As I have said, my amendment will help ensure that the oil and gas industry is responding to the forces of supply and demand, not market manipulation. I understand that we are not able to vote on amendments to S. 3711, but I urge my colleagues to suppose the Oil and Gas Industry Antitrust Act of 2006 at such time as it receives a vote.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, in the absence of any other Senator seeking recognition, I 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. SPECTER. 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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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. SPECTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, August 1, the two pending amendments be withdrawn, S. 3711 then be read the third time, and the Senate proceed to a vote on passage of the bill, with no intervening action or debate; provided further that no motions to proceed be in order during Tuesday's session of the Senate.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

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

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

MINIMUM WAGE AND THE ESTATE TAX

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I rise because this week is going to be enormously important for the American people and also enormously important in terms of deciding what kind of country we are. Over the period of these last 4 months, I have had the opportunity, the responsibility given by the Senate, to serve on the pension conference with a number of our colleagues on our side, and a number of our colleagues on the other side. That conference was chaired by our friend and the chairman of our human resource committee, Senator ENZI. He did a splendid job.

It took 4½ months to effectively wind up that conference. There are certainly provisions that are included in the conference that I would not have included. We were meeting as late as 1 o'clock in the morning last Thursday night in order to conclude the conference itself.

As would happen in a situation like that, I think there were gaps in the final recommendations which I wish we had addressed, but we will have an opportunity to deal with those issues later this week. It will be enormously important.

I am in strong support of the pensions legislation. But, also, later this week we are going to consider legislation that is coming over from the House of Representatives on the estate tax. Attached to that estate tax—it is not a new issue for this body—attached in the House of Representatives has been an increase in the minimum wage, with which I have been involved over a long period of time. Actually, since I came to the Senate, I have been involved in increasing the minimum wage, championing that with many others. Years ago we had Republicans and Democrats who supported the increase in the minimum wage. Now unfortunately—fortunately, in the last vote that we had on the minimum wage, we did have eight Republicans who supported it. We have a clear majority in the Senate for an increase in the minimum wage.

The American people overwhelmingly support an increase in the minimum wage. It has not been increased in the last 9 years and over a corresponding period of time we here in the Senate have increased our own pay more than $30,000. We increased our own pay more than $30,000 during that same period of time, but the Senate has refused to address an increase in the minimum wage for the American workers who are at the lowest rung of the economic ladder.

Most Americans believe a job ought to get you out of poverty. But those on the other side believe if you have a minimum wage job, you ought to remain in poverty. That is a very big, very major difference.

What we have seen across the country, however, is sort of a wildfire of support for increases in the minimum wage. We have had a number of States that have offered the minimum wage increase on the State ballots. We have seen increases in Florida, increases in Nevada. In more recent times we have seen increases in Arkansas, the home of Wal-Mart, and increases in North Carolina. The campaigns for increases in the minimum wage are alive and well in many different States across the country, and they are going to be successful in a number of States. It reminds us how the American people feel. They feel we should have an increase in the minimum wage.

What has happened now is our Republican leadership in the House of Representatives has added an increase in the minimum wage to an estate tax cut for the wealthiest individuals in this country. That is what they did, thinking if they put these together maybe those of us who believe in an increase in the minimum wage will go ahead and support this because we are so committed to the rise in the minimum wage.

No one in this body is more committed to an increase in the minimum wage than am I, but I am going to fight this fraudulent—I think arrogant—decision by the Republican leadership, disdaining, effectively, and dishonoring hard-working Americans by going about with this gimmick of adding an increase to the minimum wage to legislation on the estate tax.

If you look at who is for the increase in the minimum wage, you will see only 22 percent of Americans support the repeal of the estate tax, and 86 percent of Americans support raising the minimum wage. Why, I wonder. It is fair enough to say to whom the benefits are going to go if we consider a piece of legislation. That is a fair enough rule. Who is going to benefit and who is going to lose out? If you look at the estate tax, you will see there will be 8,200 of the richest heirs in the country. Some have called this the Paris Hilton tax giveaway; 8,200 of the richest heirs will receive a tax giveaway close to $1.4 million per estate. The total cost will be $753 billion for the first 10 years of full implementation, according to the Center of Budget and Policy.

