

minimum wage that accurately reflects current economic conditions.

The majority has decried this amendment as non-germane and accused the minority of holding up the underlying legislation. While the amendment may not be germane in a procedural sense, it is certainly relevant, it is certainly appropriate, and it deserves an up or down vote.

Indeed, as my able colleague Senator KENNEDY mentioned earlier on the floor, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, as recently as March of 2002, has acknowledged that moving people to jobs that pay at least the minimum wage is the centerpiece of TANF. Minimum wage jobs are the centerpiece of TANF.

But in order for people to move off these rolls and still support their families, such jobs must provide a livable wage. Mr. President, if the true goal of this legislation—as has been stated—is to reduce the number of individuals enrolled in our Nation's welfare system, this amendment would directly serve to accomplish that goal.

To achieve self-sufficiency, a working family needs more. By working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, an employee will earn \$10,700 at the current minimum wage. For a family of three, that represents an income that falls \$5,000 below the poverty line.

And this is a pervasive trend. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that in 2002 the number of working poor in the United States stood at 8,954,000. This is unacceptable. If Americans are willing and able to work full time jobs, they should be able to provide for their family.

At the current minimum wage, this situation is not likely to improve any time soon. According to the Congressional Research Service, the minimum wage today is at its lowest level in terms of purchasing power since the 1940s. And each day we fail to act, inflation continues to erode this purchasing power. As this happens, workers earning the minimum wage will only become more and more dependent on the government assistance to make ends meet.

If enacted, at its full implementation, the Kennedy amendment would increase this wage to \$7 an hour. This would provide an increase in the incomes of minimum wage earners by \$3,800 a year, which represents a positive step toward purchasing power that comports with modern day needs and prices.

The other side will argue that increasing the minimum wage will hurt business and stunt job growth. They argue that we need to give more tax cuts to the wealthiest among us, run large and growing Federal deficits, and hope that things improve.

Mr. President, this has been our policy for over three years since this Administration took office. In that time, we have seen the largest job loss in our Nation's history. We have seen Federal surpluses erased in favor of record defi-

cits. And we have been told time and time again by the Administration that things will turn around soon.

However, today's release of state-level job growth data by the Bureau of Labor Statistics flies in the face of the Administration's assertions in this regard. These statistics indicate that 49 states failed to meet the Bush Administration's projections for job creation in the month of February 2004. As of February 2004, 35 states have failed to get back to their pre-recession employment levels. Furthermore, 49 states have not created enough jobs to keep up with the natural growth in the number of potential workers, as job growth has lagged the growth in working-age population since March 2001. As for the unemployed, 43 states have higher unemployment rates than when the recession began. As a Nation, the cumulative job growth shortfall is over two million jobs since July 2003, when the first of this Administration's tax cuts went into effect.

Raising the minimum wage will not only benefit low-income wage earners, it will provide economic stimulus by putting additional dollars in the hands of those who must spend them to make ends meet. When the Congress last increased the minimum wage, the economy experienced its strongest growth in over three decades. Nearly 11 million new jobs were added. This is quite a different result from the economic policies we have pursued under the current Administration.

Mr. President, increasing the minimum wage is the fair thing to do and it is sound economic policy. I urge my colleagues to support the Boxer-Kennedy amendment.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

#### TRIBUTE TO CESAR CHAVEZ

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today is the 77th birthday of someone whom I admire greatly, Cesar Chavez. He was born March 31, 1927. I never had the opportunity to meet Cesar Chavez. I came close a couple of times, but I never had the opportunity to meet him.

He was a leader, a great father, a man of great moral character, and a humanitarian. He was a man whose name is synonymous with a broad social movement that accomplished substantive things. He was guided by principles of nonviolence and respect for human labor. He dedicated his life to helping those who had no voice. And that is an understatement.

Whether he was leading a 340-mile march from Delano to Sacramento or staging one of his prolonged hunger

strikes, Cesar Chavez worked tirelessly to focus attention to the inhumane conditions endured by migrant farm workers.

He gave life, dignity, and strength to the United Farm Worker movement. He knew firsthand the plight of migrant farm workers. He went to work in the fields and vineyards when he was only 10 years old, which was fairly standard at the time. He was forced to leave school in the eighth grade to help support his family. But even though he didn't have a lot of book learning, so to speak, he was a brilliant man. In 1944, he served his country in the United States Navy.

Forty-two years ago, Mr. Chavez joined Dolores Huerta, whom I have had the opportunity to meet. She is still an avid activist and gives inspiration to people in the State of Nevada and throughout the country. Forty-two years ago, Chavez and Huerta founded United Farm Workers Association.

