

compassionate but is nothing but destructive to millions of lives, families, and communities across America.

We have that opportunity today. I think we can get 60 or more votes for that provision. We should go as far as we can. We should try to do more. We should do food stamp reforms. I would like to see a block grant for food stamps. I do not know if we can get a block grant for the Food Stamp Program. If we can get major reforms that came out of the Agriculture Committee that require work for people who are on food stamps, that get rid of a lot of the waste and fraud that encourage electronic benefits transfer, which is being used just north of here in Maryland and other places, in isolated programs, for example, in Berks County in Pennsylvania, using the debit card as opposed to a food stamp. It cuts down tremendously on fraud. We need to encourage that for States to be able to do more of that, to reduce the amount of food stamp fraud, which I know is a very sensitive issue among millions of Americans who see the fraud every day at the grocery store.

Those are the kinds of things that we can and should debate here on this floor. And I am hopeful that we can bring a bill—I want to doff my cap to the majority leader for his courage in setting forth the last week of the session before the recess to do welfare reform so that we can come here and have a great debate before we get into the reconciliation process after we come back, but have a debate focused solely on the issue of welfare reform. Many have encouraged the majority leader to just fold welfare reform into reconciliation and consider it all one big package. I think that is a mistake. I do not think it gives welfare the kind of focus that it deserves in changing America.

So I appreciate the opportunity to come here and talk about this. I want to again congratulate the Presiding Officer for his tremendous work on this issue. And I yield the floor.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

#### WELFARE REFORM, NOT REFORMATORY

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, first of all, before my colleague leaves, we come here to speak on the floor and we have other engagements. Let me just say to him that I think we are totally in agreement on the need for a full discussion and debate. Hopefully, it will be one that is done with a considerable amount of substance and grace and dignity on welfare. I do think it would be a mistake to fold this into a reconciliation bill because I think whenever you are considering such a major departure from public policy—and this is a major departure of public policy—it is a mistake to fold it into the reconciliation bill where you really

do not have the opportunity for the debate and discussion.

I say to my friend from Missouri that, if he is going to speak in morning business, I would really prefer to let him have the time, so I will just take 2 minutes rather than taking up the rest of the time for now. I do think there are a couple of things that concern me about what is called welfare reform.

First of all, I want to make sure it is not reformatory as opposed to reform. It seems to me real welfare reform enables a family—and in the main we are talking about women and children—to make the transition from welfare to workfare. Now, we have been talking about that for a long time. Actually, Franklin Delano Roosevelt talked about that in 1935 when what we now know as the AFDC Program was introduced as a part of the Social Security Act.

The problem is when we talk about moving to workfare as opposed to welfare, it is very difficult to have any welfare reform unless, in fact, there is affordable family child care. I mean, it is very difficult today for a single parent. Almost all of these single parents are women. In some ways I wish more were men. And I wish there were less single parents, period, No. 1; and, No. 2—and I think the Chair and I agree on this—men took more responsibility. But if we are going to say to a single parent, “You need to work,” there are a couple of critical ingredients to make sure this is real welfare reform and not reformatory. One is for especially smaller children, that there is affordable child care. That is not done on the cheap.

I know that in Minnesota, one of the problems that we have run into—and I think we are doing a really good job on welfare reform—is we have long waiting lists. As a result of that, many of the mothers that you talk to cannot make the transition to work because they simply cannot afford or find—not custodial—but developmental child care for their children.

A welfare family is not 1 mother and 10 children. We are usually talking about one mother and two children.

I will be done because I do not want to take the time away from my colleague from Missouri and we will have plenty of time for debate on this.

The second point is the one we talk about all the time, which is we have to somehow figure out where health care reform fits into this, because all too often what happens is a single parent goes back to school, a mother goes back to school, a community college, maybe then finishes up at the University of Minnesota, then tries to get a job. The Washington Post had a very, very good portrait about this. What happens is, you are no longer receiving Medicaid, you are paying child care, and if you look at the wages that are out there for jobs, you are behind. So we have to make sure that, in fact, families are able to make this transi-

tion without punishing families. So I think the health care reform piece is critically important.

Finally, I think this is a challenge for all of us. I think it goes well beyond welfare reform policy. We really need to look at the fundamental question of standard of living in this country and the squeeze on the vast middle class and what has been going on for the last 15 years, plus—I am not pointing the finger in any party direction—and I think the overwhelming challenge is to have an economy that produces good jobs that people can count on. I think that has to be part of welfare reform as well, so a mother has a job that pays a wage, has benefits on which she can support her children. I think we need to look at these much more carefully.

I could say more. I will not. My colleague is anxious to speak. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANTORUM). The Senator from Missouri.

#### RESTORE HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, it is true that there is a broad consensus that people understand what we have attempted to do with our welfare system has been a failure. If you want to see what our current Washington-based, one-size-fits-all welfare program has done, to see how the perverse incentives of the welfare system have failed, I guess you could go just a couple blocks from here. There you can see a generation raised by welfare and fed through food stamps, but literally starved of nurture and hope. You will meet young teens in their third pregnancy. You will meet children who not only do not have a father, but they do not know any other child with a father. These are tragedies of the current system, and these are the realities against which reform must properly be judged.

There has been a great deal of reporting recently on divisions in our discussion on welfare. I would like to make something as clear as I possibly can. While it may have taken us some time to reconcile our differences in terms of the strategy that we have, we have never forgotten the horror of our current system, we have never disagreed on our fundamental values, and we have never wavered from our central commitment, and that is to end the system of welfare we have now, to strengthen States and communities, to restore hope and opportunity to the millions of Americans for whom such words now are tragically words without definition or words without meaning.

I might add that it is important for us to understand that as well meaning as we might be in Washington in seeking to find a single solution to all of the problems that relate to the needs of people that would move them from dependence to independence, it would be inappropriate for us to try and find