

I will be coming to the floor on this bankruptcy bill debate. My friend, Senator GRASSLEY from Iowa, and I have worked long and hard on this bill. We have our differences on it. But I will tell you this: I fully support what Senator KENNEDY and Senator WELLSTONE have set out to do, to make sure it is part of this debate that we will increase the minimum wage.

I hope those who are about to consider this issue, Republicans and Democrats alike, will understand that we are talking about people in America who get up and go to work every single day. They deserve our respect. They deserve an increase in their minimum wage.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

Mr. WELLSTONE. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Under the previous order, the time between 10:30 and 11:30 a.m. shall be under the control of the Senator from Wyoming, Senator THOMAS, or his designee.

Senator THOMAS is recognized.

Mr. THOMAS. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I will alleviate your concern that I will take the whole hour. Nevertheless, I think I will be joined by some of my colleagues.

CONCERNS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, it is an interesting time, of course, for us here. Entering into the last month of this Congress, we are faced, of course, with finishing the work that we have begun, and more particularly, in closing up the appropriations process so that the Government can continue to function with a real determination and, Mr. President, to assure that that happens and that we do not get into this business of accusing one another of closing down the Government because we do not agree on issues. I am very much persuaded we will have a continuing resolution so if we do have disagreements that cannot be resolved in this time that the Government will continue to go on. If it does not, it would be my opinion it would be up to the administration to have it shut down.

As was the case with most of the Senators here, I recently spent a month in my home State of Wyoming, having an opportunity to visit with people about things that concern them, having an opportunity, perhaps more importantly than visiting, to listen to what people believe to be the role of the Federal Government, what the people believe to be the issues most compelling to them. Of course, everyone has them.

In my State, where we have relatively little diversity in our economy, we have three basic economic areas: One is tourism, one is mineral extraction, and one is agriculture. Unfortunately, both agriculture and mineral extraction are not in good shape economically at the moment, and we are seeking to do something about that.

So this time I think is useful time for us. People always say, "Hey, you're on vacation." Well, it is not vacation. It is a very busy time. But it is a useful time and a chance to perhaps stand back a little and look at some of the broader problems. And that is so important, especially, I think, in this last month when we become so focused on every detail, every little appropriations process, where we tend sometimes to sort of get away from really the fundamental issues that we are here to represent.

So my comments today will simply represent my point of view. I do not allege to speak for anyone else. But I happen to think that one of the things that is most important to us as we deal with all issues is to have some philosophical guidance, some basic belief that you measure all these details against. Failing in that, it seems to me, it is very difficult to make decisions that are consistent, to make decisions that finally end up doing what you really believe in and what your philosophy ought to be.

One of the conclusions that I have reached, not only on my own certainly, but because of what I hear in Wyoming, people having heard it of course in the media, is that this administration is basically in limbo, that it will be for some time, that we have relatively little, if any, leadership coming from the administration. We need to recognize that and to move forward with the issues that confront us. We can do that. And we need to do that.

Frankly, we have had relatively little leadership over the last several years. This administration, in my judgment, and the judgment of others, has been one without any real basic commitment to a point of view or to a philosophy or to a direction, but rather driven more by polls and what happens to be the political thing at the moment. I suppose this is perhaps not a brand new idea, but one that I think is very dangerous and one that really does not direct us in the way that we ought to be going; that, indeed, instead we have a time of spin, an administration that is basically sort of predicated on how you can make things seem, whether they are that way or not, or whether, indeed, they are predicated on Saturday morning radio talks in which there are issues brought forth, and subsequently no real commitment to doing something about it, like the State of the Union in which things like "Social Security first" are mentioned, but then nothing is done as a followup.

That is a concern to me, that there is no real commitment and, frankly, relatively little real belief or commit-

ment or, indeed, character in terms of where we are going.

I think there are some major areas that need attention and that will be continuing to need attention. We need to look into them. One is foreign affairs, foreign policy—or a lack of foreign policy. Almost daily we see that some country—mostly the rogue countries—is challenging the rest of the world, challenging the United States. Why? Because they have begun to do this, and there is no real response, there is no reason why they shouldn't. Why shouldn't Iraq thumb their nose at us in terms of doing the weapons thing that they promised to do when obviously they are not going to be required to do that? We have not finished our job in Bosnia, Kosovo. Those things are still there.

