but aren't involved in the production receive too much of the benefits. The benefits ought to go to the producers.

I would also say to my colleagues that there is no reason in the world that for fiscal year 2001 we can't focus on equity and get the loan rate up at least to the rate for soybeans, in which case corn would be $2.11 and wheat would be $3.10. Let me tell you that is the direction we need to go for a State such as mine.

I sent a letter yesterday to Chairman LUGAR, my colleague, a Senator for whom I happen to have a tremendous amount of respect. I will certainly get a chance to talk with him today. I believe that we are making a big mistake if we simply put this money into a conference report, which means there will not be any real discussion and no real debate. We will not have paid any attention whatsoever as to how we can allocate this financial assistance out there in the countryside so that the lion's share of the benefit goes to the farmers who are in greatest need.

Why in the world do we want to use the same AMTA formula which gets subsidies out to farmers in inverse relationship to need? Why not some careful consideration and some careful discussion? Isn't that what we are about as legislators?

Too many times now in the Senate we see the same pattern of important decisions not being made by virtue of taking, in this particular case, what I think is an important question and just putting it into a conference report with no opportunity for amendments and no opportunity for discussion. I think that would be a big mistake. Instead, we can surely decide on a better formula for getting the money out there to the people. At the very minimum, it ought to go to the producers. It ought not go to landowners who are not even involved in production.

Again, we have an opportunity for fiscal year 2001 to literally talk about equity and at least get the loan rate up for other farmers and other grain farmers that are equal to what we do for soybeans.

As a Senator from Minnesota, as a Senator from an agricultural State, I come to the floor today to take issue with the direction in which we are going and to urge my colleagues not to put this financial assistance money into the crop insurance bill. But instead let's do the kind of work that we ought to do as legislators. Let's do the kind of evaluation we ought to do as legislators so we can get the help out there to people who need it.

Farm income is going to go down 17 percent again this year. There are a lot of farmers in my State. Many are going to be driven off the land.

If we are not going to write a new farm bill as an alternative to this ''freedom to fail'' bill, which is one of the worst pieces of legislation ever passed by the Congress or ever signed by a President, then I don't think we are going to write a new farm bill until after the election. At the very minimum, we ought to do our best to get the assistance to the people who need it the most.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes.

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

(The remarks of Mr. BAUCUS pertaining to the introduction of S. 2617 are located in today's RECORD under ''Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.'')

Mr. WELLSTONE. How much time remains on the Democratic side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Fourteen minutes.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I ask unanimous consent for 5 minutes to speak in morning business.

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

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BANKRUPTCY CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, sometimes we use morning business to have a chance to speak about legislation we introduce. Sometimes we use morning business to make a plea to colleagues. Sometimes we use morning business to convey a message. I want to convey a message to some Senators about conference reports and the way we have been conducting our business.

Right now with the conference reports—and I am specifically talking about the bankruptcy bill—we don't have a conference committee. We have a shadow committee because Democratic Senators are not involved at all in the deliberations. There are some rumors going around in the Senate that Republicans will basically reach an agreement on the conference report on bankruptcy. Democrats will not be involved in this deliberation at all. So we have not had a conference committee meeting. We will know what is in that conference report when it is on our desk.

That conference report dealing with bankruptcy, believe it or not, American public, could be put into an unrelated conference report such as a conference report dealing with crop insurance. There is no longer any scope of conference rule so it can be completely unrelated. Again, that is a new way of doing business in the Senate. My argument is that is no way to do business in the Senate.

I believe the minority should be involved in the conference. That is a real conference. I do not believe the way to do business is for Democrats to find out what is in the bill when it is put on our desk. I certainly don't think this bankruptcy bill —which is so harsh and so egregious in its effect on the most vulnerable citizens in the country, while basically calling for no accountability or responsibility on the part of the big credit card companies—should be put into an unrelated conference report such as one dealing with crop insurance.

I use my time as a Senator today to say to Senators that if that happens, and I hope it won't, if that should happen tomorrow, for example, when we are supposed to go on recess, I think that would be outrageous. I will oppose it. I will speak out against it and do everything I can to block it. We would be here for days. I think there are other colleagues who will be also outraged, especially at this effort to put a shadow conference report on bankruptcy, with Democrats not even being involved—and all the reports are that the bill is getting harsher and harsher, not better—into an unrelated conference report with a day to go before we are supposed to go into recess. If that happens, I want to be clear, I don't intend to be jammed. I do not intend to roll over on it. I intend to speak out against it. I intend to point out to the American people all the ways in which this is egregious legislation and the impact it will have on them and their families. That will take time. I think other Senators will join me.

I hope we do not conduct our business that way in the Senate. I hope I do not have to do that. I hope, instead, we will do what we need to do with the legislative branch and with judicial nominations, with the nomination of Brad Smith, have those votes, get onto other work, but not have last minute efforts to sort of jam legislation into unrelated legislation and attempt to ram it through here without the deliberation and without the discussion.

I do not think that is the Senate at its best. I certainly, as a Senator from Minnesota, cannot represent people in my State and people in the country that way, and I will not. I will challenge it. So I hope it does not come to that.

I yield the floor.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is my understanding we have until 10:30 in morning business on the Democratic side.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

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GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, a little over a year ago in Littleton, CO, at Columbine High School, there was a shooting incident which shocked America. We saw in that high school an event which we did not believe could happen in the United States, where students could get guns through a gun

show, go into a high school filled with other students, and open fire, killing 12 or 13 students and injuring many others. It shocked America's conscience.

As a result, the Senate began to consider gun control legislation—frankly, more gun safety legislation—to keep guns out of the hands of those who would misuse them. We are a nation of 200 million guns. Many of us believe guns should be kept out of the hands of criminals and children.

