

"(7) in a case concerning an individual, if the consideration for such agreement is based in whole or in part on an unsecured consumer debt, or is based in whole or in part upon a debt for an item of personalty the value of which at point of purchase was \$250 or less, and in which the creditor asserts a purchase money security interest, the court, approves such agreement as—

"(A) in the best interest of the debtor in light of the debtor's income and expenses;

"(B) not imposing an undue hardship on the debtor's future ability of the debtor to pay for the needs of children and other dependents (including court ordered support);

"(C) not requiring the debtor to pay the creditor's attorney's fees, expenses or other costs relating to the collection of the debt;

"(D) not entered into to protect property that is necessary for the care and maintenance of children or other dependents that would have nominal value on repossession;

"(E) not entered into after coercive threats or actions by the creditor in the creditor's course of dealings with the debtor."

(3) in subsection (d)(2) by striking "subsections (c)(6)" and inserting "subsections (c)(6) and (c)(7)", and after "of this section," by striking "if the consideration for such agreement is based in whole or in part on a consumer debt that is not secured by real property of the debtor" and adding at the end: "as applicable".

5. Strike page 66.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I now ask unanimous consent that there be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

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

EFFORTS TO LEGALIZE MARIJUANA

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, yesterday, my colleague Senator GRASSLEY introduced Senate Joint Resolution 56, a bill cosponsored by Senator KYL and me that expresses the sense of Congress in opposing efforts in various States to legalize marijuana and other Schedule I drugs for so-called medical use. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this bill, and I want everyone to understand that current drug laws should not be circumvented by allowing illegal harmful drugs to be introduced freely in our society.

Last week, an identical measure sponsored by Congressman MCCOLLUM passed in the House of Representatives by a vote of 310 to 93.

Mr. President, proponents of legalization argue that marijuana and other drugs are needed by those living with pain and disease. They stress that these drugs improve the quality of life and should not be denied to those suffering. I understand their argument that we need to be compassionate to those that are suffering. My heart goes out to those people living with disease and to the families that care for them. Nevertheless, those arguments are flawed, and we cannot allow this legalization effort to contravene our Federal drug laws.

In 1996, the Judiciary Committee held a hearing and examined the drug legalization initiatives in California and Arizona. We heard testimony from many of those involved in the war on drugs including General Barry R. McCaffrey, Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy, and Mr. Thomas A. Constantine, Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration. As a result of chairing that hearing, I learned that there is overwhelming evidence showing that marijuana is not a medicine and that its use by those suffering from cancer and other diseases is contradicted by the many side effects of the drug use. The testimony given at that hearing proved to me that the growing legalization movement in our States is harmful to the very people they are proposing to help.

As many of you know, I have not been afraid to speak out and to urge that this administration do more to stem the rising tide against teenage drug abuse in our country. Illegal drug use by teenagers is one of the most serious domestic problems facing our Nation today: in my mind, it may be the most crucial issue for our Nation's ability to craft productive and law-abiding citizens. The worsening problem of drug abuse among our children and teens wreaks havoc on the lives and potential of thousands of young people each year. Legalization movements send a confusing message to the Nation's youth and threaten to increase the already alarming rise in drug use among teenagers. If we do not act decisively, we will pay a heavy price.

For example, the results of the latest National Household Survey on Drug Abuse found that drug use among our children is climbing at an alarming rate. The number of children ages 12 to 17 using illicit drugs has more than doubled since 1992. Between 1996 and 1997 alone, drug use among 12- and 13-year-olds increased almost 75 percent.

The abuse of marijuana, a drug many widely consider a gateway drug to more serious substance abuse, more than doubled among children between 1992 and 1997, increasing 75 percent between 1996 and 1997 alone. Not surprisingly, the rate of minors first trying heroin is at its highest level in 30 years, and the rate of minors trying cocaine and hallucinogens has more than doubled in the 90's.

Although deeply troubling, this disturbing trend should come as no surprise to this administration. I warned this administration as early as 1993 that its failure to take the issue seriously and take strong action to fight drug abuse would prove disastrous to our children. Unfortunately, the evidence is now in and my predictions were all too prophetic to the great detriment of our children and future generations.

