms of unemployment compensation, and then to have relevant amendments and time limitations on those amendments of up to an hour, I would not object to that.

So, Mr. President, I object, and I offer a unanimous consent request along the lines I mentioned.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Is there objection to the modified unanimous consent request of the Senator from Massachusetts?

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I think it goes to state the case that the Senator from Massachusetts, in offering these other ideas, is in fact not interested in the Senate working its will on welfare reform, which is the bill before us, but bringing the political motives and debates that are surrounding the Presidential campaigns here on the floor of the Senate, and to have sort of “message theme” amendments on a very serious piece of legislation that needs to be passed to create opportunities so this line on this chart can continue to go down.

Because what we have with the welfare reform reauthorization bill is something that is going to continue to move people out of poverty, to create better opportunities for work. What the Senator from Massachusetts is suggesting is, instead of that, we are going to extend unemployment benefits. What we need to do is create better incentives and better education, training, and an enormous amount of childcare to help people go to work, not extend unemployment benefits.

Again, we are in this situation where the Senator from Massachusetts said: Well, if we just do this. Now it is: Well, you need to do this, and this, and then this. The bottom line is, we have a lot

of substantive debate that can and should occur on this legislation. If there are relevant amendments, we would be happy to debate them. But the amendments the Senator from Massachusetts now wants to bring in are not relevant, and, therefore, I have to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I would like to spend a few minutes talking about this bill and the importance of why we need to move to the passage of it.

The Senator put up his chart of minimum wage increases. I voted for those minimum wage increases. I would vote for a minimum wage increase in the next 10 minutes if we could have gotten that agreement. I would have been happy to vote on a side by side, and I would have supported Senator MCCONNELL's amendment, which would have raised the minimum wage, and would have raised it by over a dollar over the next couple of years.

I think it is important that we talk about this issue. But I think the most important thing we can do for the poor in America—and I found it remarkable the Senator from Massachusetts can look at his chart, that shows the minimum wage at very high levels in real dollars, during a time when child poverty, and particularly African-American poverty, has been at its highest and he says it only makes sense if you have high minimum wage, you are going to have low poverty rates.

Tell the people living during this time who were experiencing high poverty rates how much sense it made. Because in reality it made no sense because it was not happening. A high minimum wage does not guarantee low poverty. What, in many cases, a high minimum wage guarantees is unemployment and very high rates of poverty.

What we have is a situation where we had higher rates of the minimum wage. We also had a welfare system that was debilitating on the poor, designed by the very same people who think the minimum wage is the answer to poverty.

It is the same economic team, folks, which believes Government micromanaging of every person's life and business in America is the way to make sure everybody achieves. Guess what. It did not work. It did not work. What worked? Work. Yes, what every American knows. But there is a common-sense deficit in this city. What every American knows, as common sense, that work works to improve people's economic status in life, has been lost here in the Senate, was lost for many years when it came to the issue of poverty in America.

And, oh, I remember, sitting in the chair where Senator GRASSLEY sits today, and sitting in this chair at times in 1995 and 1996, when scores of

Members who designed the welfare system in the 1960s and 1970s, who designed the minimum wage increases in the 1960s and 1970s, who said that was the answer to solving poverty in America, that was the answer to solving poverty in America, came to the floor and said: How dare you. How dare you suggest we require people to work. How dare you suggest we put a time limit—a time limit—on people on welfare. Don't you understand? These people are poor. That is a disability greater than any other disability people encounter in life—at least if you listen to the other side, that is what you would think they were saying.

President Bush uses the term “the soft bigotry of low expectations.” There was no soft bigotry. This was hard bigotry of low expectations. If you were poor, you needed our help, you needed Government to give you dollars, you needed Government to raise your wages. And that was going to solve the poverty problems in America. It did not work. What worked? Work.

