Let me emphasize the importance of this point. Significant progress needs to be made on the DTV transition. If progress continues to stall, then perhaps a more aggressive approach such as reclaiming the spectrum from the broadcasters beginning January 1, 2007, will be required.

In closing, I realize this transition has not been easy for all the industries involved. Some of the industries have made intensive efforts, devoting significant time and resources to make DTV a reality, but many difficult issues surrounding the DTV transition still remain.

During a 1998 Commerce Committee hearing on DTV transition, I stated I would not suggest the Government now ought to step up and immerse itself in micromanaging every piece of this process. While I still believe the Government is not good at micromanaging, I believe the hour is nearing when the Government should step in and find solutions to the mess we helped create. More importantly, I believe Congress has a duty to protect the taxpayers of this country and reclaim spectrum so it may be put to its best use.

I will finish with one final observation: For the most part, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 has failed to live up to its promises to consumers. I believe its failures can teach us a valuable lesson while we watch many of the same industries involved in the passage of the act grapple with conversion to DTV.

The lesson we should have learned from the failure of the 1996 Telecom Act is that the interests of major telecommunications companies and average American consumers are not the same. Where the interests of the industries and the interests of the consumers diverge, Congress must assure that the consumers come first. The failures of the Telecommunications Act show what happens when Congress first fails to see where the interests of industries are incompatible with the interests of consumers, and then fails to act once it does. I intend not to let this happen and will move forward with legislation should progress not be made in the coming months.

I say again, when we gave away $70 billion to the broadcasters, I knew at the time they would never meet this time schedule. It was a dirty little secret. They have not met it.

The Senator from New Jersey is on the floor. We tried to get some free television time for candidates. They certainly could not afford that. They are not acting in the public interest, and it is time they started acting in the public interest. There is no more powerful lobby in this town than the National Association of Broadcasters, and abuses have never been greater.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous unanimous consent agreement, the Senator from Minnesota is recognized for a period of up to 10 minutes.

Mr. REID. If I could ask my friend to yield for a unanimous consent request, I ask unanimous consent that following the statement of the Senator from Minnesota, Senator TORRICELLI be recognized for 30 minutes as in morning business, and following that, Senator LOTT or his designee be recognized for up to 40 minutes.

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

The Senator from Minnesota.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I have a couple of matters to cover. I caught the end of Senator MCCAIN's statement. I point out to colleagues the link between the telecommunications bill that passed in 1996 and reform.

I remember the anteroom was packed with all kinds of interests representing billions of dollars. I was trying to figure out where truth, liberty, and justice was in the anteroom. I think the consumers were left out.

We have not seen cable rates go down, but we have seen consolidation. For those who worry about competition, I argue when we look today at telecommunications and the mass media, we see a few conglomerates controlling the flow of information in the democracy. That is frightening.

If there was a sector of the economy that is ripe for antitrust action, this is one—along with the food industry.

MENTAL HEALTH PARITY

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD two editorials—one from the New York Times, and one from the Minneapolis Star Tribune—about the importance of ending discrimination in mental health coverage and calling for full mental health parity÷.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Minneapolis Star Tribune, May 1, 2002]

BRAIN STORM AT LAST, BUSH GRASPS A MEDICAL FACT

President Bush took a grand leap on Monday—one many observers thought he'd never dare to take. He at last acknowledged that the brain is a part of the body.

Scientists, of course, have suspected as much for years; the president's declaration is sure to bolster their self-esteem. It will also open the door to a long-awaited policy change: If the brain is in fact yet another bodily organ, it certainly makes sense that its disorders be covered by the same medical-insurance rules that apply to every other bodily dysfunction.

This logic is not lost on the president, and on Monday he want out of his way to endorse legislation that would force insurers to treat brain disorders just like other medical illnesses. That would bring an end to the practice of assuring ample health coverage when the pancreas peters out of insulin but scrimping on care when the brain is short on serotonin. That sort of discrimination keeps sick people sick, Bush said, and contributes to the stigma suffered by people with brain diseases. The answer, Bush made plain, is ''full mental health parity''—a promise he says he'll work with Congress to fulfill.

This is phenomenal news, and it has the bill's top backers over the moon. Sen. Paul Wellstone's name may have been omitted as the president pushed his concept, but the Minnesota senator is too happy to care. Last year his mental health parity bill died an ignominious death in conference committee, after administration and Republican leaders buckled to insurers' complaints that the bill would be too costly.

