

favor of the President's program. I can tell you, literally, there were Democratic Members of the House of Representatives who lost in the next election, in 1994, because of that vote they cast. It was a really courageous effort on their part. It was exploited by those who said they were going to somehow destroy the economy and raise taxes across America. Yet look at what has happened. From 1993 to the current day, we have seen the Dow Jones index go from 3,500 to over 11,000, and all the things the Senator from Nevada has alluded to.

So that decision by President Clinton, supported exclusively by Democrats on Capitol Hill, had a very positive impact on America and its future. We have gone through one of the longest and strongest economic growth periods in our history. I think it relates back directly to that 1993 vote.

I can recall a number of my colleagues—Congresswoman Mezvinsky, a new Congresswoman from Pennsylvania who only served one term because she had the courage to cast that vote. If she had not, America might have gone on a different course than we have seen recently.

Mr. REID. I apologize to my friend from Minnesota. I want to end by asking one final group of questions to the Senator from Illinois.

We are here in kind of a celebratory fashion. We are going to complete this bill tonight, unless certain Members of the Senate keep our staff in all night long. Otherwise, we will finish it very quickly.

Does the Senator understand getting to this point has been really difficult and we, the minority, have had to hang very tough?

Remember, in an effort to get where we are, there have been a number of ways the majority has attempted to get to this point. You remember the Wall Street Journal article where they talked about the two sets of books the Republicans were keeping? They would, for certain things, go with the Office of Management and Budget and for certain things go with the Congressional Budget Office. Does the Senator remember that?

Mr. DURBIN. Yes.

Mr. REID. You can't keep two sets of books. The Senator recalls that didn't work. Does the Senator remember that?

Mr. DURBIN. Yes, I do.

Mr. REID. Does the Senator also remember they came up with this ingenious idea that they would add a month to the calendar? Does the Senator remember that?

Mr. DURBIN. That is right, 13 months.

Mr. REID. I remember the Senator from Illinois saying that is a great idea because we can just keep adding months to the year and we will never have a Y2K problem.

Mr. DURBIN. That is right.

Mr. REID. That was something also where we said: That is not fair, we are not going to do it. That didn't work.

Does the Senator also recall when they decided, with the earned-income tax credit, the program that President Reagan said was the best welfare program in the history of the country, where you would give the working poor tax incentives to keep working—does the Senator recall they wanted to withhold parts of those moneys to the poor in an effort to balance the budget?

Mr. DURBIN. I remember there was a certain Governor from Texas who admonished the Republican Members in the House and Senate, the House in particular, for their insensitivity. He said you should not balance the budget on the backs of working people, and that was about the time they abandoned that particular gimmick.

Mr. REID. Then there was the across-the-board cut. Does the Senator understand when they were doing that, and it was decided to do all these things, they did it without the offsets that would take an across-the-board cut of 7 or 8 percent, but now they are declaring a victory because they got an across-the-board cut—except the President can decide what is going to be cut—of .37 percent? Does the Senator from Illinois understand that crying victory over having a .3-percent across-the-board cut where the President can decide what would be cut is not something they should be crowing about victoriously?

Mr. DURBIN. It is a face-saving gesture on their part. Once we got into the budget negotiations and the Republican leadership was faced with actually saying, no, we won't add additional teachers, we will not have additional cops on the beat to address the crime problem across America, they could not do it. They ended up saying we actually won because we got this so-called across-the-board cut of .37 percent.

I might say to the Senator from Nevada, as he well knows, this is entirely within the discretion of the President, so it is not across the board. He can decide which areas of Federal spending to reduce to reach this target.

Mr. REID. I have enjoyed very much visiting with my friend from Illinois. As the session is drawing to a close, I want to express appreciation, on behalf of all the Democratic Senators, for the Senator being our floor leader. He has done an outstanding job. He has been here. He has been able to express himself very well, as we all know he can. I want to personally tell him how much I appreciate it. And on behalf of the Democratic Senators, for all of them, I tell the Senator how much we appreciate every word he has spoken, everything he has done, and I will make sure the majority keeps their ear to what the Senator from Illinois is saying. He

has done extremely well in expressing what I believe are the views of the majority of the American people.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Senator. It could not have been done without Senator DASCHLE and Senator REID and the leadership of my colleagues who have joined me. I also say it could not have been done without having such good, strong issues the American people support, that we can come talk about on the floor each day, pointing out that in this session of Congress they have not been addressed.