Cesar Chavez and the Farm Workers Union opened the eyes of the American people. For the first time, many Americans began to learn about the hard lives and inhumane treatment of the workers who helped put food on the table.

Cesar Chavez was an integral figure in the birth of La Causa, as our Nation's Latino civil rights movement is sometimes called. Organized labor, religious groups, minority students, and many other people of good will joined Chavez in his fight to secure the rights and improve the lives of migrant farm workers.

Cesar Chavez is probably our Nation's most recognized Hispanic American historical figure, but he did not help only Latinos but Irish, Asian, Indian, German, Mexican. When it came to aiding farm workers, Cesar Chavez drew no racial lines. He placed his life on the line many times. He did it by protesting, by denying his body nourishment, in order to nurture the cause he so well served.

In 1968, he staged a fast. For 25 days, he ate no food. In 1972, he repeated this for 24 days. But, in 1988, he fasted for a remarkable 36 days. He embraced the philosophy of Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He sought to bring about deep-rooted change through non-violent means.

In those many difficult days migrant farm workers lived in makeshift homes with no plumbing, heat, or running water. It was not uncommon for them to be sent into a field or vineyard while the crop-dusting plane was actually dropping pesticides. And, in most cases, little or no attempt was made to educate the children of these farm workers.

Things have changed as a result of his work. Take, for example, the onion fields of northern Nevada, Lyon County. Farm workers now have very nice facilities. They have to meet certain standards. They watch how many hours they work. They have rights they never had but for this man, Cesar Chavez.

We have a lot of work to do on improving the lives of people who gather our food, but at least today they have dignity and hope. This is because Cesar Chavez gave them that dignity and hope. He personally led a very courageous life and, in my estimation, is a true American hero and an inspiration. He believed:

The end of all education should surely be service to others.

He held this belief in his heart, and he lived this belief in his actions until his untimely death in 1993. I hope those of us in the Senate will understand that courage and commitment that guided Cesar Chavez's life and honor his legacy by looking out for those people with no voice.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, today would have been the 77th birthday of one of our country's greatest leaders, Cesar Chavez. His famous motto in life "sí se puede," "yes we can" is his legacy to all of us, and we are a better nation because of his life-long struggle to bring dignity and freedom for the working men and women and their families he cared so much about and did so much to help.

Cesar Chavez made powerful contributions to our society and has inspired countless individuals who continue his battle against injustice. My brother Robert Kennedy came to know Cesar Chavez well, and a special friendship grew. Bobby instinctively shared Cesar's extraordinary commitment to migrant farm workers, and his dedication to non-violent change, and he too was inspired by Cesar's passionate conviction. My brother was the only public official who was there in March of 1968, at the end of Cesar's 25-day fast for non-violence to help the grape workers. He was deeply moved by that day and called Cesar "one of the most heroic figures of our time."

Cesar is best known today for his leadership in founding the United Farmworkers of America, the largest farm workers' union in U.S. history. Under his 30 year leadership, it became the strongest and most consistent voice for farm workers' rights. His determination and vision led the fight for fair wages, decent medical coverage, reasonable pension benefits and better living conditions for their workers. His legacy guides us today as we continue the battle to enable today's farm workers to live and work with respect and dignity.

In fact, the Agricultural Jobs, Opportunity, Benefits and Security Act we hope to enact in this Congress is based on the far-reaching agreement between the UFW and the agriculture industry to treat immigrant farm workers fairly. Large numbers of men and women employed in agriculture are currently undocumented. Often they risk danger and even death to cross our borders only to be exploited by unscrupulous employers who pay inhuman wages under harsh and often dangerous job conditions. Our bill gives these deserving farm workers and their families the

opportunity to earn legal status, and it gives agricultural businesses a legal workforce. By passing this bill, we pay tribute to Cesar and we win an important battle in ending injustices in farm work across America.

The legacy of Cesar Chavez also reminds us of the important role of education in helping children with the greatest need to have a better future. We know we can do much more to guarantee equality of opportunity, and fulfill the promise of a good education for millions of children living in poverty, especially for the children of migrant and seasonal farm workers.

Too often, schools attended by migrant families are substandard, and college is an impossible dream. Migrant students are among the most disadvantaged youth in the nation. Current estimates place their school dropout rate between 50 and 60 percent.

Cesar Chavez put it best in his own words:

It is not enough to teach our young people to be successful . . . so they can realize their ambitions, so they can earn good livings, so they can accumulate the material things that this society bestows. Those are worthwhile goals. But it is not enough to progress as individuals while our friends and neighbors are left behind.