We are talking about a very modest increase in the minimum wage, to $7.25. But what will happen to those individuals? As long as they are still below the poverty line they are going to be eligible for a number of the programs that we have out there that have been built in to try to help and assist hard-working Americans who are being hard pressed because they don't have adequate income. What we have seen in the most recent 5 years is cuts in Medicaid, cuts in food stamps, cuts in veterans programs, and cuts in unemployment insurance. That has been the record in the past, and that will be the record in terms of the future, trying to make up for that $753 billion. These are the programs, Medicaid programs that, by and large, look after children, long-term care for the elderly, the Food Stamp Program—again, for those who are in very serious need.

That is really what we are faced with. What have we seen over the period of these last few years? Let's look at what has been happening to our fellow Americans. We have seen an increase in the total number of Americans living in poverty that has increased by 5.4 million in the United States of America in the last 4 years that there has been no increase in the minimum wage. What does the Republican Senate want to have us do? Have another tax cut for the largest fortunes in this country.

What has happened in terms of children over the period of the last 4 years? We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of children who are living in poverty. There are 1.4 million more children living in poverty. There has been no increase in the minimum wage.

The list goes on. If you look at what has happened to the purchasing power of the minimum wage, it has actually gone down some 21 percent. Yet the spread between the most wealthy individuals and the most needy individuals has never been more dramatic in the history of this country.

We have an opportunity—we will have—to try to do something, hopefully, about an increase in the minimum wage. If it were here before the Senate, there is a majority of the Members of the Senate who support an increase in the minimum wage. But we are not given that opportunity. We are not given that opportunity to just vote on that issue and then vote separately in terms of the increase in the estate tax. No, no; we are not given the opportunity to do that. Republicans say you have to take both or you don't get an increase in the minimum wage.

That is a contemptuous attitude—not toward those of us who are for the increase but for those workers, men and women of dignity. They work hard, work long, work in our schools, work to look after our senior citizens, work to clean the great buildings of American commerce—men and women of dignity, and you are saying they can't have what ought to be a right in the richest country of this world: If you work hard and play by the rules, you and your family should not live in poverty.

Oh, no. They say: No, you have it wrong over there for an increase in the minimum wage, unless we are going to provide another tax benefit for the most wealthy individuals in the country—then you can have an increase. That is a contemptuous attitude.

Beyond that, what this proposal contains is an ingenious proposal, suggested by the restaurant association. They say: People who work for tips in the restaurants, they often make $5.25 an hour. They often make that in tips. So why are we required to pay them? They were able to persuade Republicans—this is strictly a Republican proposal—to say: If they are going to receive tips, you are only required to pay $2.13 an hour. The rest can be made up in tips. That person still effectively gets the minimum wage. But the restaurant doesn't have to pay that. Do you hear me? They don't have to pay the worker the $5.15 an hour.

A number of States said that is not fair; that is not really fair. We have, now, seven States that say to the restaurants: You have to pay the full tally. It says minimum wage of $5.15 an hour, you have to pay the $5.15 an hour. The States have said it. Seven States have said that. About 30 States have done somewhat in between, but seven States have said: You have to pay the whole thing.

The Congress has said an increase in the minimum wage—a tip is a tip. That goes with the territory. I wonder how many Americans, when they go into the restaurant and they are thinking about being served, try to figure out—I wonder, should I give this person $1 or $2 because they really are only getting $2.13 an hour paid by the restaurant. Of course they don't. If the service is good they give them something to show their appreciation for it.