So we considered legislation on the floor of the Senate to do a background check at gun shows so kids and criminals would not have access to guns through these gun shows. We know the Brady law requires a background check at gun dealers. We think the same should apply to gun shows.

We also thought handguns should have a trigger lock so children who were looking around for something that was unusual and different or challenging would not find a loaded gun and hurt themselves or a playmate. We read about that almost every day. A trigger lock is a way to make sure that gun is securely stored away from children.

In another part of the bill, we dealt with the whole question of these high-capacity ammo clips, imported into the United States from overseas, that have absolutely no value whatsoever for any legitimate sportsman or hunter. They are people killers.

We considered that bill on the floor of the Senate. The vote on that bill was 49–49, a tie vote. As provided under the Constitution of the United States, the Vice President came and cast the tie-breaking vote. We sent that bill over to the House in the hopes we could reduce some of the gun violence in America after Columbine High School.

The National Rifle Association got its hands on that bill over in the House, and that was the end of it. They stripped from that bill virtually any of the provisions I described to you and sent it to a conference where it has languished for almost 8 months. During that period of time many more people have been killed by gun violence in America.

Just a few weeks ago, the Million Mom March across the United States brought out mothers on Mother's Day who gave up a celebration with their family to come out and talk about the need in America for gun safety, for gun control, sensible gun control. Yet this Congress has turned a deaf ear. We have refused even to acknowledge that this gun violence is rampant in America as in no other nation on Earth.

Every day now, for the last week, Members of the Senate have come to the floor to memorialize those who died a year ago today, after Columbine, after Littleton, CO, after Jonesboro, AR, and all of the other cities where we saw the gun violence that captured our imagination and basically stunned America. We come to the floor each day to read the names of some of the victims. These are victims whose names were collected by the U.S. Conference of Mayors from cities large and small to remind us that a year ago today these people, whose names I am about to read, died because of gun violence—people who had otherwise normal lives and families and aspired to all the good things we do in life. They lost their lives because of gun violence.

Many times, issues on the floor of the Senate and the House really do not become very personal. They are statistics. We just refer to them in the abstract. This is not about statistics. It is not about abstract thought. It is about real human lives that have been lost to gun violence a year ago today and, sadly, will be lost to gun violence again today.

Following are the names of some of the people who were killed by gunfire 1 year ago, on May 24, 1999: Michael Calim, age 32, Houston, TX; Mark Raiffie, age 47, St. Louis, MO; Gary Ricks, age 51, Detroit, MI; Bobby L. Williams, age 40, Houston, TX; Ronald Williams, age 47, Miami-Dade County, FL; an unidentified female, San Francisco, CA.

Today in America there will be more gun deaths. We must remember that among those gun deaths will be 12 children who will die. The National Rifle Association at their recent convention said: We know who those 12 kids are; they are the gang bangers, drug gangs, and all the rest. You can expect that.

They are wrong. Included among those 12 children are those who commit suicide with guns, those who play with guns, little infants killing themselves or a playmate, certainly those who are victims of gang bangers and, believe me, I have seen innocent young men and women who have been maimed. I have talked with the parents of people who have been killed on the streets of one of my cities in Illinois, Chicago. These were children waiting for a schoolbus when somebody came by and sprayed bullets from one of these weapons and injured or killed students.

For the National Rifle Association to say we basically should ignore these 12 children who die every day in America because they are part of drug gangs is a sad commentary on this organization and a sad commentary that they are out of touch with the reality of gun violence as it affects every family in America today. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time from 10:30 a.m. until 11 a.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Wyoming, or his designee.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent for 10 minutes of the time allocated to the Senator from Wyoming.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mrs. HUTCHISON. I thank the Chair.

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REBUTTAL ON SOCIAL SECURITY

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, yesterday the Senator from California, Mrs. BOXER, came to the Senate floor to discuss Social Security reform. In her discussion, she took on the issue of some of the Texas municipalities that had chosen to opt out of Social Security and attempted to show they were doing less well than anyone in the Social Security system today. I want to refute some of those remarks, especially the ones that referred to these counties in Texas, and give the other side of the story.

She attempted to show that municipal employees in Texas, particularly Galveston County, are not doing as well under their own retirement plan than if they were part of the Social Security system.

Just in the last few minutes, I talked to the county judge of Galveston County, Judge Yarborough, who is a very good Democrat, a very good person, and is doing a good job in Galveston County. He says in the 5½ years he has been county judge, he has never had one complaint from an employee in Galveston County and, in fact, has had many retirees come up to him and say how glad they are that they have their own retirement system rather than having been forced into the Social Security system back in the eighties when they were allowed to opt out.

First and foremost, because this is important, this was somehow linked to Governor Bush's Social Security plan. There is no linkage whatsoever. In fact, the opt-out was done in 1981 by Galveston and a few other municipalities around my State, and there were others around the country. There was a window during that time in which county and municipal employees were able to opt out of Social Security, and Galveston County did decide to opt out.

I hope as we go into the future and as we talk about Governor Bush's Social Security plan, we will not attempt to link that window when some municipalities opted out of Social Security to Governor Bush's plan. That is important because Governor Bush has said all along, from the very beginning when he put his plan forward, that, in fact, we would have a choice under his plan. Anyone wanting to stay in the present Social Security system would have that option.

That is a very important distinction to make because people might want to keep that option after they have looked at the alternative that will be available, but, in fact, millions of Americans will decide that they want to have a part in making some decisions on their own for the Social Security tax they pay.

Nearly 5 million municipal employees across the country are not part of the Social Security system. One such area is the city of San Diego. The rates of return on these pension programs are very good—so good, in fact, that the California Senators sent a letter to President Clinton in which they said:

Millions of our constituents, who will receive higher retirement benefits from their