Those words remind us of our commitment to provide a better future for today's youth; especially those who live in poverty, work long hours in the fields, and are in the greatest need. They remind us of our commitment stated in law, but far from reality, to leave no child behind. They remind us of our unmet responsibility to achieve equal educational opportunity for all, invest in our nation's communities, and make a difference in the lives of millions of children.

Cesar's famous "Prayer for the Farm Worker's Struggle" sums up the qualities of strength, wisdom and compassion that are essential as we carry on his mission:

Show me the suffering of the most miserable, so I will know my people's plight. Free me to pray for others, for you are in every person.

Help me to take responsibility for my own life, so that I can be free at last.

Give me honesty and patience, so that I can work with other workers.

Bring forth song and celebration, so that the Spirit will live among us.

Let the Spirit flourish and grow, so that we will never tire of the struggle.

Let us remember those who have died for justice, for they have given us life. Help us love those who hate us, so we can change the world.

Happy birthday, Cesar—may your vision continue to guide us now as we seek a better world.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, today we celebrate the life of one of America's greatest civil rights and labor leaders, Cesar Chavez. The effects of his work on behalf of farm workers and to improve civil rights are still felt across America today, from Salinas to Selah. Although Chavez is best remembered for his decades of work to advance these causes, the principles that guided him are universal and enduring.

Chavez's motto, "sí se puede", it can be done, embodies the entrepreneurial spirit that made America great, and continues to make our Nation stronger every day. Although he labored to overcome tremendous obstacles, he is remembered not just for his grit and determination, but his optimism that those barriers could be surmounted.

Just as importantly, Chavez set goals to better the conditions not just of individuals, but of our society. As he once put it, "We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community. . . . Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own."

The values and philosophy Chavez embraced are as important to the challenges we face today—from educating our children, to improving health care, to creating opportunity for all our workers—as they were to the causes he championed decades ago. When we honor these principles, Cesar Chavez's legacy lives on.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today we honor the life and legacy of Cesar Chavez, a great champion of civil rights and workers' rights.

Cesar Chavez was one of our Nation's strongest advocates for social justice. He believed that the men and women who bring us the food we depend on deserve a safe work environment and a fair wage. He fought for America's farmworkers—men and women who worked so hard to provide a decent life for their families—and challenged all Americans to recognize their plight.

On this day, 77 years ago, Chavez was born at the Yuma, AZ farm his grandfather had homesteaded in the 1880's. Like many families during the Great Depression, his family lost their farm and began years of migrating from town to town throughout the southwest in search of steady work.

Chavez began working at the age of ten. He attended school when he could—thirty-seven different schools, in all—before abandoning his education after the eighth grade to help his family.

In 1945, he joined the Navy, serving in the Pacific just after World War II. Upon returning to the United States, he lived in several different Southwestern communities before settling in East San Jose.

It was there—as he worked in the apricot orchards—that he decided to devote his life to tackling the injustice that so many migrant workers lived under.

In 1952, Chavez became a full-time organizer with the Community Service Organization, a Mexican-American advocacy group. In this position, he organized farmworkers in California and Arizona, worked to stamp out racial discrimination, and built the influence of farmworkers through voter registration drives.

His activism led him to establish the National Farm Workers Association in

Delano, CA in 1962. The new organization eventually became the United Farm Workers of America, the first union representing farmworkers in the United States.

Under the leadership of Chavez, the United Farm Workers successfully improved the once-dismal working conditions for hundreds of thousands of farmworkers throughout the nation. These efforts brought safety improvements, pay increases, benefits and job security to workers who had been among the most exploited.

The union's efforts also brought attention to the health problems facing farmworkers, including the exposure to harmful pesticides that affect workers and their children.

An adherent to the principles of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Chavez used nonviolent means to bring about these changes including economic boycotts, marches, civil disobedience, and fasts.

Chavez once declared to his followers, 'Nonviolence is our strength.' This message still rings true as the official slogan for the United Farm Workers Union.

A winner of the highest civilian honor our Nation can bestow—the Presidential Medal of Freedom—which he received posthumously in 1994, Chavez was a true American hero. He was a hero because he spoke up for so many who could not be heard.

Chavez once commented, "It's ironic that those who till the soil, cultivate and harvest the fruits, vegetables, and other foods that fill your tables with abundance have nothing left for themselves."

His life and this day remind us that as a society we have a responsibility to protect the rights of all Americans.

As Cesar Chavez often said, "Si se puede!" Yes, we can!

Mr. DODD. Today, on the 77th anniversary of his birth, people across America will pay tribute to a remarkable man, Cesar Estrada Chavez.

I had the honor of meeting Cesar Chavez. No one was a more powerful or more passionate advocate for the men, women, and children who work on farms throughout this country.