I thank the Senator for his kind words.

Mr. WELLSTONE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from Minnesota is recognized.

THE LACK OF SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I say to my colleagues, there are other colleagues on the floor. I have waited for some time. I think it has been an important discussion, but I am going to try, since there are other Senators on the floor, to abbreviate my remarks. I actually could speak for 3 or 4 or 5 hours right now. I will not. We will see when we are going to finish up today.

I would like to build on a little bit of the discussion I just heard, and then I would like to go to the issue at hand, which is the extension of the Northeast Dairy Compact, the way this was done, the impact on my State of Minnesota, and why we have been fighting this out.

First of all, I also thank Senator DURBIN for his very strong voice on the floor of the Senate. I say to Senator REID from Nevada, sometimes we come out here and compliment each other to the point it becomes so flowery, people are not sure whether it is sincere or not. I believe it is sincere. Senator REID is a good example of somebody in politics who, if he suffers from anything, it is modesty. He rarely takes credit. He really has done some tremendous work in the mental health field. He has probably done more than anybody in the Senate to get us to focus on the problem of depression. He never takes the credit. He should have included himself in this discussion.

I am talking about Senator REID.

Mr. President, I am not sure how exactly to view this overall omnibus conference report we now have before us. I am a little worried about sounding so negative that it will seem I only come to the floor to be negative. I do not. I think some of what my colleagues have talked about—given the framework we were working within and given where we started, I think there are some things people can feel good about.

I am pleased to give the administration and Democrats some credit for at

least being able to get some resources for some areas of priorities, such as more teachers and schools and moving toward smaller class size. It was a fix. I know for the State of Minnesota, and I am sure for many States, the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and the cuts in Medicare reimbursement had, no pun intended, catastrophic consequences, especially for our rural hospitals, some of the nursing homes, home-based health care, and teaching hospitals. At least we were able to make a difference for a couple of years, though, again, it is temporary.

I feel pretty good about some investment of resources that are going to be helpful to people in Minnesota. If I had to pick out one priority, it would be \$14 million for the Fon du Lac School, a pretty important commitment of resources. I count as one of the best days as a Senator the day I visited Fon du Lac School. It is a pretty horrendous facility, and for years I have been trying to get some money to build a new school for kids in the Indian community.

It is interesting, just this past week I was there, and at the end of the discussion I said to the students: I have to leave in 30 seconds, and I am sorry we are finishing. Can any of you talk about one thing you care more about than anything else?

This one student who is age 15 said: The thing I think the most about is I would like for the children—I viewed him as a child at age 15—I would like the children to live a better life than we have been able to live, and I would like to live a life that will help kids do better.

I said to this student: That was the most beautiful, powerful thing I heard said in any school I have visited, and I have been in a school every 2 weeks for the last 9, 9½ years I have been in the Senate.

I tend to come down more on the side of the editorial debate of the Washington Post. I do not think this Congress has much to be proud of at all. Part of what has happened is we have been engaged in a lot of mutual self-deception. I came out to the floor quite a while ago on an amendment dealing with veterans' health care. I said it was a deliberate effort to bust the budget caps.

The ways in which we have been talking about "not raiding the Social Security surplus" has been ridiculous. President Clinton started to do it. Tom DeLay has done it. We have put ourselves in a straitjacket. We know that is not what it is about, but it is great political sloganeering.

For Republicans who do not believe, when it comes to the most critical issues of people's lives, there is nothing the Government can or should do, then I think you are consistent and I respect your point of view, for those Republicans who take that position, and this

is not a problem. But for Democrats and other Republicans who believe there are certain decisive areas of life in America, such as investment in children and education and opportunities for children, decent health care coverage, environmental protection, making sure we have some support for the most vulnerable citizens in the Congress, whether it be congregate dining or Meals on Wheels or affordable child care or, for God's sake, making sure children are not hungry in America, I do not think we have much to be proud of because we have done precious little.

