

when we can proceed to this important legislation, the majority leader, as is his wont, calls for regular order: We are not going to listen to any voices in the Senate that have been trying to get to this measure for over a year and a half, either a hearing or a markup in the appropriate committee. No, thumbs down. Scheduled on the floor of the Senate? Absolutely not, unless you take it our way.

Now, Mr. President, you can—and the majority leader has been successful up to this time—avoid having the opportunity for such a debate and discussion, but I do not really understand the reasons why. Why are the Republicans objecting to debating the gag issue or about emergency room access? Why shouldn't patients who believe they are having an emergency based on a reasonable person's judgment be assured coverage at the nearest emergency room? Why shouldn't we be able to debate what would be the appropriate responsibility of HMOs on these issues?

Why shouldn't we be able to debate whether you can keep your own doctor or whether you have access to specialists or whether you are able to have specialists for primary care, as many women, in particular, so need in our society today? And why not discuss the importance of access to clinical trials, or a right to timely appeals—both internal and external—and health plan accountability? Why should the health insurance industry be the only industry that can cause death and disability and be excluded from accountability in the United States of America? Should we not have the opportunity to debate that issue and call the roll? Not according to the majority leader. No, no, not according to the majority leader. You either take it or leave it.

Now, that has been the position effectively on HMOs, the position on campaign financing, the position on any increase in the minimum wage: Take ours or leave it.

Now, he is entitled and has authority as the majority leader to make these decisions, but we also have prerogatives in this body, and we can exercise those prerogatives and, as Senator DASCHLE has indicated, will either do it in a regular way according to the rules of the Senate or we will have some other opportunity to do so.

This body should not be gagged, as the majority leader is doing when he responds: You will take three amendments and that is it. It is very clear what the priorities are for the Republican leadership—protect the banks and the credit card companies—protect the insurance industry—protect their friends. All you have to do is look at who is going to benefit from the HMO reform and patients' rights and who is going to benefit from the bankruptcy legislation.

Who is going to benefit from the bankruptcy legislation? The banks and the credit card companies that have been among the most profitable industries in this country in the last few

years. Who benefits from Patients' Bill of Rights? Working families benefit from it. Children benefit from it. Senior citizens benefit from it. The average citizen in this country benefits from it.

But, no, no, the Senate hasn't got time for that. Make no mistake. What was determined this afternoon by the leadership is that the Senate is favoring the banks and credit card companies and we are giving short shrift, short shrift to those who are dependent upon, in too many instances, the kinds of HMOs in this country that are not putting the medical decisions in the hands of doctors.

Why is it that nearly 200 of the leading national medical associations, nursing organizations, patient coalitions, disability groups, mental health groups, religious organizations, small businesses and consumer groups support the Daschle bill? I have been in the Chamber when I have listened to the majority leader and my friend from Oklahoma, Senator NICKLES, talk about their bill. We haven't heard of one single patients' organization that supports their bill. Every one of them supports the Daschle bill. So, when we say let us at least have the opportunity to debate it, we mean let's discuss each of the various elements. Let us have an opportunity to address those measures, with relevant amendments—they are right here. I would settle for amendments on the particular measures on this chart this afternoon, if I were asked, with time limits. But let's have accountability. Let's have accountability. Why is the Republican leadership saying to every doctor who is represented by those organizations, to every nurse, to every patient or survivor of every breast cancer group, "No, we can't debate your proposal"?

So we are going to work at it and we are going to keep at it, time in and time out.

I know there are others who want to speak. How much time do I have?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has just expired.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask consent to have the same privilege as has been extended to the Senator from Iowa and the Senator from Illinois, to proceed for 4 more minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa spoke for 20 minutes. The Senator from Illinois spoke for 15 minutes.

Mr. KENNEDY. I ask for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator may ask for 5 minutes more. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, finally, on another measure we have attempted to bring up here, and we will have the opportunity to do so, it is to recognize a fundamental issue of fairness and equity in our country, and that is an increase in the minimum wage.