We have the Asian currency issue, a difficult issue that impacts us, one that, again, we need to make some decisions as to where we are and let people know exactly where we are. The idea from the administration that we are going to raise that question is not a good enough answer—the most current one, of course, being North Korea, and which we have dealt with for some time, particularly through the KEDO arrangement, trying to find a way to cause them to control what they are doing in nuclear arms development in return for a substantial contribution on the part of the United States and Japan and South Korea to build light-water reactors to replace that. And yet, they seem basically to say, "Well, we appreciate what you are doing, but we are going to go ahead and do what we want to do. We are going to go ahead and fire missiles. We are going to go ahead and have underground development of nuclear weapons, nuclear materials."

We cannot do that, in my judgment. And I feel very strongly about it. I happen to be chairman of that subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific Rim. We are going to have another hearing this week. We had one just a month ago before we left and talked about the adherence to the KEDO agreement. There was certainly a notion that at that time things were being done that were not consistent with the plan.

I think we need to give some real consideration to our military preparedness. This is not a peaceful world. One of the best ways to ensure as much as we can that it is peaceful is to continue to have a strong defense force, a strong military, to be the world's strongest military. And we are. However, there is increasing evidence that we are not putting enough emphasis into it in terms of support for it, in terms of the distribution of our troops all over the world. It is very costly. It is very difficult, then, to meet the mission that we have given ourselves, and that is to be able to work in two theaters, if necessary, at one time. Some doubt that we can do that now. So we, I think, have to deal with those kinds of very difficult issues.

The matter of taxes is one, as you can imagine, we hear a great deal about when we go home—taxes in terms of the amount of taxation that citizens pay, the unfairness of taxes in terms of things like marriage penalty, the behavior of the IRS, which, of course, we addressed in our last session and hopefully will be useful. Perhaps even more important is the whole notion of Tax Code reform. You can deal with the IRS, you can deal with the management and the administration, certainly, of tax collection, but the real bottom line is the Tax Code. If the Tax Code is going to be so convoluted and so difficult and so detailed, it becomes increasingly difficult to do that.

Here again, the administration has come forth with no real idea as to how to simplify the Tax Code. There is not unanimity among any of us as to what it ought to be—whether it ought to be a flat tax, a sales tax, or a consumption tax, or simply a simplification of what we have now. But we need some leadership to do that and we need something from the administration to do that. We need some ideas to do that instead of simply getting up and saying Social Security first, and then turning off the radio.

I have a number of other items I would like to share, Mr. President, but I want to recognize my friend, the Senator from Kansas, who has come to the floor. I yield as much time as he desires for his observations.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague and my good friend from Wyoming for reserving this time and for talking about some of the very crucial issues that affect our Nation's citizens, our daily lives, our pocketbooks, and, quite frankly, the lack of leadership that we see both from the standpoint of the administration and, to be very candid, in this Congress as well.

What I would like to talk about for a few moments is the issue that I think is the first obligation of the Federal Government. That is our national security, our national defense.

In beginning my comments, Mr. President, I would like to refer to a letter that was sent from the distinguished majority leader, Senator LOTT, to the President. Senator LOTT said this:

I am very concerned about the growing inability of our country to man the uniformed services. Not only is there difficulty in recruiting, but also in our ability to retain key personnel.

Senator LOTT then went on in several paragraphs to describe the problem that we have. Then in the last paragraph he said,

Mr. President, while I believe that more money needs to be allocated to our National Defense, it needs to be done prudently. We need to get the missions, manning, equipping, and pay and benefits synchronized to enable us to continue with a quality force into the 21st century. I urge you to make this a high priority of your fiscal year 2000 budget request.

And then in regard to the suggestion by the distinguished chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator STEVENS, there is an effort by some of us who have the privilege of serving on the Senate Armed Services Committee, and those of us in the Senate Intelligence Committee, to take action as of this appropriations cycle. I think that certainly would be very wise and it is very needed.

The President wrote back and pretty much said that he is committed to ensuring that we have a strong and ready force and indicates—and I am paraphrasing here, and perhaps that is not entirely fair, but the way I read the President's letter is that we will stay the course and that we have a defense system certainly prepared to meet all of our national security interests.