As a matter of fact, I say to my colleagues on our side of the aisle, if you were to take the "non-Social Security surplus," 75 percent of it because of cuts in the budget caps of 2 years ago in a lot of these areas we say we care the most about, in real dollar terms we are still not spending as much as we spent several years ago.

I do not think we have all that much to be proud of and we have to do a lot better. I said at the beginning I would talk about some positive things. I do not want to come out here appearing to be shrill. I do think, unfortunately, this is a pretty rigorous analysis.

We did not pass campaign finance reform. That is the core issue. That is the core issue, the core problem. We did not pass patient protection legislation. We have done precious little to deal with the reality of 44 million people without any health insurance coverage and many other people having health insurance coverage but being underinsured.

Under title I—I saw this listed as one of our victories—we are funding about one-third of the kids who are eligible to be helped. These are some of our most vulnerable children in America, to the point where in Minnesota, in St. Paul, after you reach the threshold of a school that has 65 percent low-income population, there is no money for any other schools. It is about a \$16 billion shortfall, and we have increased spending by \$75 million.

We have done hardly anything for affordable child care. We did not include prescription drug coverage as a part of Medicare. On a whole host of amendments I have worked on as a Senator, almost all of them were eliminated in conference committee; whether it be at least some support for kids who witness violence in their homes or trying to deal with the problem of exploitation of women in international sex trafficking or juvenile justice mental health services or having an honest policy evaluation of what the welfare "reform" is doing around the country or increasing some funding—I mean real funding, a real increase of funding—for Meals on Wheels or congregate dining or social services support.

If you look at it from the point of view of how at least I think we can make life better for others—I am not

going to speak for others—I think this has been a do-nothing Congress, I really do.

I will make one other point before I talk about this dairy compact, and it is this: I am hearing so much discussion about testing third graders, and if they do not pass those tests, they do not go on to fourth grade. It is high-stakes testing, and by the way, I will have an amendment next year to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which makes sure we do not start testing at that young of an age.

Here is the point. Jonathan Kozol wrote a book "Savage Inequalities," in which he points out—and all of us know this about our States—some school districts have the best technology, a beautiful building, recruit the best teachers, have the best lab facilities, the best textbooks, and other schools have none of that. We do not do anything to change that.

I cite a second bit of evidence. We have all these reports and studies, irrefutable evidence that if you do not get it right for children by kindergarten, many of them come to school way behind and they fall further behind and then they drop out. This is critically important, and we invest hardly anything in affordable child care.

Third, we do not do anything about the concerns and circumstances of children's lives in New York City or Minneapolis-St. Paul or rural Aitkin County or rural anywhere or inner-suburban anywhere in the country before they go to school and when they go home, whether it be the violence in the homes, or the children who see the violence or the violence in the communities or children who come to school hungry or children who come to school with an abscess because they do not have dental care. It is not very easy for children to do well in school under these conditions. We do not do hardly anything to change any of those conditions for children's lives in America so that we can truly live up to the idea of equal opportunity for every child.

But we are going to flunk them. We are going to fail them. We are going to give them standardized tests and fail them. We already know which kids are going to do well and which kids are not. I would argue it is cowardly. I would argue it is a great political slogan, but it is cowardly. There is a difference between testing and standardized—we should have accountability, but there are different ways of testing.

If you cannot prove you are giving every child the same opportunity to achieve and do well in the test, what are you doing giving these kids these standardized tests and flunking them and not letting them go on to the next grade?

We have done so little when it comes to good health care for every citizen,

equal opportunity for every child, jobs at decent wages, and getting money out of politics and bringing people back into politics and speaking to the economic pain that exists among citizens in our country.

I start with agriculture. I am from an agricultural State. We have a failed farm policy that is driving family farmers off the land. We have not done a thing about the price crisis. We have had another bailout. We have some money for people so they can live to farm another day, but we have not changed a thing when it comes to farmers being able to get a decent price. We have not changed a thing when it comes to all the concentration of power in agriculture and in the media and in banking and in energy and in health insurance companies. We do not want to take on these big conglomerates. We do not want to talk about antitrust action.