Here we are in the Senate Chamber. I find it absolutely ironic. We have Senator GRASSLEY standing up for the new war on poverty, his bill out of committee, increasing the work requirement, yes, increasing support for women who are trying to get work, including daycare and other services. On the other side we have, no, we need the Government to fix the economy and raise the minimum wage. It is a classic difference in the perspective of what the role of Government should be. We stand here today and say, you can debate all you want about the minimum wage. I am not suggesting it is a bad thing, but it is not a panacea. It bears no relationship historically to reductions in poverty. Why? Because most of the people who get the minimum wage jobs, as the Senator from Iowa said, in the past are not heads of households; they are teenagers, many of whom are in very wealthy homes. That is who we are helping with minimum wage increases primarily. We are helping some others, but if you really want to help those who have not had the chances economically, if you really want to lift people out of poverty, then work and developing and nurturing a system that encourages people to get their lives together and to get into the workplace to achieve is the answer. That is what this bill does, and more.

That is why I am so excited about this bill because we have found out that, yes, work works. This is the lowest rate of African-American child poverty ever recorded in America. By the way, in the last year, 2002 and 2003, yes, because of the recession, black poverty among children went up, but very slightly, 1 or 2 percent, during a time of a lot of job loss.

If you look at the other statistics, for example, one that probably mirrors this, as far as high rates of poverty, had to do with single mothers never married. What we saw was single mothers never married, historically the rate

of employment among single never-married mothers was around 40 to 42 percent historically. It was an intractable problem that people said could never be fixed. Then we passed the welfare reform bill in 1996. Now 63 percent of single, never-married mothers are employed.

That is remarkable to see those kinds of dynamic shifts. By the way, that number has not changed in the last 2 years. The employment levels have remained the same as they have basically within the welfare system.

The Senator from Massachusetts has said things have been terrible the last few years in the job market and people in poverty have been hurt. The bottom line is, the welfare rolls continue to be low. They have not shot back up.

In fact, I was reading an editorial from a paper I generally don't read editorials from, my hometown paper—not necessarily fond of me. They happened to write a lucid editorial, sort of the blind squirrel phenomenon. They wrote an editorial in the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, “Shrinking Welfare, the Statistical Mystery of a Smaller Dole.” They comment on the fact that here we are, during 3 years where there has not been dramatic job growth, and yet the welfare rolls are not going back. They were sort of at a quandary as to why.

They say: Although welfare reform still has problems, single mothers often have considerable difficulty obtaining childcare—after we passed now \$7 billion; we have over doubled the amount of daycare that is going to be available under this bill—these numbers suggest it is working.

The numbers suggest welfare is working. For whatever reason—gosh, I can't imagine; it is again another common-sense deficit—more people are trying to do for themselves instead of asking government to do for them.

Go figure. Let me repeat this. For whatever reason, more people are trying to do for themselves instead of asking government to do for them. Even if the experts can't explain it, they conclude that is a good thing.

Do you know what. That is a good thing, what we did in 1996, despite the protestations, despite the charts with pictures of people standing in bread lines, sleeping on grates, of just absolutely cataclysmic predictions of what would happen to rates of poverty, which were around this level at the time, we had projections that black poverty among children would skyrocket, that women would be thrown off welfare and not be able to raise their children, that we would have dramatic changes and riots in our poorest neighborhoods because of this welfare reform proposal that was being put forward. I will read some of my colleagues' predictions of what would happen to poverty.

Guess what. They were wrong. Those of us who stood here and said, have faith in the poor in America that they, too, want a better life for themselves and their children, and they are willing

to work for it, if given the incentives and the opportunity to do so, if given the tools to make work work, they, too, will pursue the American dream, we had faith in them. Too many others have faith only in the government to take care of them.

Having talked to numerous people who have been on welfare—in fact, in my office in my State, I have hired nine people from the welfare rolls. They have worked through all the problems, and there are problems in someone transitioning off of welfare. I can tell you that every single one thanked me for having faith in them, thanked me for passing a bill that didn't say that we needed the government to be there to protect them and keep them in poverty and dependent upon it, but trusted them that, if given the tools, that they, too, could take care of their family and feel better about it every day, knowing full well it would be a struggle and continues to be a struggle.