Mr. President, I don't buy that. I rise today to voice my concern with what I think is a very growing and very worrisome problem with our military. And that problem exists right now and today and we should take immediate action to find answers to that problem. The issue is not, it seems to me, do they have enough tanks or fighters or ships or small arms. By the way, I do not think they have the adequate funding support for the modernization and the procurement of essential systems, but I will leave that discussion for a later time. This issue is even more fundamental and, I think, just as important; that is, the basic care of the men and women of our Armed Forces and their families.

Now, we have all heard the concern from the leaders of the military—we have had hearing after hearing—their real growing inability to attract and retain the needed skilled personnel, such as pilots and mechanics and ship drivers or any number of other very critical skills maintained by enlisted and officers of our military. Some say they are perplexed at this talent drain and wonder why they cannot stop the hemorrhaging.

Let me recount some other related topics concerning the care of our military and perhaps we can start to understand what I call this hemorrhaging.

Following the end of the cold war, the United States started a systematic downsizing of our military, consistent with the threat, and that made sense. I think everybody agreed with that. However, many people have not given much thought to how far we have downsized, just how far we have downsized.

Let me summarize what we have removed from the military: 709,000 active duty troops—709,000 active duty troops—293,000 reserve troops; 8 standing Army divisions—8—20 Air Force and Navy wings with 2,000 combat aircraft; 4 aircraft carriers; 121 Navy ships and submarines.

With the end of the cold war and with these very dramatic reductions in our military, we should be able to take great solace in the fact that surely our military commitments and deploy-

ments have also taken similar reductions. In other words, if you took dramatic reductions in regard to the active duty troops, the reserve troops, the Army divisions, the Air Force and the Navy wings, 4 aircraft carriers, 121 Navy ships and submarines, you would think that our commitments and our deployments would have been reduced as well. Unfortunately, as also many of us understand, just the opposite has occurred. The military across the board has experienced a many-fold increase in their operational commitments and tempo of their operations. Plainly stated, our significantly "downsized" military has been asked to deploy much more often and for longer periods of time than they ever have in our history.

This increased operational commitment has directly impacted the very culture of our military. For example, Mr. President, General Ryan, who is the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, has stated that the Air Force has shifted from a garrison force to an expeditionary force during this period—a dramatic change. The bottom-line impact on our people is that they are now away from their families significantly more than they were in the past. And, by the way, as we have shifted to an all-voluntary military, the number or percentage of married service members has also significantly increased—reportedly 63 percent now of our military members are married. So, problem No. 1, Mr. President, we have significantly increased the workload upon a substantially smaller military.

Since the percentage of service members that are married has grown, this increased workload has amplified the negative affect of deployments on the morale of our troops and their families. The reluctance of families to continue to tolerate these separations really contributes to the loss of mid-level personnel, key personnel, mid-career personnel. Asking our military to deploy and endure hardship in their personal lives is not new. Ask any veteran of World War II, Korea, or Vietnam about hardship and long separations. But those situations were drastically different than the involvements the U.S. military is being asked to participate in as of today.

In each of the major conflicts in the past, the mission and importance of the U.S. involvement was clearly articulated by the President, by the administration, understood by the American people, and certainly understood by our men and women in uniform. Those conflicts were founded on the notion that our involvement was in the U.S. vital national interests. The men and women of the military understood that concept, and they and their families were more willing to accept the hardship of military life.

I am convinced that the missions that our military are now participating in today do not meet that fundamental threshold of national interest. I am

also convinced that our military members understand the nature and the motivation of their missions. Although they continue to perform superbly, they understand that their sacrifice and their family's sacrifice today is not for the same noble cause as the defense of the American homeland—the very reason many join the military in the first place.

Problem No. 2: With a significantly increased deployment schedule and a substantially smaller force, the value and importance of today's missions impacts on the willingness of the men and women to join or to commit to the military as a career. Without clearly articulated mission goals and objectives founded in the fundamentals of the U.S. vital national interest, the ability to recruit and retain motivated men and women for our military will remain very difficult.

You only have to look at the deployment of 27,000 men and women in uniform in the Gulf, 37,000 in Korea, approximately 10,000 in Bosnia, with the expectation of what happens in North Korea and Kosovo as an example.