I ask the Chair to let me know when I have 1 minute left.

We have had the most extraordinary economic prosperity in the history of this country. We have had the explosion in terms of Wall Street, even with its ups and downs. We have the lowest rates of unemployment, the lowest rates of inflation.

Over the many debates which have taken place since I have been here in the U.S. Senate, since 1962—and we have raised the minimum wage during this time five different times with Republican and Democratic support—we are always faced with two issues: If we increase the minimum wage, we are going to add to inflation and add to unemployment. It is fair for those who oppose the increase in the minimum wage to ask us, now that we saw the last increase in 1996–1997—we have seen an increase of 90 cents. For whom? The working poor; men and women working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year, who pay their bills and play by the rules—words that were used by the Senator from Iowa. They are the workers. They are the workers, struggling.

Mr. President, our particular amendment, if successful, with a dollar in the next 2 years, would move it up by the year 2000 to \$6.15. That would be \$5.76, in terms of purchasing power. It would still be lower than what it was for a period of some 20 years—25 years, in purchasing power, at a time of extraordinary prosperity and economic growth.

In every one of these debates they say if you raise it, you will see higher unemployment and you will see higher inflation. Look what happened the last time. When we raised the minimum wage in 1997, the unemployment rate was 4.9 percent and the rate of inflation was 1.7. Then we raised the minimum wage. We raised the minimum wage. Today, the unemployment rate is—higher? No, it is lower. It is 4.5 percent, and the rate of inflation is 1.4 percent. Mr. President, 3.7 million new jobs have been added. Executive salaries have exploded and gone up through the roof, but the real purchasing income for the needy working families of this country continues to fall further and further behind.

Those who receive the minimum wage primarily are women—60 percent. It is a women's issue. It is a children's issue. These are children of working families. Family values? This is it. When you get an increase in the minimum wage, those families say, "Now we no longer have to work three jobs, we can work two. Maybe we don't have the time to spend with our children." But this is an issue of dignity for those who are out there working. It is an issue of fairness. It is an issue of decency.

This body, at the time of this extraordinary economic growth and prosperity, at a time when we in this body have benefited from a cost-of-living adjustment of more than \$3,000 since our last increase in the minimum wage,

ought to be able to say to those working poor that we understand, when they work 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year, they ought not to be continuing to live in poverty.

Mr. President, those issues are going to come back to us and we will address them, I guarantee you, before the end of the session.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to proceed as in morning business for up to 25 minutes.

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

#### THE ONGOING INVESTIGATION OF PRESIDENT CLINTON

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to make the most difficult and distasteful statement, for me probably the most difficult statement I have made on this floor in the 10 years I have been a Member of the U.S. Senate.

On August 17, President Clinton testified before a grand jury convened by the independent counsel and then talked to the American people about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky, a former White House intern. He told us that the relationship was "not appropriate," that it was "wrong," and that it was "a critical lapse of judgment and a personal failure" on his part. In addition, after 7 months of denying that he had engaged in a sexual relationship with Ms. Lewinsky, the President admitted that his "public comments about this matter gave a false impression." He said, "I misled people."

Mr. President, my immediate reaction to this statement that night it was delivered was deep disappointment and personal anger. I was disappointed because the President of the United States had just confessed to engaging in an extramarital affair with a young woman in his employ and to willfully deceiving the Nation about his conduct. I was personally angry because President Clinton had, by his disgraceful behavior, jeopardized his administration's historic record of accomplishment, much of which grew out of the principles and programs that he and I and many others had worked on together in the new Democratic movement. I was also angry because I was one of the many people who had said over the preceding 7 months that if the President clearly and explicitly denies the allegations against him, that of course I believe him.

Since that Monday night I have not commented on this matter publicly. I thought I had an obligation to consider the President's admissions more objectively, less personally, and to try to put them in a clearer perspective. And I felt that I owed that much to the President, for whom I have great affection and admiration, and who I truly

believe has worked tirelessly to make life tangibly better in so many ways for so many Americans.