But there is honor in the struggle to provide for your family. There is honor. There is dignity. There is character in struggling to provide for you and your family.

Millions of women—predominantly women; welfare is predominantly a woman's program, a single-mother program—have courageously gone out and fought for their families because we gave them the tools and incentive to do so. They have changed their lives for the better, and they have given their children a hope, a model that they can build a life on, that they can build on the success of their mother who overcame addiction.

A young woman spoke to our Republican conference this morning from here in DC, incarcerated many times, addicted, so bad that she lost her three children to foster care. Then welfare reform came around, made her go to work. And today she has her three children back.

She not only got a job, she now has a small business where she employs four people in town. She didn't do it with an SBA loan or any Government help at all; she saved a little money and started her own business. In the last 6 months, she got married. You have to believe in people. You have to believe that poverty is not the ultimate disabler.

That is why this bill is so important. That is why this bill has to be passed, because we have 28 States right now, where all of the requirements that we have put on the States to have work programs, to get people transitioned off of the rolls, to provide the support services to transition people into the economic mainstream in 28 States—that incentive is now gone. So in 28 States in America, we are back to the old AFDC days. That will have an impact.

Let me tell you what one of the reasons is I am so excited about this bill. It is the next step in welfare. We knew—those of us who helped design

the 1996 act—this was the first step, that work was the most important thing. There were other important things, but we understood work was the central focus. But there were other causes and concerns we wanted to deal with.

Senator GRASSLEY had this chart up. It is a chart by Haskins and Sawhill. They are from the Brookings Institute. I think even the Senator from Massachusetts would admit that the Brookings Institute is not a conservative think tank. It is seen as the left-leaning think tank in town—or one of them. Elizabeth Sawhill is a former Clinton poverty expert. Ron Haskins happens to be—I don't know how he got in there—he is a fairly conservative guy. We have our differences. Anyway, Ron and Elizabeth worked together on this. This is a peer-reviewed study that isolates factors of poverty. This is the official poverty rate, 13 percent. Remember what we said back in 1996: Work works. You have to get people into work. That is the best cure for poverty, the best way to turn your life around. That is the best medicine for children—to see mom get up every day and go to work, instead of receiving a welfare check. Guess what. It works. With full-time work, poverty rates go down to 7.5 percent.

The other thing this bill does is understand we have to keep this and, in fact, improve upon it. We are going to increase the work requirement by 20 percent. Interestingly enough, we increased the amount of daycare by 100 percent. So this is, again, Washington logic. We are going to require people to work 20 percent more, so we need 100 percent in daycare to pay for that. Nevertheless, there are other factors involved that reduce poverty.

Marriage. The President's initiative is, again, common sense. It is an understanding that the poverty rates are lower among married couples than they are among single heads of households. So one of the things the President wanted to do with his marriage initiative is to create at least a positive or nurturing atmosphere for couples who enter the welfare system with the intention of getting married to actually get married and raise a family.

There was a study done by a professor at Princeton that asked the question upon paternity establishment: Are you in a relationship? What I mean by paternity establishment is that most States figured out the best time to establish who the father of the child is in a hospital; so most States have adopted that as a way of establishing who the father is, and then using that to get the father to pay child support. That was something that was a very big contentious point in the welfare bill of 1996. We required paternity establishment in the States, that they have an active program to find out who these fathers were. This was the whole deadbeat dad issue and the fact that there were enormous amounts of uncollected child support. So we did a whole

lot of things on child support enforcement and paternity establishment because there was a huge number of women on welfare who either refused to, or don't, for whatever reason, identify the father of the child. From my perspective, to try to get the father involved in the child's life, I thought paternity establishment was going to be very important.

The States have a different view. They saw it as a way to get cash—establish paternity so we could get child support and we could get money. They were not particularly interested in whether dad did anything to raise the child other than to send the check so the State could get some of the money. They would then reduce the benefits to the mother in proportion to the child support being paid by the father. There is an incentive for the States to find out who the father was and attach wages, if necessary, and get the child support flowing into the State coffers.