Certainly, if we are putting our military in a position of increased deployments and increased family separation, Mr. President, we must have or are doing a better job of adequate pay, health care, and retirement system. Unfortunately, just the opposite is occurring in today's military.

Let me outline the pay issue with one example that is occurring all too often in the military today. Picture, if you will, a young soldier—in which we have placed a great deal of training and responsibility and trust—commanding the world's best tank, M1A2, a \$4 million piece of equipment. At home, this soldier has a wife and three children. They live in a mobile home off post, and because of his low military income, they are on the WIC Program, the Women, Infant and Children Program, which is a form of welfare.

What has happened to reasonable compensation for men and women that are committed to the service of our country? Can't we pay our military enough to keep them off of welfare programs or off of food stamp programs? We, the Congress, cap the raises that the military can receive. The net result of this action is that the military pay differential between a comparable job in the civilian market and the military has grown from 13 to 15 percent. That gap can go to 20 percent in just a few years.

Problem No. 3: Although the skill level required of the men and women of our military does continue to grow, the pay differential between the same skilled civilian and the military simply continues to widen.

The current pay of many of our young military families is so low that it is not adequate to keep them off of welfare programs. The prospect of continued and frequent long deployments coupled, with the opportunity to get better pay on the outside for the same

work, contributes to the inability to attract and retain the skills needed for today's military. This is true for both officer and enlisted personnel.

OK, the pay is not great, but surely the housing has kept up with the increased numbers of married military members, and we have provided them with adequate housing—not palatial housing, but certainly adequate. Wrong again. To illustrate this issue, let me quote from an article entitled "Shoddy Military Housing Need Repair," by John Diamond, a writer with the Associated Press. He says this:

"In reality, we're the biggest slum lords in the country," said Michael J. Haze, chief of Fort Carson's housing division. "I have soldiers every day telling me they live in the projects."

In the projects.

The article went on:

Behind the bureaucracy, thousands of military families continue to tolerate what the Pentagon acknowledges is shoddy, substandard housing because they cannot or will not pay higher rents for off-base housing.

I don't want to mislead anybody. Some of the base housing is very nice and adequate. But if a serviceman happens to be unlucky enough not to be assigned to nice facilities, or a base that has nice facilities, their pay will not support quality housing in the private sector.

Problem No. 4: We ask our military to deploy at a much higher pace than ever before, we assign missions that do not meet the national interest threshold, we pay them less than they could get for the same or similar skills as a civilian, and in many cases, we ask them to live in substandard housing. It goes without saying that the culmination of these problems really contributes to the dissatisfaction with the military as a career and its attractiveness to potential recruits. How could anybody assume otherwise?

Finally, many of the men and women are able to work with and through all of these issues with their families and make the military a career. Many are still doing that. For many years, the attraction and reward for the tough life in the military was the great benefit of retirement. The deal was that if you would spend at least 20 years in the service of our country, your retirement benefits would be one-half of your base pay. And if you elected to spend 30 years, you would receive 75 percent of your base pay. That retirement program was a major benefit, a major recruiting tool, a major retention draw. Many young men and women have said, "I can stick with this tough life because I know I am doing a good job for my country and I know that at least I have half of my pay coming to me at the end of 20 years." The plan is now that if a service member works for 20 years, the benefit is only 40 percent of the base pay. It is still 75 percent after 30 years, but the big draw has always been the 20 years. This is not popular with the troops. That is probably the understatement of my remarks. The

fear is that the retirement program has been so weakened that, coupled with a myriad of other problems that I have described, many service members will leave rather than "tough it out until 20."

Problem No. 5: The members of our military are working harder, deploying more, receiving less pay than civilians are for the same job, living in inadequate housing, and are now seeing a reduction in retirement benefits. It is not difficult to understand that with this collection of negatives, and all of our commitments all around the globe—some may or may not be in our national interest—the military is experiencing problems in retention and recruiting.

I didn't mention health care. I don't have prepared remarks regarding health care, but I will come back to the floor and mention that as problem No. 6. That is an additional problem—adequate and affordable health care that is at least accessible. So, in many cases, that is an additional problem.

