

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

am amazed—and I was speaking with a gathering of community college students who have focused on this as well—that in the name of “welfare reform,” we are now saying to many single parents—most of them women, and many of them in our community colleges—they have to leave school and take a job. In other words, this is the bitter irony: They are on the path to economic self-sufficiency and yet we are telling many of these parents, these women, “You have to leave college; you can’t complete your education; you must take this job, because these are the work force participation requirements.” It may be a \$6-an-hour job with no benefits; and a year from now they are without health care coverage, they are worse off than they are now, as are their children.

That is outrageous. So I am going to have an amendment for student exemption for these adults who are in school trying to complete their education so they can reach economic self-sufficiency, so that any State that wants to can at least say, look, we want to exclude these parents who are in school from the work force participation requirement. That makes a lot of sense if we are interested in these mothers and children being able to do better.

The second question I want to raise for colleagues is—and I don’t know if this will be an amendment on this bill or not, but as long as we are talking about education, which is what we are going to do with the Coverdell bill, and trying to do better for children—how come we cut food stamp benefits by 20 percent? The majority of the beneficiaries are children from families making under \$7,500 a year.

As I travel around the country, it all has to do with the questions you ask. It all has to do with whether you are willing to listen. It all has to do with what communities you are willing to visit. I find a lot of teachers telling me that a lot of their students can’t do well because they come to school hungry. Why in the world did we cut the major safety net program for the working poor, the primary recipients, by 20 percent by the year 2002? I think we need to revisit that question.

Mr. President, there is another issue that I want to raise that may be an amendment, or may not be, which is that it is impossible to focus on education and children doing well without focusing on the adults or the adult. The two variables—to wear a kind of political science hat for a moment—that have had the greatest impact, or the two primary causes of whether a child does well in school or not, the two most important factors—that is the word I am struggling for—are the educational attainment and the income status of the parent or parents.

Well, if that is the case, I think we ought to start asking the question, if we are looking at the learning gap in our country and what children do well and what children don’t do well, what about so many of these communities—

and William Julius Wilson, a great sociologist, has written about this in his book called “The Disappearance of Work”—what about these communities where there are no jobs, even with the economy humming along as it is? What about many of the ghettos and barrios in rural areas where there are no jobs, and the parents or parent can’t find employment, can’t find a job at a decent wage? What is the connection between the economic status, the job status of the parent or parents, and the educational achievement of the children?

I think that, at the very minimum, we ought to ask labor and the Department of Education to do a study of this and come back and provide us with some evidence. I will tell you that I think we will find a very strong correlation. And I will tell you that I am all for work. In fact, I think the most important policy goal is to make sure that when people in America work full-time, 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, they are not poor. I can think of a variety of different things we ought to do to make sure that happens. We also ought to look in a lot of communities where people live where there are no jobs at all, nor is there transportation to get into the suburbs where those jobs do exist.

I say to my colleagues, this is not just an urban issue; this is a big rural issue as well. I look forward to when the Coverdell bill comes out to the floor. I look forward to the debate and discussion.

I see my colleague from Missouri on the floor. I don’t want to take any more time. Before Senator ASHCROFT takes the floor, I was talking about the importance of getting a resolution on China, urging the administration and the U.N. Commission on Human Rights that we ought to take a position on the violation of human rights in China. I know my colleague is a strong supporter. I say to my colleague that we are going to have tremendous support on an up-or-down vote. I am urging the administration today to please move forward. That was the other agenda item for me.

I yield the floor.

Mr. ASHCROFT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a fellow from my office, Neil Kulkarni, be allowed privileges of the floor during the pendency of morning business and my remarks.

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

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Minnesota for his kind remarks. I do share his concerns on human rights in China.

STATEMENT MADE BY U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL KOFI ANNAN

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, I rise to address the disturbing comments made yesterday by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. Apparently emboldened by his recent agreement with Saddam Hussein, Annan stated on ABC’s “This Week” that the United States would have to consult with the Security Council before launching military strikes against Saddam Hussein.

He stated:

If the United States had to strike, I think some sort of consultations with the other members would be required.

Let me state categorically that the United States does not require the permission of the United Nations to use our military forces in the pursuit of our national interests. Nor does the United Nations have any authority to require that the United States use our military forces if it would seek to deploy them.

The United States has never, at any time, ceded to the United Nations any power to require the deployment of American forces against the wishes or the judgment of the United States, nor have we ceded to the United Nations any power to forbid the use of our military force.

Mr. President, the comments by Secretary General Annan over the weekend are indicative of a growing arrogance of a United Nations that has grown accustomed to dictating American foreign policy toward Iraq. With U.S. policy toward Iraq in drift over the last 6 years, Secretary General Annan was able to take the lead in dealing with Saddam’s provocations. What has the United Nations achieved? Has Saddam been punished? Have his weapons of mass destruction been destroyed?

On the contrary, Saddam is stronger today than he was before instigating the crisis 4 months ago. He is better off across the board militarily, politically, and economically. He has blocked weapons inspections and moved weapons technology and equipment for several months. He has won greater prestige in the region and in the Arab world generally. He will be allowed to sell more oil. There is growing talk of dismantling the rest of the sanctions regime.

The administration has compared Saddam to Hitler, but the President’s policies are laying the groundwork for another Munich in the Persian Gulf. Saddam is the chief terrorist of a terrorist government whose weapons of mass destruction threaten the United States and our allies in the Middle East. The administration seems pleased, however, to make concessions to Saddam through the United Nations. More oil sales and a politicized inspection regime for Presidential sites in Iraq have meant victory for Saddam.

Mr. President, the absence of Presidential leadership on Iraq has not served the United States well in the