Our country's laws prohibiting narcotic and dangerous drug use are not arbitrary. These laws are designed to protect our children and to protect ma-

ture adults from harmful chemicals. These laws should be fully enforced because they help prevent drug experimentation and drug addiction.

Promoting the use of marijuana for so-called medical purposes is nothing more than a sham effort to legalize drugs through the back door. If we do not act decisively, we will pay a heavy price.

In the words of General McCaffrey, our Drug Czar, "[addictive drugs were criminalized because they are harmful; they are not harmful because they were criminalized.]" The more a product is available and legitimized, the greater will be its use. If drugs were legalized in the U.S., the cost to the individual and society would grow astronomically.

The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act is the key law by which legitimate drug products are evaluated and regulated in this country. A central precept of this law is that all drugs be proven safe and effective under their labeled indications. Proponents of medicinal uses of marijuana should not be exempt from this basic public health requirement. Anecdotal reports that marijuana may be beneficial should not cloud the fact that only controlled clinical trials can meet the exacting licensure requirements of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. If there is, in fact, a medical benefit from marijuana then it is imperative that the necessary scientific studies be conducted to assess and confirm such benefit. To date, proponents of medical uses of marijuana have been unwilling or unable to come through the front door of the FDA with evidence of its safety and efficacy. The pharmacological armamentarium contains many proven drugs to treat pain. It is poor public policy to acquiesce in back door mechanisms that permit unsafe and unproven products like marijuana to reach the bedsides of American patients.

I believe this to be an important resolution and urge my colleagues to join me and Senators GRASSLEY and KYL in sending a clear message to those who advocate the legalization of marijuana and other Schedule I drugs for medical use in our States. I ask for their support when this joint resolution comes to the floor.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF HIS EXCELLENCY ANDRES PASTRANA ARANGO, PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, on August 7, 1998, Andres Pastrana Arango was sworn in as the 60th President of Colombia, 28 years after his father, Misael Pastrana, took the same oath of office. A former journalist, mayor of Bogota, and Senator, president candidate Andres Pastrana swept into office with the largest electoral margin in his country's history.

With the election of President Pastrana I believe that a new opportunity has been created for the United

States and Colombia to work closely together to deal with issues of mutual concern to our two countries. I very much hope that both of our governments will take advantage of this opening because it is in the interests of both countries that we do so.

In his inaugural speech of August 7, President Pastrana set forth his agenda for his term of office. Breaking the stranglehold of major narcotrafficking organizations and bringing peace to Colombia are among President Pastrana's highest priorities. During the course of his address, he laid out his plans to end the 34 year old civil war and to counter drug trafficking and the violence and corruption it brings with it. In order to tackle the financial, political and social problems of his country, he also pledged to undertake a complete turnaround in Colombia's Government during his administration.

I believe that President Pastrana has been very quick in shaping the outline of policies and programs that should help to strengthen democratic institutions in Colombia and respect for human rights. His inaugural address gives me hope that the United States working together with the Government of Colombia can make that a reality. I would urge my colleagues to take the opportunity to read for themselves President Pastrana's Inaugural address. I ask unanimous consent that his address be printed in full at the conclusion of my remarks.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection; it is so ordered. (See Exhibit 1.)

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, President Pastrana is visiting the United States this week, and the Committee on Foreign Relations will have the honor of receiving him on September 24. At that time we will have an opportunity to discuss at length President Pastrana's vision for his country. I look forward to the opportunity to do so.

EXHIBIT 1

INAUGURAL SPEECH AS PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC BY MR. ANDRÉS PASTRANA ARANGO

This day is not only mine, but of all of us Colombians. The solemn oath that I have taken today before almighty God and before you is a sacrament of our democracy. It is an oath pronounced throughout our history that, in this case, acquires a greater dimension since it requires that we likewise succeed in the fulfillment of our obligations and not repeat the errors of the past. Proud of our heritage, we are now going to seek the best for our future.