That is not exactly the most nurturing conclusion that I thought would occur by finding out who father was. I had this funny idea that maybe if they found out who the father was and the father became involved in a legal way with his child, he might take some responsibility for that child. That is not, unfortunately, what has happened. There are a lot of factors involved, including a culture in many communities that is not nurturing of fathers taking responsibility for their children—at least in the popular culture. In a segment of the popular culture, it is not reinforced that fathers should take responsibility for their children. It is a misogynist popular culture that abuses women in song, in video, and in many other ways, and teaches you not to take responsibility for your actions. So the popular culture, matched up with the State that was just interested in money, has resulted in incredibly high rates of absent fathers.

What are we going to do about that? What should we do? People say, Senator, what is the Government's role in marriage—to encourage people to marry? Why doesn't the Government stay out of it? I argue that the Government is already in it because, prior to welfare's inception—and you can say this is a good or bad thing, but it is a fact—prior to welfare's inception, one of the reasons mothers and fathers stayed together was because there wasn't any money to support the child at all. The Government didn't help raise children at all. There was no money. That is when sort of a popular joke regarding the shotgun wedding came about, because mom had no means to support herself and her children. So families required fathers to stick it out.

Many will say that was not the optimal situation. I agree. But ask the question now, are we better off now? Are the children better off now? As the Senator from Massachusetts said, it is about the children, isn't it? Are the children better off now in this culture?

I would make the argument that the Federal Government has already done its part in taking sides on the marriage debate, and that is, it has been an enabler of the dissolution of marriage because it is no longer required to support and raise your child.

Again, you can argue positives and negatives about it, but that is a fact. Economically, it simply was not possible 50 years ago. Economically, it is a viable option—I am not saying the best option. I am not saying better or worse. All I am saying is it is an option that was not available before. So the Government has taken sides on the issue of marriage.

What I am suggesting, and what this bill suggests, is the Government try to shift gears to be somewhat neutral on the issue. What do I mean by that? A researcher from Princeton I started talking about did a survey asking whether mothers and fathers at the time of paternity establishment were in a relationship. Actually, a very high percentage said yes at the time. I think it was roughly 80 percent said they were currently in a relationship.

They were asked the question: Do you have any intention of getting married? Again, a very high percentage of these young parents or new parents said, yes, they actually were contemplating marriage—over 50 percent. What happened?

By the way, what did the Government do during this time? The Government basically said: OK, dad, sign here, make sure you establish paternity. Thank you very much. Fold up that paper, put it in the briefcase, and back down to the welfare office. File the paper. Make sure we get dad a child support order so we can get our money. That is the Government's role financially.

The Government says marriage is not such a bad—no, no, we are not going to prejudice these folks; let them do whatever they want as long as we get our money—as long as we get our money.

What happened a year later? The researcher from Princeton—again, not a conservative researcher—asked the question a year later of these same couples. Guess what. Very few got married. I think 10 percent were still together in one form or another.

What happened? I think it is fairly obvious what happened. It is a tough situation for an unmarried couple, particularly, again, given the popular culture. It is a very tough situation to work through the difficulties of raising a newborn and trying to keep a relationship together. Even people who are married have a tough time. A newborn is a big change in your life. Having had seven children, I can tell you, having a newborn in the house is a big change. When you are struggling economically, when you may be living at home or may be living in poor accommodations or maybe not living in the same place, this is a very stressful and difficult situation. People, in many cases, do not

have a heck of a lot of role models around to help them get through this difficult time in their life.

I do not think anybody here is surprised to hear these numbers—I would not think they would be—that a very small percentage of people in this situation end up getting married. Why aren't you surprised? I think we need to think about that. Why were you not surprised when I said that? That is the expectation, is it not? That is what we expect.

If we expect it, what do you think the people involved in the situation expect over time? We are trying to change that dynamic. We are not trying to force anything down anybody's throat. All we are suggesting is that at the time of paternity establishment, instead of folding up that little paper that now has the signature that is going to create financial liability for that man for at least some period of time, we ask one additional question: Are you interested in getting married?

