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