We are not only conferring the presidency upon me today; we are also inaugurating a new era for Colombia on the right path. I make a commitment to myself and to you to govern without privileges nor discriminations, but for all Colombians. Those who hold the highest positions in government shall have the greatest obligations under the law, and those who think that power gives one the right to break the law shall not govern. Put simply, there shall be no room for corruption in my administration and it shall not be tolerated nor forgiven. I want—and I shall accept nothing less—this administration to go down in history as the cleanest of all administrations.

Within the immense margin of our challenges, let us risk facing the big changes

that we need. Let us again trust that our cities and our countryside become safe and peaceful. Let us believe that once again our industry and our agriculture will prosper, that our children will receive a good education, that their health will be protected, and that their parents will be safe from the scourge of unemployment.

Fulfilling these expectations implies serious and sustained efforts, a common cause and the uncommon courage to gather new ideas and be willing to never quit nor give up.

For change does not happen in a week, a month, or a year. Perhaps, it will not even be complete at the end of this administration. We are at the dawn of a new era, not yet in its splendor. But change begins today.

We have vast natural resources but, more importantly, great human talent. If we prepare ourselves conscientiously, we should not fear the economy's globalization. On the contrary, we shall welcome it and we shall compete and prosper within it.

I see a Colombia proudly acknowledged in our hemisphere and in the entire world, for navigating through the prodigies of cyberspace and not in the artificial paradises of cocaine. I see a proud Colombia, with enough authority to challenge other nations to control their own drug demand, because we were able to combat our own country's supply and demand.

As President, I shall not surrender even a bit of our sovereignty, but I shall appeal to the entire country to comply with the law and to build the prosperity that shall make Colombia a magnet for investment with its modern economy.

We shall look for prosperity not only in industry and enterprise, but also in agriculture, which has been abused for many years without being paid its due. We are going to invest more in the countryside. Let us not forget that the land is the soul of Colombia and that those who cultivate it are the soul of the land.

Colombians, during my campaign I proposed ten great changes. Each one of them is equally important and they shall all be promoted. We must try again, and trust once again, that we can change and attain a better country. I ask for your help, for, more than the decisions of a President, it is your hands that shall mold the final substance of our efforts.

To the people of Colombia, I owe the privilege of being the leader that shall close the doors of the 20th century and open those of the 21st century, towards the vast horizon of the Third Millennium. I have been given the responsibility of continuing and improving, wherever possible, the accomplishments of other leaders. But more than six million Colombians, and a broad consensus of the country, have chosen me to find the road to this Promised Land that Colombia should be.

A COLOMBIA IN PEACE

A very wise Spanish saying says, "Without peace, there is no bread". Therefore, first of all, I want peace, which means peace and bread. And it is the Promised Land that we yearn for, a Colombia in peace.

But reconciliation requires a government that is able to organize collective leadership for peace. This implies sacrifices, requires renunciation, and demands serious commitments that would be sterile, as long as Cain continues killing Abel.

The President of the Republic assumes the non-renounceable leadership of building peace. Do not expect me to build a bureaucracy for peace. As of now, I invite all Colombians to continue and to work within the "Agenda for Peace" that I am going to lead.

It must be clear for every one that I shall recover for the State the monopoly of force

for peace, social justice, and the happiness of the Colombian people. Every minute that we save on war is an investment in life. International cooperation in our peace processes should not be viewed as the inability to build it ourselves, but as a new way of making peace.

The call to peace as a necessary condition for the country's project is evident. But peace demands the transformation of the human energy of animosity, which is characteristic of wars, into vital energy for the reconstruction of a new Colombia.

It is precisely this vital energy that should not permit that violent acts, like those of recent days, occur again; acts that fill me, like their families and all my countrymen, with pain. They do not contribute to the atmosphere of understanding that we, myself personally and my entire administration, are ready to propitiate by putting all of our efforts into it.

