

does better. The same would be said for the State of the Senator from Wyoming. His State will remain a donor State. Those States that are beneficiaries, that receive more than they pay in, will continue to receive more than they pay in. The amendment that Senator THOMAS and I have put together would not change that fundamental reality.

But what we do feel is that this is an opportunity, when there is this very significant growth in the overall pot of money available for transit, that 7 percent of the total pot be subject to some redistribution to recognize the contemporary realities that we now face.

In order to address some of the concerns that have been raised with Senator THOMAS and with me and with our staffs, we have made some changes.

First, there will be no transferability provision in our amendment, so that the money which would be shifted to States that are currently being underfunded for their transit needs will not be allowed to then be shifted into highway construction or bridge repair or nontransit needs.

There was some concern that this amendment was somehow a raid on transit funds for nontransit purposes. We want to make sure—make absolutely certain—that all of our colleagues understand that that is not the case, that the 7 percent component of the transit funds that would be redistributed would be strictly for transit needs.

Secondly, it was expressed that there is some concern about whether a shifting of this 7 percent portion of the funds would somehow jeopardize donor States, what are called new-start funds. And I have heard some concern expressed. The fact is that under our amendment, no State which gains under the pending amendment will have their new-start funding cut next year. Under this amendment, we pay for the changes by making modest reductions from the donee States but not from attacking the new-start funds.

Thirdly, the question has been raised whether this is need based or not, whether 30 to 35 States that would benefit by this have transit needs. Admittedly, the needs that we have in many of our areas where there are fast growing suburban areas, whether it is fast growing new younger cities or whether it is in rural areas, are different than the needs that our colleagues from New York or Chicago might have, but they are very great needs nonetheless.

In my home State of South Dakota, we have a tremendous reliance on our rural transit needs, particularly for seniors to make it to health visits, for groceries, to get to congregate meal sites. All of these things, given the dispersal of the population, the very rural nature of the State, makes transit all the more critical. And it is critical, as well, in our Indian reservation areas. I have nine in my State where the need for access to quality nutrition, education, and medical care would be

enormously enhanced by the availability of at least some minimal rural transit assistance.

Currently, over 30 percent of our 206 vehicles providing rural transit in our State are 10 years old or older; 70 percent are 5 years old or older. We have had, in the course of the State, local, and Federal partnership to make rural transit a reality, a continuing hardship where some of our counties now, in fact, are terminating their transit programs. We cannot afford to see this kind of retreat, this kind of neglect, for rural transit needs in my State.

So I think that anyone who takes a close look at our amendment will recognize the very modest nature of the amendment, that it is only 7 percent of a total pot, a vastly growing pot of money, that would be subject to some modest change of redistribution to meet the contemporary transit needs; that, in fact, the overwhelming share of States would benefit by this redistribution; and it would not incur a significant reduction really in the States that currently have the traditional great benefit from the transit programs.

So, again, this is a modest step, but I think it is a modest step in the right direction, one that will contribute greater equity, one that will contribute to the creation of what is truly a national transit strategy. And I think every one of our colleagues who come from the traditional large recipient States will recognize that a national commitment to transit assistance will be all the stronger if, in fact, more than eight States benefit but that all 50 States benefit to a greater degree than is currently the case.

So, again, I thank my colleague, Senator THOMAS from Wyoming, for his work on this in our effort to craft a reasonable and a balanced and a modest change, but one that nonetheless ought to be of great help to the large majority of States as we debate the transit amendment and the infusion of new money into the transit provisions of the ISTEA II legislation.

So, with that, I encourage my colleagues to be very supportive of this and to examine the language of our amendment carefully.

Mr. President, I yield back my time and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WELLSTONE. 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. WELLSTONE. We are in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent I be able to speak for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I want to bring to the attention of my colleagues a matter before we go back to the ISTEA, or the transportation bill. It concerns a resolution that I think is extremely important. This will be a sense-of-the-Senate resolution that we will have a vote on this week, an up-or-down vote, which says that the Senate strongly urges the President, acting through the current representatives of the United States, to make all efforts necessary to pass a resolution criticizing the People's Republic of China for its human rights abuses in China and Tibet at the annual meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, which convenes March 16.