Mr. President, these are very serious problems that face the men and women of our military. I must admit that they do not have simple or inexpensive solutions. I do plan, with the help of many of my colleagues, to systematically attack these problems as a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. I hope that together we can help restore the faith of our military members that the American people care about the sacrifice they and their families make in the defense of our Nation by providing adequate pay, housing and retirement benefits and health care. We owe this to these men and women and their families that serve our Nation.

In closing, again, I thank my colleague, the distinguished Senator from Wyoming, for the time. I want to come back to the letter sent to the President of the United States by the majority leader, Senator LOTT. Senator LOTT said in two or three paragraphs, in brief, what I have tried to outline today. Mr. President, we have to do something about this. Mr. President, we have to do something now. We have to do something with the current appropriations bills. The President has sent a letter back to the majority leader saying, in effect, that we do have a military that still stands in the breach to protect our individual freedoms and national security. And we will talk about it in the next budget. That is not good enough. It is not good enough. We need to begin the process now.

I ask the President to reconsider the letter by Senator LOTT. I know my colleagues will work in a bipartisan fashion to end what is a growing scandal in the military in terms of retention of the people who we need to maintain our military and maintain our national security.

I thank my colleague and my good friend from Wyoming for the time. I yield the floor.

Mr. THOMAS addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. THOMAS. I thank the Senator from Kansas very much for his comments.

Mr. President, I guess the real issue and the thing that he and I are both talking about is the basic, fundamental functions of the Federal Government and what priority they should have. Certainly, the defense of this country has to be among the—if not the—top priorities. No one else can do that. I appreciate very much the comments the Senator has made.

This whole idea of priority setting, this whole idea of the concept of the basic belief of what you think the better role of the Government, is of course a difficult issue but it is the basis of why we are here; it is the basis of elections to decide. People say, "What is your position with respect to the Federal Government?" There are legitimate differences of view. You can see them on this floor. There are those who believe sincerely that the Federal Government ought to be the predominant activity in government in the whole country. There are those who, frankly, have very little confidence in local governments and in State governments, and they think the Federal Government ought to do all of those things. Obviously, there are roles for the Federal Government. In my view, there are quite certainly roles that are better done at the local and State level. That is the constant issue with which we deal.

I was talking about some of the things people talked about while I was in Wyoming. I mentioned Social Security. I would like to go back to that for just a little bit. There has been a great deal of talk about the condition of Social Security to the extent that people, many older people, are worried about, of course. But maybe even more importantly, younger people who are now just entering the workforce are saying, "I am going to be paying into this thing forever, but by the time I am ready to retire, there will be nothing there." I think it is clear that Social Security is strong for 20 years or 25 years, and all those who will become eligible for benefits during that time will see them. But young people, like these folks sitting here, are the ones who will be paying the tab. Unless we do something, we will unlikely have a solvent Social Security program.

We need to move forward. I am pleased that there is a considerable amount of talk about it. I hope we do something rather soon. It seems to me that if we can do it, the sooner you do it, the less severe the changes need to be. If you make rather simple changes, rather incremental changes 20 years out, it makes a great deal of difference.

What are we talking about? Of course, one of them that is already underway is to raise the retirement age. Times have changed. People are living longer. People are working longer. That is legitimate. There will be de-

bate about how far that goes, of course. But, more importantly, the notion that seems to be catching on is that some percentage of the payments that are made, some of the percentages of 12-percent payments that are made into Social Security, should be set aside into an individual account which is invested in equities, invested in something that will earn more interest than the current investment which is in Government securities; that that account will grow more quickly; that there will be more benefits from the same investment. And that is very possible, of course; further, that that account would be your account and my account.

If for some reason or other you happen to pass on before you use all of that, that it, indeed, be part of your estate. There would be a substantial difference. I don't think many are talking about a full privatization of Social Security. That is something that would be a pretty big step. But to take 30 percent, for example, 3 or 4 percent out of the 12 percent, I believe that is happening. I certainly hope so.

I already mentioned tax reform. Certainly, we will have some debate soon about what seems certain to be a budget surplus—a budget surplus on which we will have some decisions to make; choices about doing something about reducing the debt, a debt on which we pay \$280 billion a year in interest; do something about reducing tax rates so that the people who own the money will be able to keep more of it. I suppose one of the considerations will be to spend more. I hope that is not a successful consideration. Others are suggesting some of it be put in for this Social Security reform and that it be used that way.