What have our Republican friends said? We don't like the fact that States have made that judgment, that decision. We know more than the seven States that said you have to pay the full fare. We in the Senate of the United States are saying you don't know what is necessary in your State, about paying an adequate sum to those workers. So we, the Congress, are going to tell you, the State, and tell your workers, that we, the Republicans in the Senate and the House of Representatives, are going to say we are going to tell you that you only can pay $2.13.

I hope we don't hear any more about the one big solution to all of the problems back home. How many times do we listen to a large solution, a single solution for all the problems back home? How many times do we hear: Let the States make a judgment and decision in order to protect their workers?

Here the States have made a judgment, here the States have made a decision, and the Republican Party says: We know better. We know better. We know how to save our constituency a little more money, for them, and a little less for the workers. A wonderful, Republican, ingenious concept tied on to this proposal.

At another time, and we will have more time, we will have a chance to get into this in greater detail. I will just conclude.

I note, as I gave the figures about the number of families who are living in poverty, and also the number of children in poverty, there has been a different story in one of our neighboring countries. The second strongest economy in Europe is England. No. 1 is Germany, No. 2 is England. Their minimum wage is going to nearly $10 in October—$9.83. They have increased it now over the last 5 years. Do you want to know something? They have taken 1.8 million children out of poverty with their increase. And they have a strong economy and a more fair economy.

But not here. Nine years, eight pay increases for Members of the Senate over 9 years, and we have not been willing to give an increase in the minimum wage. No, if you want that increase, you vote to give the wealthiest individuals another bouquet, another bouquet. How contemptuous can it be?

At another time later in this debate—I know we have limited time. There are others who want to speak on the underlying bill. I look forward to addressing the Senate in greater detail on this issue and also on the pension issue, which is going to be extremely important.

I reserve the remainder of my time and yield the floor.

SERVICES FOR ENDING LONG-TERM HOMELESSNESS ACT

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, as a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions—HELP—Committee, I rise to express my support for the Services for Ending Long-Term Homelessness Act, S. 709, as introduced by Senator MIKE DEWINE.

Many low-income housing advocates in Utah have asked me to cosponsor this important legislation because it establishes a grant program, run by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, SAMHSA, for services to end chronic homelessness. In Utah alone, there are approximately 1,900 chronically homeless individuals whose lives are in a constant state of peril because they are repeatedly homeless for long periods of time. They usually have one or more disabilities, and often cycle between homeless shelters, the streets, mental health facilities, emergency rooms, hospitals, and jails. The public cost for their continued care is extremely high, and their medical outcomes are generally very poor.

I believe that ending chronic homelessness requires housing with supportive services, and policies which prevent high-risk individuals from returning to the streets. Based on several estimates, including an estimate published in the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health Report, it will take approximately 150,000 units of supportive housing and over 10 years to end long-term homelessness. S. 709 would authorize funding for a flexible array of services in permanent supportive housing, focused on helping people move toward recovery and self sufficiency.

Although I support the bill and its intent, I am very concerned about its cost. Throughout my Senate career, I have fought hard for fiscal discipline. Although the cost of the bill has not been estimated by the Congressional Budget Office, everyone agrees that the issues and associated costs are complex.

S. 709 provides accountability, has mechanisms for controlling costs, and mechanisms for maximizing cost savings. For example, the bill prioritizes accountability and cost control through a required competitive process. In an effort to save on overall public spending, the bill gives priority to applicants who serve individuals who have proven to be more expensive to the public health system and to law enforcement. Additionally, S. 709 requires that the grantee match the Federal funds received, and the match requirement increases over time. It is important to note that the amount of funding an applicant receives cannot rise above the rate of inflation. Finally, the bill ensures accountability by requiring grantees to report on their performance. This effort is to ensure that chronic homelessness is being reduced, thus reducing costly mental health and substance abuse problems, and increasing education and employment.

Mr. President, I support strongly the goals of this bill and I believe our continued economic expansion and improving Federal budget will enable us to fully implement the objectives of this bill and end homelessness in this country forever.