Mr. President, last week, on Friday, I was able to discuss this with the majority leader, and he made a commitment—and his word is good, I know that—that on this resolution we will have a separate up-or-down vote. I believe we will have a very strong vote for this.

Mr. President, I started out working with Senator MACK from Florida. The resolution was a Mack-Wellstone resolution. I know he will be a very strong supporter, as well as Senator HUTCHINSON from Arkansas, Senator FEINGOLD from Wisconsin, and I think this resolution will receive broad bipartisan support.

I come to the floor of the Senate to speak for two reasons. One, to again thank the majority leader for his commitment that we will have an up-or-down vote on this specific resolution, and second of all, to make an all-out appeal to the administration, to the President, to the Secretary of State, to Sandy Berger and others.

The Washington Post had an editorial last week, and I will read relevant paragraphs.

The immediate issue is whether to sponsor a resolution at the United Nations Commission . . . in Geneva next month [actually this week.] You wouldn't think this would be a tough call. Such a resolution would moderately criticize China's record and call for improvements; it would impose no penalty beyond well-deserved embarrassment. Democracy advocate Wei Jingsheng nevertheless calls the resolution "a matter of life and death" for reform in China. President Clinton explicitly promised, back when he delinked trade and human rights in 1994, that the administration "would step up its efforts" to get such a resolution approved. China's regime remains as oppressive today as it was then.

Mr. President, I come to the floor to make an appeal to the President, to make an appeal to the administration. I think when we have an up-or-down vote on this resolution, which calls on our country to be a part of an effort to introduce a resolution at this Human Rights Commission meeting on human rights dealing with abuses of human rights in China, we will get a strong vote on the Senate floor—Republicans and Democrats, Democrats and Republicans. We want to work with the administration. I call on the President

today to please make a commitment for the United States to play a critically important role.

I consider one of the finest hours I have spent as a U.S. Senator to be Friday morning with Wei Jingsheng. Wei Jingsheng—I think many Senators and the Presiding Officer knows about Wei Jingsheng—spent 18 years in prison in China for the courage to speak out for democracy, for human rights. Because of tremendous international pressure, he was released from prison—in poor health. But he can never go back to his country again or he would be imprisoned.

Wei Jingsheng has been nominated by a number of people for the Nobel Peace Prize. He deserves it. He wrote a wonderful book called "The Courage to Stand Alone." That is what he has done.

He came to my office and met with a lot of different human rights organizations on Friday. I asked him to please write a letter that I could distribute to colleagues this week about the importance of an up-or-down vote on this resolution specifically dealing with China—which the majority leader has made clear we will be able to do this week. I will just quote from a little bit of the letter he wrote, which has been translated.

I strongly support the passage of a resolution that solely condemns the human rights situation in the People's Republic of China. And he lists a variety of reasons; I will read a couple.

If we want to target more than ten countries at the same time, we not only dilute our force, but also strengthen the solidarity of the anti-human-rights alliance and simultaneously increase resistance to our effort.

Continuing:

Based on these considerations, I urge those in the Senate who support human rights to take a strategy that stands in opposition to those friends of the Chinese dictatorship. In unity, we can strike against the real leader and supporter of the alliance of anti-human-rights forces—the Chinese Communist government.

As long as we persist we will succeed—it is simply a matter of time. I know because our endeavor is just.

Respectfully, Your friend, Wei Jingsheng.

It is the least we can do, I say to the President, I say to the White House, the least we can do. Whether or not Senators agree or disagree about whether human rights concerns should be linked to trade or not is a separate question from this question. This question is simple. The right place to do this is at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. It is the right time. The President has made a commitment to do so. Now we must follow through on our commitment.

I urge Senators to please support this resolution. We will have an up-or-down vote on it. I also urge Senators: please, don't dilute this. If we want to pass a resolution calling for respect for human rights in all sorts of other countries—yes, I won't oppose that. As a matter of fact, many of those countries are already on the list and it will be brought up in Geneva. But we also need

to have a separate resolution dealing with what is happening in China.