There is nothing wrong with philosophical differences. We just need to stand for what we are for. We are for less government, if we are having people keep more of their own money. It is pretty clear where you stand on that issue.

I hope the marriage penalty is considered. I saw some numbers the other day where two single persons were making roughly \$35,000 a year, and they pay individually. If they are married, this is about a \$1,300 penalty to the same people earning the same amount of money simply because they are married. That needs, of course, to be changed.

Another one that I heard a lot about and I also feel strongly about is the Executive orders that have been issued. There are a good many Executive orders, some of which simply are done apparently to replace what the Congress should be doing. One on federalism created a great deal of concern.

Basically, the President issued an Executive order that broadened the scope of the Federal Government in terms of working with States and working with counties, and instead of the good old 10th amendment where it says that those things which are spe-

cifically laid out in the Constitution will be done by the Federal Government, other things will be done by the States and by the people—this changed that. There was such a reaction to it that I understand it has been withdrawn. But the use of Executive orders is something that sort of moves away from the leadership of causing the Congress to do things, and working with the Congress. The idea of an Executive order on health care, for example, which is exactly the thing that the Republican bill has on the floor, it seems to me, is inappropriate.

Energy—I guess I have a rather strong feeling about energy in that it is one of the things that is important to my State, but, more importantly, it is one of the things that is important to this country. We now have ourselves in the position where 57 percent, I believe, of the fossil fuel we use is imported. That puts us at sort of a security risk, it seems to me, in addition to not having the kind of domestic industry that is very important. Do we have a policy at the Department of Energy for that? No, we really do not. We really do not.

We have a real problem with what we do with nuclear waste that is the result of nuclear power plants. Do we have a plan to do that? The administration is opposed to it. We have a responsibility to do something about nuclear waste storage. Does the Department of Energy have a plan? No. We are not moving forward.

Those are the kinds of things that need to be resolved. One of the energy issues that is fairly new this year and will continue next year is the deregulation of electric energy. It has a great impact on this country.

The use of the huge monopolies—most of us would like to see us change monopolies and make them come a little more into the marketplace. Does the Department of Energy have a strong position on that? No.

Finally, the chairman of the committee urged them to come up with a bill. But we need to do something with that. Here again, we get into the question of whether you do the same thing for every State. I can tell you that Wyoming's interest in electric deregulation is different than New York's. You have to have a system to do that. Leadership is what we need.

The Senator from Kansas who just spoke is one of the experts in agriculture. He was, indeed, the chairman of the Agriculture Committee in the House. Agriculture is having a tough time. Agriculture is having a tough time because of the Asian situation, because of the crop failures, and because of the weather and many things.

We are trying to do something with it and, indeed, have, but we need again some kind of impetus and leadership from this administration that has not been there.

Previous to now, we have had accelerated payments that are the changed

payments from where we had the acreage and payment program into a market system. We have had averaging, income averaging, just extended—that is good for farmers—and an IRA for farmers and ranchers. Of course, if you don't have any money, it does not help a lot. And that is going to have to be done. We did something about unilateral sanctions in countries so that we can have more markets overseas.

These are some things, but there need to be more. We need to do something with crop insurance to make that work. We need to open more foreign markets because almost 40 percent of our agricultural product goes into foreign trade. We need to do something about agricultural credit to help make this transition from managed agriculture to market agriculture.

So we need to work together, and we need some leadership in doing that.

Mr. President, probably again the thing that seems always to strike me, because I guess I believe it also, is that the real issue in many of the things we do is in terms of federalism—what is the role of the Federal Government? Where can we be most efficient? Where can we get the job done more easily? At the Federal level? At the State level? Should we send block grants, for example, in some instances to the States? I think so. And the delivery system is so different.

We held a couple of meetings on rural health care while I was in Wyoming. We have about 475,000 people in 100,000 square miles. Many people live in very small towns. We only have two towns that are over the 50–60,000 category. So you have to have a little different system for the delivery of health care than you do in Pennsylvania or than you do in New England, and that is an important kind of thing. Telemedicine, for example, is going to be very important to us.

So all this comes into this equation of how do you best serve the people of this country. I happen to believe, as you can imagine from what I have said already, less Federal Government is better than more. I am one who thinks that the most efficient delivery system comes when it is done at the local level. I am one who thinks that the Government closest to the people is the one that provides the kind of services that people really want.