The first question is that of identity. What is Colombia and what do we want it to be? Historically, the nation looked for its identity in a homogeneity that was excluding, which despised diversity or nullified it. A country demanded a religion, a language, and even a dominant ethnic group. From dictatorial positions or from republican pacts, these conditions of identity were being imposed for an indefinite time to conform other systems of power. A subsequent evolution, particularly the current one, demonstrates that those that have been excluded in any way, usually demand, with great violence, the acknowledgment of their existence and their right to participate. The point is that the identity of the new Colombia that faces the challenges of the 21st century and is handed over to the new generations must be inclusive of Colombian diversity, not exclusive, as it has been until now for a significant number of Colombians. Keeping the nation united must be the origin and the end of this historic determination in favor of peace.

A MODEL FOR DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

I receive a country with seriously affected economic indicators and with its public finances in ruin. I, therefore, intend to do an inventory of the conditions in which I received them. But we shall also promptly present, in the coming weeks, the great guidelines of the measures to be taken in order to bring Colombia out of the situation in which we found it.

A fundamental part of this recovery program is budget adjustments. Our country cannot continue to carelessly spend beyond its possibilities. If we did so, the already serious unemployment situation that we inherited would be even more overwhelming. And the imbalances everywhere would make the economy unmanageable and would commit the development of the country for a long time. Therefore we shall rigorously dedicate ourselves, from the very first days of this administration, to putting the fiscal house in order.

But we shall not only organize public finances. We also have to reactivate an equitable economic growth. The development plan that the administration must submit to Congress within the first six months, as stated by the Constitution, shall be the opportunity to draft the navigational chart that shall permit us to open the doors of the 21st century to a society with better and more equal growth. In this purpose, the search for peace is not only a common yearning but also an intelligent strategy for economic development. Peace is the most urgent task on our country's agenda and the best social contract that we can make towards the future.

DRUG TRAFFICKING

We must take advantage of the closing of the century to do an inventory of the serious

damage caused to society by drug trafficking. Ecologically, there is no doubt that it is the main predator of large areas of Colombian territory, which is valued in the world for the diversity of its environmental treasures.

Not to mention, the increase in corruption, whose effect on institutions has become one of the most fatal aggressors that the Colombian State has confronted in all its history. Or the increase in violence, due to easy money for the attainment of objectives that used to be the fruit of years and years of honest labor. Or the increase in drug use.

If Colombia survives in spite of so many misfortunes, it is only because of the moral fortitude of a people that has known how to face them. But let us not ask it for more miracles.

THE "PEACE FUND" WITH TRI-PARTITE CONTRIBUTIONS

In order to reach this national objective, besides the political initiatives that we are implementing, peace shall be the common thread of the next development plan. It shall be funded by tri-partite contributions from different sources. Firstly, the government itself, which, as a consequence of the austerity program to be undertaken, shall free significant resources to be earmarked for strategic investments for peace. Secondly, contributions from the international community that has demonstrated its interest in collaborating financially to acclimatize peace in Colombia. And thirdly, monies that wealthy Colombians shall contribute, through a "Peace Bond of Compulsory Subscription", whose authorization we shall request from Congress, and through which the valuable demonstrations of so many good-willed Colombians may become concrete.

As I said in my campaign, we shall submit a bill before Congress that shall permit the gradual reduction of the Aggregated Value Tax while simultaneously and forcefully combating current tax evasion. Moreover, once the fiscal adjustment program yields results, we shall propose a reduction of income tax rates for those companies generating new employment.

OUR FOREIGN POLICY

The transparent and categorical mandate that I have received from the Colombian people must also transform our international position in order to carry out a foreign policy with a broad consensus, that is coherent and systematic, that overcomes the exclusivism of any group, region, or party. Our diplomacy shall be efficient, able to work without disadvantages, respectful of commitments and aware of its non-renounceable dignity and its well-earned rights.

I am convinced that the irreversible purpose of globalization demands a more equitable international order. We do not want to be simple spectators but, rather, diligent actors in this new world commitment.

I am aware that our international agenda demands a different way of looking at it. We do not reject responsibility. We assume it. Our foreign policy shall be aimed at strengthening our negotiating power with regards to fundamental issues on the global agenda. We shall reaffirm our commitment to the promotion and defense of human rights and International Humanitarian Law, with acts and effective actions.