If both answer yes, for example, what a caseworker could do is pull out a card and say: Here is a card and here is a list of 10 people, 10 organizations who do marriage counseling. If you call one of these organizations and you show up for an appointment, we will pay for your counseling to help you get through this difficult time and stressful time in your life.

Believe it or not, there are people who are saying this is a right-wing agenda to try to get people to get married, as if that is a horrible thing to actually have mothers and fathers of children actually get married; that is some sort of secret plan to destroy the world. I do not understand it.

What we are trying to do is help two people who at the time have a commitment and have a product of that commitment called a child who needs love and support from as many people as that child can get—optimally, a mother and a father. All we are saying is give this child a chance; hopefully, a better chance. At least try. At least try to help people who want to be helped. Not force it on them, just try to help people who have, at least at the moment of the time they are looking at the face of this new creation, who actually still dream and hope of a better life with that child and together to pour some water on that seed to nurture it instead of folding up that piece of paper and saying: I got your money. That is all I came for. I am here from the Government, and I got your money. I got your signature, and that is all I am here to do. And look down at that child and say: I know what is going to happen, but what do I care? I have no requirement to care about whether mothers and fathers stay together and raise and nurture that child. It is not my job.

I will be offering an amendment, if we get a chance to offer amendments, to actually increase to the President's budget figure the amount of money in this program because I do believe that

Government should be on the side of children in creating at least a chance for them to be raised in a stable two-parent family.

What happens to the poverty rate? If you increase the marriage rate, the poverty rate drops not some but very dramatically. So the keys in this legislation of work and marriage are the two strongest indicators of a reduction in poverty. The other factors many others suggest are keys to reducing poverty is increased education. It helps, but it is not anywhere as powerful as the focus of this bill. Reduced family size? Again, the more children you have the higher the chance you are going to be in poverty. So if you have fewer children, it helps—again, not as much as the focus of this bill. The interesting thing is, if you factor all these four things together, look what happens to the poverty level: Work; marriage, which allows in many cases the opportunity for education; and reduced family size—dramatic reduction in poverty. Can you imagine, for the longest time we didn't want to do this? And we still don't do this. The results are powerful.

What do some on the other side still hold to? I underscore "some" because thankfully we have had bipartisan support in much of what we have done here. What do some on the other side see as the answer? Spend more money. If we want to get people out of poverty, just increase the amount of money you give people in poverty and, guess what, you get them out of poverty.

Here is doubling the welfare benefit. If we doubled the welfare benefit, what would happen? Hardly any decrease in poverty. The Senator from Massachusetts might say it is obvious on its face, if we give people more money—in fact, it isn't that he might say it; yes, he did say it. He said it is obvious, if you give people more money, if you raise the minimum wage, of course poverty is going to go down. We are not talking about raising the minimum wage here; we are talking about doubling the welfare benefit. It makes barely a scratch. So I guess it isn't all that obvious, is it?

I guess, just like the rest of us, people who are experiencing poverty in their lives are as complex as the rest of us and have a lot of factors that go into whether they are poor, not just how much money comes in the door. There are a lot of factors that go into whether people rise in society. What we know works is work and marriage and families. We know that works. You know what. America knows it works. That is obvious. It is obvious to me and hopefully it will be obvious to my colleagues as we proceed here today. Instead of focusing on minimum wage—again, it has its time and place, but there is no evidence at all that has been put forward that it does anything to reduce poverty. In fact, straight cash assistance—not identical with the minimum wage, but the same idea behind it—doesn't significantly affect poverty.

What we are doing in this bill works. It works from an analytical point of view; it works from a moral point of view; it works from a commonsense point of view. It is all about what we Americans value and understand and revere—at least we have throughout the history of this country.