Medical coverage for the brain—too costly to cover? Tell that to America's epileptics, whose disability has long been covered because it's no longer considered ''mental.'' Besides, the claim about costliness was nonsense from the start. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that premiums would rise less than 1 percent if parity were assured. And that calculation doesn't take into account the savings that could be reaped if—as is likely—early and habitual treatment of brain disorders led to fewer emergency-room visits, shorter psychiatric hospitalizations and reduced prison stays.

Of course the best reason to assure mental-health parity, as Wellstone and Republican cosponsor Pete Domenici of New Mexico have argued, is that it's the decent thing to do. Bush said just that on Monday, lamenting the history of misunderstanding, fear and shame that has haunted people suffering from neglected but fully treatable brain disorders. The way to banish those horrors is to treat the medical afflictions with medicine—wherever in the human frame they occur.

This is a terrific pledge from a once-reluctant president, and onlookers who see parity as a no-brainer should make sure he sticks by his word. As Wellstone observed earlier this month while speaking to mental-health experts in Bethesda, Md., much could still go awry as this measure moves through Congress over the next month. Though the Wellstone-Domenici bill calls for covering all mental illnesses, many foes favor letting legislators or health plans pare down the list to a few coverable—perhaps just the few curable—diagnoses. That could leave many of the sickest entirely uncovered. There's also the ominous danger posed by the possibility that insurers will design health-care packages that offer no mental-health care at all—a sneaky and pernicious way to skirt the parity requirement altogether.

But why worry about such things now? Bush has become a believer. Now perhaps he'll exercise a sliver of compassionate conservatism and lead the fight against weakening the modest mental-health parity bill. So voters must hope—and insist.

[From the New York Times, May 1, 2002]

TOWARD MENTAL HEALTH PARITY

President Bush said some encouraging words this week about the need for a health care system that will treat mental illness with the same urgency as physical illness. The president seemed to suggest that health insurance should cover mental problems on the same terms as other medical problems. If the president is serious about this issue, he will need to lean on recalcitrant House Republicans, the chief impediment to reform, to pass a bill elevating mental health coverage to a par with medical and surgical coverage.

Congress took the first step toward this goal in 1996 when it passed legislation that prevented private plans that offer mental health coverage from setting annual or lifetime limits that are lower than those set for other illnesses. But the law left a loophole that allowed companies to require much higher deductibles and copayments for mental health treatments than for other diseases. So a new bill—pioneered by Senators

Pete Domenici, Republican of New Mexico, and Paul Wellstone, Democrat of Minnesota—is now pending that would require parity in all terms, including deductibles, co-insurance and duration of treatment.

Although Mr. Bush shared the stage in Albuquerque with Senator Domenici, a longtime supporter of full mental health parity, he did not endorse the senator's progressive and expansive bill, which would require parity for more than 200 mental health conditions listed in the chief diagnostic manual when they cause clinically significant impairment. In one comment, Mr. Bush seemed to be seeking ''full mental health parity,'' but in another he talked only of putting ''serious mental disease'' on a par with other diseases. He also called it ''critical'' that the move toward parity not run up the cost of health care significantly.

The chief arguments shaping up in Congress involve the potential cost of upgraded mental health coverage and the appropriate range of mental illness to be covered. The Congressional Budget Office estimated last year that the Domenici-Wellstone bill would drive up premiums by about 1 percent, a cost that seems bearable given the importance of treating mental illness and removing the stigma attached to it. The health industry suspects that costs may rise faster and deplores any added cost to a system already under financial strain. But surely there are compromises that would install mental health parity as the norm but allow health plans to abandon parity if their psychiatric costs rose beyond a reasonable level. Me. Bush needs to follow his rhetoric with some hard bargaining to get a bill passed by Congress this year.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Both editorials are strong. They thank the President and my partner in this effort, Senator DOMENICI, for their fine work. Both point out that we need to make sure we have full mental health parity. We need to end the discrimination and make sure our loved ones and other families are provided with the treatment they need. That is not happening today. This would be a huge civil rights bill that would end discrimination and get much more coverage to people.

I recommend to every colleague the three-part series in the New York Times, front page. I cannot even read it, it is so powerful and so painful with regard to what is happening to those put in homes for mental health coverage. Because of the coverage they are getting, there will be a criminal investigation. People have taken their lives by jumping out of windows because of no supervision. The staff is underpaid and poorly trained and does not know how to provide the pharmacological coverage.