It's easy for Americans to forget that the food they eat doesn't magically appear on a supermarket shelf. Every bunch of grapes, every box of cereal, every can of corn represents the labor for real human beings—so many of whom come to this country in search of a better life, but instead find low wages, poor housing, and substandard working conditions.

Cesar Chavez didn't just know about this struggle. He and his family lived it. He grew up moving from town to town and from school to school while his father worked in the fields. He himself became a farm worker as soon as he finished the eighth grade. Born out of his sweat and toil was a fierce determination to give a voice to people like him and his family who labored so hard and received so little in return.

Chavez became one of America's most well-known, beloved, and effective labor leaders. As the founder and leader of United Farm Workers of America, Chavez shed light on the shameful treatment of farm workers in our country. He led boycotts and marches. He helped register voters. He went on hunger strikes. And he united workers across America with a simple, yet powerful, message: "Si se puede"—"Yes we can."

Cesar Chavez represented farm workers. But the priorities he fought for are America's priorities: Better pay and benefits for workers. Better education for children. Expanded civil rights for minorities. All working Americans today owe a debt of gratitude to this outstanding individual.

Of course, Chavez's work is not done. There is still a great deal we can do to help to create a better life for working Americans, especially those who work on farms. One thing we can do right now is pass the bipartisan AgJOBS bill, which I'm proud to cosponsor. This bill, sponsored by my colleagues Senator CRAIG and Senator KENNEDY, would give many hard-working non-immigrant farm workers a chance to obtain legal status. This bill is the right thing to do for these workers. And by increasing the number of legal farm workers, it's the smart thing to do for our economy. This legislation has the support of agricultural businesses, labor unions, as well as immigrant and civil rights groups. It deserves to become law.

But there is so much more we can and should do to make America a land where each and every person receives respect and opportunity. We can extend a helping hand to the children of non-immigrant workers—by passing the DREAM Act to help those children get a college education. We can give every child in this country a chance at success—by making a real commitment to our public schools. We can ensure that a job in America is truly a gateway to a better life—by raising the minimum wage and making it a fair and living wage. And we can make access to health care a right—not a privilege—for every man, woman, and child in America.

By perpetuating his legacy, we will truly be honoring the memory of Cesar Chavez. Let us continue his commitment to achieving basic rights and dignity for all American workers. And let us use his vision as a guide as we strive to build a better tomorrow for all Americans.

#### CLARK COUNTY VICTORY IN NEVADA SCIENCE BOWL

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Clark High School for its victory in the 13th Annual Nevada Regional Science Bowl. In fact, this is Clark High School's second consecutive victory in this competition.

I commend the students on this year's Clark High School team—Young

Ran, Alex Cerjanic, Yung Wang, and Ryan Weicker—for their hard work and commitment to academic excellence. I would want to recognize their coach, Beth Issacs, for her instruction and strong leadership of the team.

This past February, 32 student teams from across Nevada participated in the Nevada Regional Science Bowl. The Clark High School team performed exceptionally well and earned the honor to represent Nevada in the National Science Bowl. The team's success not only demonstrates the benefits of hard work and diligent study, but also reflects well on the students, faculty, and administrators of Clark High School.

The Department of Energy's National Science Bowl began in 1991 as part of a national initiative to encourage America's students to excel in mathematics and science. Teams of four or five students coached by a teacher must demonstrate their knowledge by answering questions related to various scientific fields. Over the past 13 years, thousands of students have participated in this competition and have demonstrated the great potential of our Nation's youth.

Please join me in congratulating Clark High School for its commitment to academic excellence and victory in the Nevada Regional Science Bowl.

#### ELMO AND NANCY MARTINELLI 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate Elmo and Nancy Martinelli on their 50th wedding anniversary. These two native Nevadans have demonstrated a remarkable commitment to each other and their family for these past five decades.

Raised in Sparks, NV, Elmo and Nancy were high school sweethearts and were married on April 25, 1954. The son of Italian immigrants, Elmo served in the Army and opened a barber shop, which he owned for more than 30 years until his retirement in 1994. Nancy worked as an office secretary and bookkeeper until motherhood arrived in 1955.

Throughout their lives, Elmo and Nancy have dedicated themselves to ensuring that their children—Greg, Craig, Sheila, and Julie—could enjoy the best possible opportunities life has to offer. Their family would grow over time to include five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

As their children grew and moved on to college, the Martinellis created a new and no less active life, which included regular weekly golf games, improvement and maintenance of their home, and worldwide travel. In fact, Elmo and Nancy have traveled throughout the United States in their motor home, visited most of Europe and the Far East, and have taken cruises on most of the world's major bodies of water.

In the mid-1990s, the couple sold their Reno home where they had lived for 39 years and embarked on a new adventure: the construction of their dream