As President of the Republic, I shall fully exercise the constitutional duty of leading foreign relations, aware that the leadership of the Head of State in a regime like ours is irreplaceable.

Our foreign policy shall be guided by the protection of Colombia's essential rights. We share the great principles contained in the United Nations Charter and in the instru-

ments of the Inter American system. Colombia's international word is sacred to us. We defend the sanctity of treaties and the good faith in relations among States. We have always supported the pacific and negotiated solution to conflicts. National heritage is the product of law, never of force or of arbitrary imposition. We believe in the force of multilateralism, in the collective action organized to confront problems and to prevent and resolve divergences and conflicts.

Venezuela is the country with which Colombia has made more progress in economic integration. The strong historic and cultural ties that unite us shall permit us to foster understanding in all areas in order to continue making progress in the process of binational integration and in the consolidation of the Andean Community of Nations in order to project it to the entire continent.

The United States, as hemispheric power and because it is the biggest and most advanced economy in the world, is a fundamental country for Colombia's international relations. We also begin a new era of understanding and trust with them, which will permit the diversification of our common agenda so as to continue on the road of true cooperation, more as brothers than as good neighbors.

Regarding Europe and the Pacific Basin countries, we shall continue strengthening our economic and cultural relations, as well as the ties among the various integration blocks that exist today. In this respect, we shall assign particular importance to the European Union, Latin American and Caribbean Summit that will take place next year, as a result of the dialogue between the European Union and the Rio Group.

Colombia embarks today on search of the international community, to re-assume the leadership that belongs to it in the "New World" design.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

This is evident: peace is not possible without social justice. Colombia is a society torn by social distances. It is urgent, therefore, to improve the distribution of national wealth, to make society cohesive and direct it towards peace, through education, health and employment.

The world is changing in giant leaps. Society has discovered that its great source of wealth is no longer mineral but human. To invest in it, as well as in our natural resources, is the change that will make us strong. And this, in turn, compels us to reflect upon the meaning of continued fighting over scarce material resources instead of strengthening our democracy and developing our industry and our trade, based on human resources, education, technology, and science.

Therefore, it is time to break with history and to change our course. Thus, the development model that I propose to you is not dependent upon peace negotiations but, rather, establishes the basis for a transparent, fertile, and lasting peace.

THE ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

The macroeconomic effort shall be aimed at the urgent generation of employment. To generate employment—good employment—is essential if we want to have a real future. Employment is not only the new name for peace but also our first expression of solidarity.

In order to attain the goals of collective improvement, it is necessary to build a strong and solidary economy, which we are lacking today. Correcting the imbalances and channeling the economy towards development and full employment again will initially demand the adoption of severe but essential measures.

Economy and education must go hand in hand to establish the basis for progress. The

coming Third Millennium needs new learning. We are going to change education in Colombia so that it may become an open door, where the question will not be how much money the family has but, rather, how much talent the student has. Awakening young people to knowledge is the only way to face the future successfully.

PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

My administration makes and reaffirms a preferential option for the poor. We do not want a Colombia with excluded persons. The government's task is to foster and consolidate economic growth that will reduce the injustices of poverty and demonstrate, with its results, that it is worthwhile to be just.

For my administration, the poor are a moral commitment, a political commitment, an economic commitment, a cultural commitment, and not just a statistic index. A plan for overcoming poverty convokes, channels, and opens new dimensions for international cooperation and must prevent poverty from being the dangerous ally of those who, with drug trafficking, try to undermine the foundations of the nation and of the international community.

Being solidary in Colombia means helping to create jobs, investing in the creation of jobs, buying at a fair price to create and foster the quality of those jobs. When I think of globalization, I think about its most urgent aspect, which is globalization of solidarity.

RECOVERING VALUES

This is why, together with Gustavo Bell, I would like to invite all of you to recover values. This country must organize itself and become strong against corruption. We cannot continue to tolerate the systematic robbery of goods belonging to the community. It is necessary to end corruption, and the people have taken a first step with their vote. The President and each one of his officials must be a model for others. Their words must be truthful and their example must be clear. There is no greater corruption or lie than good advice followed by bad example.