People live in the homes which are supposed to be community-based care, and there is absolutely no treatment, no help. These are people who do not have money. They are not capable of being a political force. My God, they live under the most wretched conditions. This should not happen in the United States of America.

It is a powerful series. I have never seen a greater contribution than what the New York Times has done on the front-page series.

EDUCATION

Mr. WELLSTONE. My third topic is education. I spoke yesterday almost with a twinkle in my eye when I heard what this administration is proposing to do.

In Minnesota, in 1999, students took out $483 million in loans; $406 million in Federal loans. In 1987, it was $188 million, $483 million versus $188 million.

Saying the students cannot consolidate loans and keep them at 4 percent and not worry about interest rates going up, average students—if this administration has its way—are going to be charged an additional $3,000 more. It is unconscionable.

All Senators need to understand many of our students are not 19 or 20, living in a dorm. Even if they are, a significant number of them are working 30 hours a week. These are not people for whom the cost of higher education for their families is easy. A lot of them are students not living in the dorm—40, 45, and 50 years of age—going back to school. Some of our taconite workers are going back to school to try to find employment and support their families. These are hard-pressed people.

Now, this administration doesn't want to give them a break on interest rates on their loans? It is the most distorted of priorities. Give it all away in tax cuts. A vast majority of these tax cuts go to huge multinational corporations, wealthy citizens, the top 1 percent of the population. And to give them credit, many of them say: We do not need it.

Instead, we are told we don't have enough money to fund the Pell grant, so the way we will do it is to charge higher interest rates for students, many of whom are hard pressed. It is unconscionable, unacceptable.

I announce on the floor of the Senate, along with other Senators, including the Senator from Minnesota, the Presiding Chair, who cannot speak but I can speak for him, we are not going to let it happen. It is not going to happen. I say to the White House: It is not going to happen.

Tomorrow we will talk with teachers, including teachers from Minnesota. I will talk about the education budget. We had all of the symbolic politics ''leave no child behind,'' with all the travel around the country, including in Minnesota and coming to the high school, Eden Prairie High School, all for education, all for the children—accept for when it comes to digging in the pocket and providing resources.

The State of Minnesota anxiously awaits the administration living up to the commitment to provide the full funding for special education. We had it done in the Senate. It was on a glidepath. The Presiding Chair and I would have liked to have seen it happen quicker. Over 5 years, it would be full funding, and over the next 5 years and the rest of the decade it would be mandatory, automatic full funding, $2 billion more in resources for education for the State of Minnesota, half of which would be used for special education, and half to be used to cover other costs which we incur because we do not get the funding from the Federal Government. The House Republican leadership and the White House blocked it.

We are going to have a debate on this issue. There are a lot of different formulations. I say forego the tax cuts for the top 1 percent; forego giving multinational corporations breaks so they don't pay taxes. Then we will have $130 billion, and over the next 10 years that is exactly what we need to provide full funding for special education.

I stake my political reputation on that tradeoff. I come from a State where we cut teachers, prekindergarten for children, and early childhood education programs. It breaks my heart to see that happen, where class sizes are going up. My daughter, Marsha, says her advanced Spanish class has 50 students.

Colleagues, education is a compelling issue in people's lives. If you want to talk about what is good for the country, good for the economy, and good for democracy, you are going to want to support education. We ought to be doing this. There will be a debate and every Senator will be held accountable. We need the full funding. That will be a fight. I know the Democrats will fight for it, and I hope many Republicans do as well.

Finally, ''leave no child behind,'' is the mission statement of the Children's Defense Fund. It is probably too much for them to take because all we have is a tin cup budget from this administration. To me, education is pre-K through 65; it is not K through 12.

Talking about higher education, older students, talking about students going back to school, and then there is the prekindergarten, which for some reason always is put in parenthesis, that is probably the most important education of all.

I don't want to celebrate the administration's budget. I am in profound disagreement with the priorities of this administration on children and education. I celebrate the work of these childcare teachers, many of whom make $7 an hour, with no health care benefits. It is preposterous. We say we love children, believe in children, but we devalue the work of the adults who help those children.

We are going to be meeting with Commissioner O'Keefe, probably with the Presiding Chair, as well, who has come from Minnesota. We are talking about TANF and welfare reform, and the administration has a new formula that 70 percent of the single parents, mainly women, will be working out of the home 40 hours a week, but they don't have additional money for childcare. There are a lot of other things that are wrong with this reform as well.

My point is, whether it be welfare mothers, whether it be families with