So I am hopeful we can move forward, that we can get an agreement to somehow or another dispose of the Kennedy amendment, either in this bill or at some future time, and move to passage of this very important piece of legislation which is going to have a dramatic impact in taking this number and numbers like it, the poverty rate among Black children, of all children—it has not just been among African-American children; it has been among all children as well as mothers—down, and down further.

We have an obligation if we know something is working to make it permanent and extend it and make it better, to do more of what we know works. That is what this bill does. I am hopeful the Senate will give its support to the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent I be allowed to speak as in morning business for 5 minutes.

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

ENERGY PRICES

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I came to the floor nearly a week ago to talk about high energy prices. I know several of my colleagues have been speaking about this issue today. At the time I spoke last week, I outlined a series of suggestions, 13 concrete actions I was urging the administration and particularly the President take to begin addressing this problem, both of high price of gas but also the high price of natural gas and the impact that is having on American families and on our economy.

The figures are fairly startling. Today, energy prices are at historic highs. Some analysts estimate that energy price shocks this year could cost American consumers more than \$40 billion. Speaking very frankly, we cannot afford this kind of expense. We need to maintain a healthy pace of growth in our gross domestic product, and high energy prices dampen that growth. Clearly we need to give attention to this.

I was encouraged by some of the reaction we received to my statement last week. I did receive a letter from the National Association of Convenience Stores, particularly endorsing the suggestion that we begin to address this boutique fuels problem, the proliferation of boutique fuels.

I ask unanimous consent that letter be printed in the RECORD following my remarks here.

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

(See exhibit 1.)

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I was also encouraged by the comments of my colleague from New Mexico and others who have come to the floor endorsing some very similar suggestions. It is important that we speak today about this issue because of the OPEC meeting that is about to occur in Vienna, Austria. I want to reiterate that it is extremely important that the administration assert pressure on OPEC, the OPEC members who are meeting in Vienna, to forego their proposed 1 million barrel-per-day production cut. We do need to rein in high oil and gas prices and we need to send a strong message that cutting production of oil in OPEC is not the way to do that.

OPEC has the ability to affect price in two important ways: They can add to supply or they can talk down the price of oil on the world market. We have seen them do both in previous periods. I don't see any real action to affect the price of oil on either front at this point. We have been out of the price band—this is, I believe, this \$22 to \$28 band that OPEC has talked about—for quite some time now. At the same time that we have been way above that band, some OPEC members are talking about not only keeping production steady but actually cutting production.

This would be a very wrong-headed move. It would have adverse consequences on American consumers. I hope very much they will reconsider and I hope our administration will use its very best efforts in the next day or two to ensure that OPEC in fact does not cut production.

EXHIBIT 1

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF CONVENIENCE STORES,
Alexandria, VA, March 25, 2004.

Hon. JEFF BINGAMAN,
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy
and Natural Resources, Dirksen Senate Of-
fice Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR: On behalf of the retail members of the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS), I would like to express our appreciation for your comments yesterday regarding the proliferation of boutique fuels. As the representative of an industry that sells more than 75 percent of the gasoline consumed in the United States every year, NACS has long advocated for a comprehensive fuels policy that would restore gasoline fungibility to the system without sacrificing supply.

The problems associated with the proliferation of boutique fuels are significant. As you noted yesterday, these specifications have "greatly reduced the overall flexibility and efficiency of our fuels system." We could not agree with you more. America's motor fuels system, including the refining, pipeline and storage infrastructure, was not designed to accommodate dozens of unique, non-fungible fuel blends.

Last year, NACS commissioned a study that analyzed the impact these boutique fuels have on the nation's gasoline supply and assessed the effect possible adjustments to the fuels regulatory system might have on refining capacity. Our study revealed that reducing the number of boutique fuel blends, while maintaining or improving environmental quality, will improve fungibility. However, it will also reduce the production capacity of the domestic refining system by

requiring the production of more environmentally sensitive blends, which are more difficult to produce. For this reason, an approach to boutique fuels must be carefully balanced with the preservation of supply.

