

Federal poverty guideline of \$16,600 for a family of three. We should be ashamed of our Nation that we have reached this point where we ignore what we are doing to people because of this minimum wage.

Let me add that I salute our Governor in Illinois who, through the State legislation, increased Illinois' minimum wage so that we pay more to workers. But clearly we need to do this across the Nation and not leave it to the leadership of Governors. We should show leadership in Congress.

Raising the minimum wage is going to help the economy, too. A lot of people argue otherwise. Whether it be raising the Federal or State minimum wage, history shows that it doesn't have a negative impact on the economy. That is the argument which has been used against the minimum wage since Roosevelt first created it; that if you raise the minimum wage to \$1 an hour—or whatever it happened to be in the earliest days of the history of this legislation—somehow jobs would be eliminated because people would say that rather than pay a dollar an hour, they will hire fewer employees. That is always the argument, and that argument fails every time when we look at the impact of an increase in the minimum wage.

In the 4 years after the last Federal minimum wage increase passed in Congress, the economy experienced its strongest growth in over 30 years. Nearly 12 million new jobs were added in the late 1990s—almost a quarter of a million a month. So as we raised the minimum wage, the number of jobs didn't shrink, it dramatically increased—exactly the opposite of what the critics of increasing the minimum wage have argued for 60 years or more.

The last raise in the minimum wage did not have a negative impact on my State's economy when the State of Illinois sought a minimum wage increase. The fact is, in the 4 years after Congress passed the last Federal increase, Illinois experienced great economic growth. Over 350,000 new jobs were added to the State's economy. Even the retail industry, which is often cited as the industry most sensitive to the minimum wage, saw over 44,000 new jobs created in Illinois 4 years after the increase in the Federal minimum wage.

Research shows that other States experienced similar impacts.

A study by the Fiscal Policy Institute of 10 States that raised the minimum wage above the Federal rate found that both total employment and employment in the retail sector grew more rapidly in higher minimum wage States.

And for small businesses with fewer than 50 employees, the number of businesses, employment, and the size of the total payroll grew faster in higher minimum wage States than in States where the lower minimum wage prevailed, exactly the opposite of what critics say if you raise the minimum wage: you are going to hurt the retail

sector; they are going to have to shut down their businesses. Exactly the opposite has happened time and again.

The minimum wage needs to be updated. In contrast to the first 4 years after the Federal minimum wage took effect and created jobs, in the last 4 years under the Bush administration the minimum wage has held steady while its real value has steadily declined, and only 4.7 million jobs have been created.

It is one thing for politicians to give lofty speeches about values and family values. It is another thing to look at the rollover on the minimum wage and ask those same Members who are pontificating about the guidance—the divine guidance—that brings them to this Chamber and then systematically voting against the poorest among us. That, to me, is a shame and something we should remedy by adopting the Kennedy amendment.

We force a lot of hard-working Americans and their families to work longer hours, work harder to pay for the necessities. That is time away from their children, time away from just a little relaxation so they can put their lives together and face another hard week of work.

In Illinois, a worker earning the minimum wage has to work 95 hours a week to afford a two-bedroom apartment. Mr. President, 11.9 percent of Illinois residents live in poverty, and an unacceptably low minimum wage is part of the problem.

Over 20 States, including Illinois, have taken upon themselves to raise the minimum wage and give an economic boost to their citizens. After the State of Illinois raised the minimum wage in January of 2005 to \$6.50, Illinois nonfarm employment increased by 79,800 jobs. It didn't go down in Illinois after the minimum wage went up. It increased.

Since the State raised the minimum wage, Illinois has ranked No. 1 among all Midwest States in the total number of new jobs.

Illinois employers have created 30,000 new jobs in the traditionally lower paying, higher proportion minimum wage industry sectors of leisure, hospitality, and trade.

The minimum wage amendment we are debating today would give a raise to 333,000 workers in Illinois.

It has been more than 9 years since the minimum wage workers last saw an increase in their wages. It is a delicate subject and one that Members of Congress do not want to discuss, but I think we have to be very honest about it. While we have consistently, year after year, denied an increase in the minimum wage to the poorest, hardest working Americans, we have every year without fail increased congressional pay. Our salaries have gone up while we have ignored the plight of the poorest among us.

During the 9 years that Congress has raised its own pay by \$31,600, we have not increased the minimum wage for

the poorest workers in America. It isn't fair.

How can we continue to turn a blind eye to these people who get up and work hard every day? Who are they? They are the people who took the dishes off your table at the restaurant this morning. They are the ones who made the bed at the hotel after you left. They are the ones who are watching your kids at the day-care center. They are the same ones who are watching your parents at the nursing home. They are the ones who are making sure your golf course is perfect when you go out to play golf. And they are the ones who get up every single day and do these hard jobs for very little pay.

Why in the world are we sitting here ignoring the obvious? If you value families and you value workers, you should value work. To hold the minimum wage at \$5.15 an hour for 9 years is shameful, and it should change.

I urge my colleagues to support the amendment that is going to be offered by Senator KENNEDY. I am happy to be a cosponsor of that amendment.

Mr. President, how much time is remaining on the Democratic side in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEMINT). There is 1 minute remaining.

IRAQ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, later this week as part of the debate on the Defense authorization bill, we will talk about Iraq. That a timely issue. As of last week, there have been 2,500 soldiers' lives lost in Iraq since the beginning of this conflict. What was promised to the American people to be a rather uncomplicated effort by America to rid Iraq of a dictator has turned out to be a war that has gone on for 3 years with no end in sight.

This week the Senate will have a chance to say to the Iraqi people that as of the middle of next year, this becomes your responsibility. We will give you 12 months and more American lives and more American dollars and then, Iraq, you have to stand up and defend yourself. If you believe in the future of your Nation, it has to go beyond an election, go beyond political debate. It has to reach the point where Iraqi citizens are prepared to stand, defend, and die, if necessary, for their own country.

There are 130,000 American lives on the line today and every day. We have to serve notice on the Iraqis that their future has to be in their hands.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized for 7 minutes in morning business.

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

IRAQ

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I heard the distinguished deputy minority