Let no one be wrong. The government shall persecute the corrupt, shall bring them to light, and shall rescue the institutions from the claws of the corrupt.

THE NEED FOR POLITICAL REFORM

For all these reasons, a thorough political reform must be undertaken. "We cannot pour new wine into old vessels." The recovery of politics for the common good, for social justice, for solidarity, and for development requires the creation of new forms of governing, of controlling, of competing for power, of designing laws, of creating the future.

I thank God for the privilege of having my mother and family here present. I thank Divine Providence for the gift of Nohra's company and leadership and of Santiago, Laura, and Valentina's challenging future.

And I thank the Lord for having given me in Misael Pastrana a living example of values, of loyalty to life, of love of country. He was a patriot who, in light of Colombia's destiny and uncertainties, affirm and warn, "the promised land is at stake". It is necessary for "The New Dawn" brings us optimism, faith, truth, solidarity, and the commitment required to change history because no one will do for us what we must do for ourselves.

Dear friends: A "New Dawn" begins now! Today, it is not only the inauguration of a new President, but also the opening of a new era for the nation. With Gustavo Bell we will make the dream of "The Great Alliance for Change" come true for Colombia.

The glory of a leader consists in attaining peace, striving for the citizens' well-being and happiness. Achieving this shall be the

only reward I will aspire to at the end of my mandate. This is no time for hesitation or doubt. This is a moment for decisions and courage. Long and difficult is the road leading to the Colombia we yearn for. Let us begin now! Tomorrow will be another day!

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Monday, September 21, 1998, the federal debt stood at \$5,510,750,292,549.80 (Five trillion, five hundred ten billion, seven hundred fifty million, two hundred ninety-two thousand, five hundred forty-nine dollars and eighty cents).

Five years ago, September 21, 1993, the federal debt stood at \$4,392,902,000,000 (Four trillion, three hundred ninety-two billion, nine hundred two million).

Ten years ago, September 21, 1988, the federal debt stood at \$2,596,653,000,000 (Two trillion, five hundred ninety-six billion, six hundred fifty-three million).

Fifteen years ago, September 21, 1983, the federal debt stood at \$1,354,377,000,000 (One trillion, three hundred fifty-four billion, three hundred seventy-seven million).

Twenty-five years ago, September 21, 1973, the federal debt stood at \$459,603,000,000 (Four hundred fifty-nine billion, six hundred three million) which reflects a debt increase of more than \$5 trillion—\$5,051,147,292,549.80 (Five trillion, fifty-one billion, one hundred forty-seven million, two hundred ninety-two thousand, five hundred forty-nine dollars and eighty cents) during the past 25 years.

SUPPORT WORKING FAMILIES

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, in a time of unprecedented economic prosperity, we have seen a reduction in inflation and unemployment yet a full-time minimum wage earner makes almost \$3,000 below the poverty level—a mere \$10,712 per year. No one who works full time should be poor in this country—it's time to raise the minimum wage.

Republicans say that raising the minimum wage will cause job loss and put undue burdens on business owners. But in a recent study conducted by Princeton economists David Card and Alan Krueger, their analysis of New Jersey's minimum wage increase in 1992 showed that employment in fast food restaurants grew at least as quickly as in neighboring Pennsylvania where the minimum wage stayed the same. Also noted in the study was that higher wages actually benefitted employers—turnover expenses were reduced and productivity improved due to better motivated and more stable employees. Mr. President, it's time to raise the minimum wage.

Additionally, data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that since the 1996-97 wage increases took effect, 4 million new jobs have been created and unemployment is at 4.5%—its lowest

level in a generation. In fact, a study by the Economic Policy Institute documents that there was no measurable negative effect on jobs. The only measurable effect was on workers—they received the pay increases they deserved. Mr. President, it's time to raise the minimum wage.