Your acknowledgement of the challenges facing the petroleum industry and your interest in overcoming these challenges is greatly appreciated by the convenience store industry. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues in a non-partisan, policy-specific effort to restore efficiency and flexibility to the gasoline marketplace.

Thank you and please let me know how NACS might be of assistance.

Sincerely,

JOHN EICHBERGER,
Director, Motor Fuels.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, how much time remains of the 5 minutes I requested?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 1 minute and 10 seconds.

Mr. BINGAMAN. I ask unanimous consent for an additional 5 minutes.

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

IRAQI AND AFGHANISTAN LIBERATION MEDALS

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak to a bill to honor our service men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan who have served and continue to serve their country by working for a fee, independent and stable Iraq and a new Afghanistan. These missions have been difficult and the cost has been high; nearly 600 Americans have been killed and almost 3,000 Americans have been injured in Iraq, while more than 500 Americans have been injured and more than 100 U.S. servicemen and women have been lost in Afghanistan.

More than a year after the initial invasion, nearly 110,000 troops are still stationed in Iraq, working to build a new, stable beacon of freedom in the region. My fellow Senators, the liberation of Iraq is turning out to be the most significant military occupation and reconstruction effort since the end of World War II. We cannot understate the importance of the work being done there today.

The administration's focus on Iraq leaves the mission in Afghanistan incomplete. Despite constant progress there, the fighting is still not over. Recent assassinations of government officials, car bombings, and the lingering presence of terrorist forces and former Taliban fighters force thousands of our troops to stay in-country.

For their courageous efforts, the Department of Defense has decided to award our brave young men and women with the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal—GWOT—and no other medal. This is despite the fact that G.W.O.T. medal is meant for any individual who has served overseas during the war on terror and may have come within a few hundred miles of a combat zone. The dangers of serving in Iraq and Afghanistan are greater; therefore, along with my colleagues, Senators LOTT, LANDRIEU, INHOFE, and

LUGAR, I propose to correct this mistake by passing legislation authorizing the Iraq and Afghanistan Liberation Medals in addition to the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal.

While some of us in this body have not shared the administration's view on this war, we are united when it comes to supporting our troops. These young men and women from active duty, National Guard and Reserves are all volunteers and exemplify the very essence of what it means to be a patriot. We believe that what they are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan today differs from military expeditionary activities such as peacekeeping operations or no-fly zone enforcement.

They continue to serve, even though they do not know when they will return home to family and friends. They continue to serve despite the constant threat to their lives and the tremendous hardships they face.

There is a difference between an Expeditionary Medal and a Campaign medal. We only need to look at an excerpt from U.S. Army Qualifications for the Armed Forces Expeditionary medal and Kosovo Campaign medal. In order to receive the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, you don't need to go to war. You only need to be "placed in such a position that in the opinion of the Joint Chief of Staff, hostile action by foreign armed forces was imminent even though it does not materialize."

To earn the Kosovo Campaign medal, the standard is higher. A military member must:

Be engaged in actual combat, or duty that is equally hazardous as combat duty, during the Operation with armed opposition, regardless of time in the Area of Engagement. Or while participating in the Operation, regardless of time, [the service member] is wounded or injured and required medical evacuation from the Area of Engagement.

Many within the military agree that there is a difference. According to the Army Times, "Campaign medals help establish an immediate rapport with individuals checking into a unit." An expeditionary medal like the GWOT does not necessarily denote combat. A campaign medal is designed to recognize military personnel who have risked their lives in combat.

Campaign medals matter.

"When a Marine shows up at a new duty station, commanders look first at his decorations and his physical fitness score—the first to see where he's been, the second to see if he can hang. They show what you've done and how serious you are," said Gunnery Sgt. James Cuneo. "If you're a good Marine, people are going to award you when it comes time. . . ."

My fellow colleagues, it is time.

We must recognize the sacrifice of our young men and women who liberated Iraq, including great Americans like Army Specialist Joseph Hudson from Alamogordo, NM, who was held as a prisoner of war. The Nation was captivated as we watched Specialist Hudson being interrogated by the enemy.