So we need to focus, I think, on fundamentals. We need to focus on the idea that, for example, those things that are done by the Federal Government that are commercial in nature ought to be put out for bid, if that is possible, so we can do it in the private sector. It is done more efficiently that way, and it also creates more jobs in the private sector. And that is one of the fundamental things we ought to continue to focus on.

We don't have much time remaining in this session—I think something around 20 days of activity. We have lots of things to do. I am hopeful that our friends on the other side of the aisle will address these issues that need to be resolved. I think it is clear that

there are two or three issues they are going to try to insist on bringing up daily, not with the intention of completing them and finding a resolution but simply to bring them up so that they are the kinds of issues that will be involved in the campaigns that are coming up in November—patients' rights, for example. Both sides of the aisle have bills on patients' rights. Most of the elements of those bills are very similar and there is a consensus that some of those things need to be done. The leadership has offered to deal with it with a limited number of amendments so that we can get it done.

That is not acceptable to the other side of the aisle because they want to keep this issue alive as a political issue. That is too bad. I am sorry for that.

The minimum wage. We just have raised the minimum wage two times. It is a political issue that has to keep coming back. Campaign reform. Most of us want to make some changes in campaign reform. We have talked about it extensively in this session of Congress. It is kept alive as a political issue. We need to address ourselves to things that have to be resolved, those things that are important to the people in the conduct of the business of this country.

So I am just really hopeful that our leadership in the Senate and the leadership in the House and this administration will address ourselves to some of these issues and that we will, in fact, during this next month be able to resolve them, conclude them, and do them in the fashion that is most acceptable and most useful to the American people. That, after all, is our job. I think it is based largely on making some decisions as to what the Federal Government does best, how it does it, how it can be done most efficiently, how we can involve the States, how we can involve local governments. Invariably, when you go home, you see things done voluntarily, you see things done on a local level, and it reminds you, fortunately, the strength of this country lies not in its Federal Government, the strength of this country lies in the communities and the people who live there, people who give leadership to issues that affect them, people who volunteer, people who address the issues and resolve them, and that is, indeed, the strength of this country.

Mr. President, I yield the floor. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CAMPBELL). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SANTORUM. 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. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I ask consent to be yielded the 10 minutes remaining under the time of Senator THOMAS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

OVERRIDE THE VETO OF PARTIAL BIRTH ABORTION BAN

Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, in conversations with the leader over the last couple of days, we have set a date for the Senate vote on the override of the President's veto of the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 1997. It is going to be September 18, which is just a couple of weeks from now. I am hopeful, even though the numbers do not look good right now, that we will be able to muster sufficient support to do what the House did, which is to override the President's veto. The House voted, with I believe six or seven votes more than necessary, to override his veto. Here in the Senate we are three votes short of overriding the President's veto, of getting the 67 votes. We had 64 Senators vote in favor of the ban. We will need three more Senators to change their vote and support this act and override the President's veto.

I want to pick up on what Senator THOMAS was talking about and what is being talked about around the country, which is the President and his unwillingness to come forward with the truth, and his propensity to look at a factual situation and skew it some. Some would say lie; I would just say maybe skew it some, to put a different spin or color on what the real facts are.

I think we have maybe the first opportunity here in the Senate, since the President's admission a couple of weeks ago, to really pass judgment on the President's ability to be truthful with the American public. How many people in this Chamber are going to stand by this President when he has blatantly not told the truth about the issue of partial-birth abortion and the need for it to remain legal? He has stood behind this notion that this procedure needs to remain legal because of the potential impact on the health of women who have abortions and that this needs to be an option available to them because there may be circumstances in which women need this procedure to avoid serious health consequences. That was potentially a legitimate argument, even though I could give, and I will when the bill comes up, lots of reasons why from a medical perspective that makes no sense. We have made those arguments time and time again, and others have made those arguments, including Dr. BILL FRIST.

But, just prior to the vote last year here in the Senate, the American Medical Association came out with a letter that said that a partial-birth abortion is never medically necessary to protect the life or health of a woman. And this is an organization, by the way, that supports abortion rights. This is not a right-wing, radical, pro-life organization—take your pick, right-wing, radical, or pro-life, or all of the above. It is