Contrary to what has been said by my colleagues on the opposite side of the aisle, workers who will benefit from this increase are not primarily teenagers from high income families. 70% are adults over the age of 20 and forty percent of minimum wage workers are the sole bread winners in their families. As a matter of fact, the average minimum wage earner brings home half of their family's income. Additionally, 60% of minimum wage earners are women. Mr. President, it's time to raise the minimum wage.

In 1979, minimum wage earners needed to work an average of 40 hours per week to stay out of poverty. Today those same workers must work 52 hours. By raising the minimum wage one dollar by the year 2000 we will restore its purchasing power to its mid-1970's level. With unemployment levels 50% to 75% lower and inflation rates 2 to 3 times lower, we can afford to restore that purchasing power. Mr. President, it's time to raise the minimum wage.

It is time to honor the American working people with a fair wage. As President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "Our nation, so richly endowed with natural resources and with a capable and industrious population, should be able to devise ways and means of insuring to all able-bodied working men and women a fair day's pay for a fair day's work." I call upon my colleagues in the Senate to begin narrowing the gap between rich and poor in this country. We must help bring economic prosperity to the men and women who feed our families, care for our children and elderly parents, and play by the rules. It's time to help working families and it's time to raise the minimum wage.

CAL RIPKEN'S STREAK OF PLAYING 2,632 CONSECUTIVE GAMES

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, Sunday, September 20, 1998 marked the end of an era in sports. Cal Ripken, baseball's Iron Man, took a well-deserved day off. As the Baltimore Sun put it, "The Streak died of natural causes. It was 2,632."

Cal Ripken sat in the dugout Sunday night not because of injury, or illness, or a manager's decision. Cal voluntarily took himself out of the lineup because he felt he was not playing up to his own standards, and would not contribute enough to the team. Cal's quietly monumental decision exemplifies the dignity and class with which he has conducted himself throughout his career.

When Cal Ripken began his streak in 1982, Ronald Reagan was President, I was a Congresswoman, "Dallas" was

the most popular TV show, and the movie "ET" was setting box office records. A baby born that year is about to be a junior in high school. Ryan Minor, who played in Cal's place Sunday night, was 8 years old.

I was in the stands September 6, 1995, the night that Cal played game number 2,131. I've watched history being made on the Senate floor, but that night I watched history being made on the glorious green field of Camden Yards. I will never forget the joy we all felt as the banners rolled, the light bulbs flashed, and Cal took his victory lap.

Records are made to be broken, but I can't imagine Cal's record being broken in our lifetime. The next closest player, Albert Belle, would have to play in every game for the next 14 years to equal The Streak.

What Cal has accomplished is simple: Every day for the last 16 years, he got up, got dressed, and went to work. He represents the old-fashioned ethic displayed by millions of Marylanders every day as they work hard, play by the rules, and take care of their families. It's not fancy, it's not flashy, but it is the glue that holds our communities, our society, and our nation together.

So to Cal Ripken, I say hats off, thank you for being you, and thank you for showing all of us how it's supposed to be done.'

THE OMNIBUS PATENT ACT OF 1998

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have been working diligently along with Senators DASCHLE, BINGAMAN, CLELAND, BOXER, HARKIN, and LIEBERMAN to get this measure considered and passed by the Senate. It an important measure to America's future.

Along with all the Democratic cosponsors of the bill, I signed on to offering our patent bill as an amendment to this bankruptcy bill. I helped provide an opportunity for this amendment in the unanimous consent agreement accepted by the Senate on Friday September, 11th. It is long past time for the Senate to consider this patent reform legislation.

Unfortunately, Republican opposition to the bill has prevented Senate consideration for more than a year. This is another example of how secret, anonymous holds on the Republican side are preventing important legislation from being considered by the Senate. I deeply regret that those same Republican objections have now succeeded in preventing our Republican cosponsor, the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, from even offering this amendment to the bill in the amendment spot that we had reserved for that purpose. I believe that there is strong support for this measure. I cannot guarantee that all 45 Democratic Senators will vote for it, but I do know that no Democrat has prevented or is now preventing its consideration.