But the truth is that, after much reflection, my feelings of disappointment and anger have not dissipated, except now these feelings have gone beyond my personal dismay to a larger, graver sense of loss for our country, a reckoning of the damage that the President's conduct has done to the proud legacy of his Presidency, and ultimately an accounting of the impact of his actions on our democracy and its moral foundations. The implications for our country are so serious that I feel a responsibility to my constituents in Connecticut, as well as to my conscience, to voice my concerns forthrightly and publicly. And I can think of no more appropriate place to do that than on this great Senate floor.

I have chosen to speak particularly at this time before the independent counsel files his report because, while we do not know enough yet to answer the question of whether there are legal consequences of the President's conduct, we do know enough from what the President acknowledged on August 17 to answer a separate and distinct set of questions about the moral consequences for our country. Mr. President, I have come to this floor many times in the past to speak with my colleagues about the concerns which are so widely shared in this Chamber and throughout the Nation that our society's standards are sinking; that our common moral code is deteriorating and that our public life is coarsening.

In doing so, I have specifically criticized leaders of the entertainment industry for the way they have used the enormous influence they wield to weaken our common values. And now, because the President commands at least as much attention and exerts at least as much influence on our collective consciousness as any Hollywood celebrity or television show, it is hard to ignore the impact of the misconduct the President has admitted to on our culture, on our character and on our children.

To begin with, I must respectfully disagree with the President's contention that his relationship with Monica Lewinsky and the way in which he misled us about it is nobody's business but his family's and that even Presidents have private lives, as he said.

Whether he or we think it fair or not, the reality is in 1998 that a President's private life is public. Contemporary news media standards will have it no other way. Surely, this President was given fair notice of that by the amount of time the news media has dedicated to investigating his personal life during the 1992 campaign and in the years since.

But there is more to this than modern media intrusiveness. The President is not just the elected leader of our country. He is, as Presidential scholar Clinton Rossiter observed, "The one-man distillation of the American peo-

ple," and as President Taft said at another time, "The personal embodiment and representative of their dignity and majesty." So when his personal conduct is embarrassing, it is sadly so not just for him and his family, it is embarrassing for all of us as Americans.

The President is a role model who, because of his prominence and the moral authority that emanates from his office, sets standards of behavior for the people he serves. His duty, as the Reverend Nathan Baxter of the National Cathedral here in Washington said in a recent sermon, "is nothing less than the stewardship of our values." So no matter how much the President or others may wish to compartmentalize the different spheres of his life, the inescapable truth is that the President's private conduct can and often does have profound public consequences.

In this case, the President apparently had extramarital relations with an employee half his age and did so in the workplace, in the vicinity of the Oval Office. Such behavior is not just inappropriate, it is immoral and it is harmful, for it sends a message of what is acceptable behavior to the larger American family, particularly to our children, which is as influential as the negative message that is communicated by the entertainment culture.

If you doubt that, just ask America's parents about the intimate and frequently unseemly sexual questions their young children have been asking them about and discussing since the President's relationship with Ms. Lewinsky became public 7 months ago. I have had many of those conversations with parents, particularly in Connecticut, and from them I conclude that parents across our country feel much as I do that something very sad and sordid has happened in American life when I cannot watch the news on television with my 10-year-old daughter anymore.

This, unfortunately, is all too familiar territory for America's families in today's "anything goes" culture, where sexual promiscuity is too often treated as just another lifestyle choice with little risk of adverse consequences. It is this mindset that has helped to threaten the integrity and stability of the family which continues to be the most important unit of civilized society, the place where we raise our children and teach them to be responsible citizens, to develop and nurture their personal and moral faculties.

President Clinton, in fact, has shown during the course of his Presidency that he understands this and the broad concern in the public about the threat to the family. He has used the bully pulpit of his Presidency to eloquently and effectively call for the renewal of our common values, particularly the principle of personal responsibility and our common commitment to family. He has spoken out admirably against sexual promiscuity among teenagers in clear terms of right and wrong, emphasizing the consequences involved.