Mr. President, the administration has already indicated that it will strongly support action on Colombia, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Nigeria, Iran, Iraq, Sudan and many other countries. Significantly, the administration has also publicly supported an international investigation of the situation in Algeria. But the administration has remained undecided on China.

Like many of you, I support any call for greater action on all governments committing human rights violations. Yes, let's do that. But there are also compelling reasons for the Congress and the administration to issue a stand-alone declaration on China.

This resolution that I will be introducing on the floor of the Senate with bipartisan support is a stand-alone resolution declaration on China. That has been the focus of the past several meetings of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva. We cannot move away from that focus. This is a compelling moral issue. Our country ought to be there speaking out for human rights for people in China and other countries as well. But this resolution will be the key up-or-down vote.

Finally, Mr. President, the U.N. Human Rights Commission is the only major international body which oversees the human rights conditions of all the nations. There is no dispute that the credibility of the commission process hinges on whether or not there will be at least a debate on China's human rights record. Few countries have so brazenly challenged the legitimacy of international human rights scrutiny or so openly challenged the universality of human rights as China. It would be shocking, I say to the President, for the United States to respond to this challenge with silence.

Would it be shocking, I say to the President, the administration, and my colleagues, for us to respond to this challenge with silence? When I meet with somebody like Wei Jingsheng, who has exhibited such courage—and he just asked us to go on record supporting this simple resolution, and I believe it is the very least that we can do. Colleagues, we are going to have a vote on it this week, and I hope that we have an overwhelming, strong, bipartisan voice and message to the President and the administration that the United States will be courageous, that we will live up to our own best selves as to who we are as a Nation, and we will take the lead in Geneva.

If we let the U.N. Commission on Human Rights meet in Geneva and we are silent and there is not any discussion about religious persecution, the persecution of people because they had the courage to speak out, the crushing of the people in Tibet, and all of the rest, if there isn't even any discussion, it will be devastating for so many courageous people in China that have stood up for human rights. We can't let that happen. Therefore, we will have this up-or-down vote.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I am not quite sure what our schedule will be this week, whether we will finish up on the ISTEA highway bill or not, and that is an important piece of legislation. I think all of us know that people in our States anxiously await the Senate to move forward on this business. It sounds like the next piece of legislation we may have will be a piece of legislation introduced by Senator COVERDELL from Georgia which deals with education and children.

I won't get into all of the specifics. We will have plenty of debate on that matter. I wanted to just mention to colleagues that there are several amendments that I want to bring to the floor that I think are very relevant to what we need to do by way of responding to the concerns and circumstances of children. Let me preface this by saying to colleagues that I think one of the things we have to start doing as legislators, as Senators, one of the things we have to start doing on the floor of the Senate, is to have more of a focus on children. We have given enough speeches to deafen all the gods, and there have been enough reports.

The question is, what are we going to do by way of movement forward with positive action that will help children in our country—all of the children in our country?

I find myself, as I speak on the floor of the Senate today, critical of, I guess, both of our parties. One would think from the pronouncements we hear all the time that everybody is doing great in the United States of America today, that everything is humming along just fine, everybody is happy, everybody is satisfied. Yet, when I travel the country—and I go into a lot of different communities—I don't find that at all.

I am glad that the economy is doing well in the aggregate. I am glad unemployment is at record low levels, though it doesn't tell us what jobs and what wages. I am glad the GDP looks good and that the business cycle is up. But can I raise the question, since we are going to move to education and children, how do we explain the fact that during this business cycle, with Republicans and Democrats talking about how great things are, we have one out of every four children under the age of 3 growing up poor in America, and one out of every two children of color under the age of 3 growing up poor in America? And we are now saying that these early years are the most important years for these children in determining whether or not they are going to have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We have our work cut out for us, and I hope we will respond. So far we haven't.

So when this legislation comes out, I want to just mention a couple of amendments that I am thinking about. One of them speaks to the question I just raised indirectly, but I think it's important. As I travel the country, I