

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DOMENICI. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. DOMENICI. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry. Is time allotted for speeches this morning?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business until 2 o'clock, the time to be equally divided between the leaders.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, first I ask unanimous consent that Dr. Randy Hyer, a fellow in my office, have floor privileges for the purpose of the introduction of a bill this morning.

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

(The remarks of Mr. DOMENICI pertaining to the introduction of S. 1898 are located in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. ROCKEFELLER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to take such time as I will require for a statement. It should not last more than 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right. We are operating under an order that will carry us to other matters at 2 o'clock.

THE SENATE'S UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, I thought this would be a good time to remind my colleagues of the unfinished business that is still waiting to get done.

As we head toward the Fourth of July and another recess, we also need to remember that the days to take action in Congress are running out. It is not only late June, we also have very few days of legislative session left.

Will this be the Congress remembered only for what it did not get done? Will this be the Congress that spent all of its time and millions of taxpayers' dollars only on camera-filled hearing rooms to learn about the White House Travel Office and to turn every pebble over on Whitewater?

Instead, this should be a Congress capable of doing something about the day-to-day struggles of hard-working Americans. But to produce, we need some basic steps taken. The calendar needs to be pulled out, votes scheduled, final agreements reached, and work completed.

I think of three actions that will help millions of Americans, including West Virginians.

No. 1, it is time to wrap up the Kennedy-Kassebaum health insurance bill. Members from the other side of the aisle are determined to include something called medical savings accounts. I might add that I hear absolutely no clamor for MSA's from constituents, beyond employers that are thinking about using this device as a substitute for the health insurance they now subsidize for employees.

But the key point is that the heart of Kennedy-Kassebaum involves changes that will make sure insurance is there for people when they really need it. When they need coverage for the very illness or condition that is now labeled a pre-existing condition. When they need coverage, but have to change jobs and now find their insurance canceled.

These are the changes that affect millions of Americans, and many, many West Virginians. This is the work we need to get done before this session of Congress runs out.

No. 2, this Congress still has the time to enact welfare reform. This is an area begging for reason and common sense. No one is going to get exactly their way on something as complicated and contentious as changing the welfare system. But it is not hard to figure out what Americans expect from us. They want to know that welfare is not a haven for avoiding work, responsibility, and the rules that most hard-working citizens play by.

The Democratic leader has just laid out another detailed plan, known as Work First Two, that reflects exactly what we need to do on welfare reform. It is a tough, no-nonsense plan to require adults to work or prepare for work. It does not make a point of punishing innocent children, who have done nothing wrong.

It is time to move away from politics, rigid positions, and posturing on welfare reform. The President has proven he will not sign a bill just because of its label. We should not waste any more time on legislation that belongs to one faction or simply rubber-stamps what some Governors have asked for. We need to work out our differences, and produce the bill that will turn welfare into a last-resort—for the sake of poor families and the hard-working taxpayers who want reform.

Finally, I find it shameful that this Congress has still not been able to enact an increase in the minimum wage. And I want to elaborate some on this subject, because it is so important to the people of my State.

A few weeks ago, the Washington Post ran an article telling us that the CEOs of major companies got a 23-percent raise in their compensation in 1995. According to the consulting firm of Pearl Myers & Partners, the average salary of a CEO was \$991,300 with the remaining in stock options and bonuses. Twenty years ago, the top CEO earned about 40 times as much as the typical worker. Today, that same CEO earns 190 times as much.

We know from study after study, town meeting after town meeting back

home, that wages for most other Americans are stagnant and that most workers have every reason to feel insecure about their income, their jobs, and their health insurance. The people who work 8 hours every day, making products and providing needed services, deserve a living wage. They should not be left behind. The gap between the rich and the poor continues to polarize the country into the haves and have-nots, and that is downright un-American.

As others have already said, whatever economic tide that is rising seems to be lifting a lot of yachts, and not much that carries the rest of Americans. Working families today are making less than they did 20 years ago. Look at what has happened to a single worker over those 20 years. He or she has watched the collapse of communism, voted in four Presidential elections, seen computers become a part of every day life, and watched the stock market rise over 5,000 points. For the worker relying on the minimum wage, his or her most recent paycheck is worth less than the first one in purchasing power.

And some wonder why hard-working American families feel left out of the American dream? The stagnation of wages over the past 20 years is obvious to parents struggling to pay their bills.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues who still do not support a minimum wage increase to listen to this: When adjusted for inflation, the current Federal minimum wage of \$4.25 an hour is worth 27 percent less to workers and their families than that amount in 1979. Measured in 1979 dollars, the minimum wage is only worth \$3.10 an hour. A minimum wage worker earns \$8,840 a year. This is not a living wage, in fact, it is barely a sustainable wage. Even with an expanded earned income tax credit, earning \$4.25 an hour does not lift a family out of poverty.

No matter what the opponents say, minimum wage earners are not a collection of teen-age burger-flippers. Sixty-nine percent of all minimum wage earners are adults over the age of 21. Women make up 60 percent of all minimum wage workers and are usually a single parent trying to keep their families together. These workers are playing by the rules, paying rent, utility bills, health care premiums, food and clothing for their families. They are working long and hard hours, and they do not want to slip into welfare and dependency.

They deserve our admiration, our respect, and they deserve a raise.

In my home State of West Virginia, over 100,000 workers would get a raise if we pass the Democratic amendment to raise minimum wage to \$5.15. Almost 24 percent of West Virginia's work force would benefit from an increase in the minimum wage—about one out of four workers.

Let me share the story of just one woman in West Virginia. When her husband was injured in the mines and denied disability coverage, she went to