

pay at 350 of the country's largest firms. The median CEO salary and bonus in 1997 was \$1.6 million, or \$770 an hour. The CEO takes less than 2 days to earn what a minimum wage worker earns in a full year.

The same groups that complain about an increase in the minimum wage are the ones that have made dramatic increases in the payment of their officials, Mr. President. On the one hand, they say, "We can't afford to pay a 50 cent or \$1 increase in the minimum wage"; yet, they are able to afford millions more in salaries and stock options to their executives.

Over 170 groups have joined the Campaign for a Fair Minimum Wage. They include religious groups, such as the American Friends Service Committee, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, the United States Catholic Conference—and dozens more.

Women's organizations are also represented: the American Association of University Women, the National Committee on Pay Equity, the National Partnership for Women & Families, the National Women's Political Caucus, the Older Women's League, and many others.

Civil rights groups also support the Campaign. These groups and others understand that the minimum wage is a civil rights issue—a partial list includes the American-Arab Anti-discrimination Committee, the Asian American Legal Defense Fund, the NAACP, the National Council of La Raza, the Rainbow Coalition, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and many more.

Trade unions have joined the Campaign, too. Virtually every union member earns more than the minimum wage, thanks to union representation at the bargaining table. But that hasn't stopped the AFL-CIO, AFSCME, the Communications Workers, the Steel Workers, the Service Employees and other unions from strongly supporting this increase. They believe that every working American deserves a decent wage, and they are working hard to achieve that result.

Mr. President, we will continue to consider the issues that have been raised in past debates on the minimum wage. We are eager to debate these issues on the floor of the U.S. Senate and give the membership an opportunity to vote on this issue.

As I have mentioned, and will continue to say time in and time out, this is an issue of fundamental fairness and decency. It is a real reflection of the kind of values which this institution has.

This is a women's issue because the majority of minimum wage workers are women. It is a children's issue because many of those women have children.

It basically is a fairness issue. And we are very hopeful that we will have the opportunity to debate this and have a decision on this issue in the U.S. Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah is recognized.

ORDER FOR MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 6 p.m. there be a period for the transaction of routine morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

CONSUMER BANKRUPTCY REFORM ACT OF 1998

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, let me, first of all, say that as we go into this debate—and I am pleased to be joined with Senator KENNEDY; I have spoken about the importance of raising the minimum wage—I look forward to having the opportunity to debate this with colleagues.

I guess I have reached the conclusion—I think this is sort of the common ground with the Chair—that the best single thing we can do in the Congress, in the House and the Senate, is to do everything we can to enable parents to do the best by their kids, or a single parent to do her or his best by children. I really do believe that this means many different kinds of things. But one of them certainly is to try to make sure that people have a living wage. I think it is terribly important.

I think it is a value question. I look forward to the debate. I will be out on the floor with my colleague, Senator KENNEDY, and others as well.

CRISIS IN AGRICULTURE

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I want to talk for a moment, or for a little while here, about what is happening in the Midwest. I had thought that perhaps this afternoon I would have an opportunity as a Senator from Minnesota to join my colleagues from other Midwestern States with an amendment that would speak to the crisis in agriculture. That didn't happen this afternoon.

For those who are watching this debate, now that there is an attempt to work out an agreement on this bankruptcy bill with a potential cloture vote tomorrow, it doesn't look like we will be able to introduce this amendment, at least today. But I do want to just say to colleagues—I know that a number of us will be on the floor tomorrow—that my top priority as a Senator from Minnesota is to bring to the floor of the Senate, with other colleagues, an amendment that would really make a difference in the lives of family farmers in my State.

Mr. President, we have an economic convulsion in agriculture. There is tre-

mendous economic pain in our rural communities.

Many farmers and their families are just leaving their farms now. They are doing it quietly. It is not so much like the mid-1980s where you really saw a lot of farm rallies and marches and whatnot. That may happen. That may not happen. I don't know.

I know that when I go to farm gatherings—whether it be in Fulda, MN, or in Granite Falls, MN, or Crookston, MN, it is quite unbelievable with the number of people that come.

The fact of the matter is that with farmers now receiving somewhere like \$1.42 for a bushel of corn, there is just simply no way—or \$2.15 for a bushel of wheat—they can't cash-flow.

My friend, the Presiding Officer, is from the State of Indiana. And he knows something about this issue.

You can be the best manager in the world. You can't make it. If you are not a huge conglomerate, then you have more of a family farm operation, which really ranges in terms of numbers of acres of land. But the important part of it is that it is entrepreneurship. The people that work the land live there. These are the people that are in the most trouble.

For those of us who are from the Midwest—in a way, I approach this debate with a sense of history, because I think in many ways this is sort of one of the last regions of the country where you have a family farm structure in agriculture.

Mr. President, what I want to say to colleagues, understanding full well that we will not be able to do this on the bankruptcy bill, though I must say to my colleague from Iowa, a very good friend, that there is unfortunately a very direct correlation between what is happening, as he well knows, to family farms in our State and bankruptcy.

If we can't do this amendment that will speak to the farm crisis on the bankruptcy bill, then the very next vehicle that comes to the floor—the very next bill—we absolutely have to have an amendment out here.

We may have some different views about what needs to happen. But I will tell you that the amendment that I see which must be brought to the floor first and foremost is we are going to have to remove the caps on the market assistance loans. We can do other things as well and allow a 6-month loan extension. Corn right now is capped at \$1.89 a bushel. This would get it up to \$2.00, \$2.20, \$2.25. Wheat is capped at \$2.58. This would get it up to \$3.20. This would be the single most important thing we can do, along with providing indemnity payments that we have all been talking about.

We passed this before we went on recess. It is going to have to be more by way of financial assistance, given what is happening to a lot of farmers in the South as well, because of weather conditions. And in our State, in northwest