

The James Guelff and Chris McCurley Body Armor Act is designed to deter criminals from wearing body armor, and to distribute excess Federal body armor to local police.

Lee Guelff, brother of Officer James Guelff, wrote to me about the need to revise the laws relating to body armor. He wrote:

It's bad enough when officers have to face gunmen in possession of superior firepower . . . But to have to confront suspects shielded by equal or better defensive protection as well goes beyond the bounds of acceptable risk for officers and citizens alike. No officer should have to face the same set of deadly circumstances again.

I strongly agree with Lee.

The legislation has three key provisions. First, it directs the U.S. Sentencing Commission to provide an appropriate sentencing enhancement for any crime of violence or drug trafficking crime in which the defendant used body armor.

Second, it makes it unlawful for a person who has been convicted of a violent felony to purchase, own, or possess body armor.

It is unconscionable that current laws permit felons to obtain and wear body armor without restriction when so many of our police lack comparable protection.

Finally, the bill enables Federal law enforcement agencies to donate surplus body armor (approximately 10,000 vests) directly to local and state police departments;

Far too many of our local police officers do not have access to body armor. The United States Department of Justice estimates that 25% of State, local, and tribal law enforcement officers, approximately 150,000 officers, are not issued body armor.

Getting our police officers more body armor will save lives.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, more than 30% of the 1,200 officers killed by guns in the line of duty since 1980 could have survived if they wore body armor.

This bill has the support of organizations representing 500,000 law enforcement personnel nationwide including: Fraternal Order of Police; National Association of Police Organizations; National Sheriff's Association; National Troopers Coalition; International Association of Police Chiefs; Federal Law Enforcement Officers Assn; Police Executive Research Forum; International Brotherhood of Police Officers; Major city Chiefs; and National Assn. Black Law Enforcement Executives.

Once again, I commend the Senate for passing this important and long overdue legislation.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. JEFFORDS. 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. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday the Senate resume consideration of the Murray amendment No. 378 and there be 120 minutes equally divided in the usual form.

I further ask unanimous consent that at 2:20 on Tuesday the Senate proceed to a vote in relation to the amendment and no amendments be in order to the amendment and there be 5 minutes equally divided for closing remarks prior to the vote.

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

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, with regard to the Sessions amendment, I ask unanimous consent that the previously agreed to Sessions amendment No. 600 be modified to be drafted to the pending substitute. This is a technical change. It does not change any of the amendment's legislative language.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I saw in the newspaper this morning the headline in the Washington Post "Business Seeks Tax Breaks in Wage Bill." This is a reference to the inevitability that I and others are going to offer an increase in the minimum wage. This story is a reference to what the business lobbying groups are doing in preparation for that particular legislation and how they intend to add additional kinds of tax reductions for companies and corporations on that piece of legislation.

We have just seen in the Senate last week a tax reduction of \$1.35 that is excessive and unfair in terms of its allocation among Americans. A number of us voted in opposition to it. We recognized that even in that proposal there wasn't a nickel—not 5 cents—increase for education over the next 10 years—not even a 5-cent increase.

We found \$1,350,000,000,000 in tax reductions, but we couldn't divert any of those resources to education, particularly educating the needy children on whom this legislation is focused, recognizing that these children are our future, recognizing that what we are trying to do is to give greater support to the children and to get greater accountability for the children, the schools, parents, and communities, as well, in this legislation.

It is good legislation, I support it, but it does need to have the resources to be able to have life to it. We didn't get any increase on that.

We are going to have a chance to revisit that issue when the Finance Committee reports back in the next few days with their product on the allocation of taxes, on who is going to get the tax reductions. Many of us will have the opportunity again to present to the Senate: Do we want to see the reduction in the highest rates for the wealthiest individuals, or do we want to use that money, which otherwise would go back in terms of reduced taxes—do we want to use that money to fund education for children in this country?

We will have an opportunity to vote on that several times when the bill comes back. The idea that the ink isn't even dry on that legislation and already our Republican friends on the other side are licking their lips, waiting for an increase in the minimum wage, which is a target to try to help working families working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks of the year, to help them out of poverty.

We have the Republican leader ARMEY saying:

There is a general resolve, especially among Republicans, that you can't put this kind of disincentive in the employment of people on the lowest rungs into play without trying to compensate for its adverse employment effects.

In other words, schools are out, and we are going to have a lot more besides the \$1.35 trillion in tax reduction, that evidently the Republican leadership is waiting for the Senate and the House to take action to increase the minimum wage, hopefully \$1.50 over 3 years, with a 60-, 50-, 40-cent increase in 3 steps, in order to help some of the hardest working Americans.

This is a question about human dignity. It is a question of whether we are going to say to Americans working at the lowest end of the economic ladder that the work they do is important. What is the work they do? Many of them are teachers' aides. Many of them work in childcare centers. Many of them work as nursing aides. Many of them work in the buildings across this country, cleaning them late at night, away from their families. That is what many of these low-income jobs are all about. People work hard at them. They sacrifice in order to get them in many instances. We want to say to those workers that when we have had the strongest economy in the history of the Nation, people who work hard should not have to live in poverty.

It is interesting to note that over the history of the minimum wage we have increased the minimum wage 17 times. It was only the last time, when we increased it, which was 4 years ago, and evidently this time, that we have seen the minimum wage loaded up with tax goodies, tax benefits. We didn't do it the previous 17 times. We didn't do that. But now our Republican friends are looking for a vehicle to carry this load about further tax reductions for the wealthy corporations.

We have had consideration of the tax reduction bill. We have all seen that.