So I argue that at the macrolevel this has been a do-nothing Congress. I think people in the country should hold us accountable. I say to the majority party, I think they should especially hold the majority party accountable because I think many of us have wanted to do much more. I think that is what the next election probably will be all about.

If people believe education and health care and opportunities for their children and jobs at decent wages are important issues to them—that is their center; that is the center of their lives—and they believe the Republican majority has not been willing to move on this agenda, and they feel as if there is a big disconnect between what is done here and the lives of people who we are suppose to represent, then I say, let the next election be a referendum. But I certainly wish we had done more.

A FAIR DEAL FOR MINNESOTA DAIRY FARMERS

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, final point. Some of us have been fighting for several days. We are out of leverage now. It is toward the end. But to be real clear about it, there was a time, when the Northeast Dairy Compact was brought to the floor, it was going to be part of the 1996 "Freedom to Farm." I think it is the "Freedom to Fail" bill. It was defeated.

But this compact, which was not in the farm bill that passed in either House, was then put into the conference committee. There is a reform issue on which we ought to work. There is one in which I am really interested. I do not think the conference committee, which has become the "third House" of the Congress, should be able to put an amendment, a provision, into conference that was not passed in either House; or, for that matter, take out a provision that was passed in both Houses.

So this got snuck in. It was part of a deal. It is how we got the "Freedom to Fail" bill, which has visited unbelievable economic pain and misery.

The argument that was made for the Freedom to Farm bill was it should all be in the market; there ought not be any safety net; so a family farmer should not have any real leverage for bargaining for a decent price. You name it. It was a great bill for grain companies, a great bill for the packers, but not a very good bill for family farmers. On the other hand, when it came to dairy, it was a different set of rules. And we were going to have these dairy compacts with administered prices.

Our dairy producers were just asking for a fair shot—dairy producers in States such as Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Let me explain. In my State, we have 8,700 dairy farms. We rank fifth in the Nation in milk production. These farms generate about \$1.2 billion for our farmers each year. The average size of the Minnesota dairy farm is about 60 cows—60 cows per farm. We are talking about family-size farm operations. We are going to lose many more because this compact, for all sorts of reasons so negative, impacts on our dairy farmers.

Mr. President, I am disgraced by the recent action by the majority party to include such harmful dairy provisions to the State of Minnesota as part of the final spending bill this year. The tactics used to include dairy as part of this bill is yet another illustration of the flagrant abuse of power. I and my fellow colleagues have fought hard and have been successful in defeating previous attempts to extend the Northeast Dairy Compact. We fought openly and fairly on the Senate floor, and now our successful efforts may be unjustly curtailed by clandestine negotiations by those who overtly misuse their power. This type of backroom negotiating style is clearly not the first time that harmful dairy provisions have been attached to the bill. We have been fighting such tactics since the authorization of the compact. In fact, the authorization of the Northeast Dairy Compact was inserted into the 1996 farm bill as part of a backroom deal. In 1996, I offered an amendment which successfully struck the compact out of the Senate bill and the compact was not in the farm bill initially passed by either House of Congress. Instead, it was later inserted during the bill's conference in the passage of the 1996 Freedom to Farm bill. Yet ironically, the 1996 Freedom to Farm bill was passed with the intent to remove government from the marketplace. Although, I adamantly opposed the bill, many viewed the 1996 farm bill as a way to decouple payments to family farmers. The thought at that time was that farmers should produce for the market and that Congress should eliminate a safety net for our farmers.

For some reason, we seemed to play by a different set of rules when it comes to dairy. We told our corn and soybean farmers that to succeed in the 21st century they should pay close attention to market signals, but at the same time we considered implementing compacts that drown out those signals for dairy farmers. And yet even among dairy producers, we scrutinized and only allowed one region of the country to provide a safety net for their farmers, while hurting farmers in other parts of the country.

Minnesota is not asking for special favors. All Minnesota dairy producers are asking for is a fair shot. I have spoken here before about the importance of family dairy farming to my State's economy. Minnesota's dairy industry is one of the cornerstones of the State's economy. We have 8,700 dairy farms in Minnesota, ranking fifth in the Nation's milk production. The milk production from Minnesota farms generates more than \$1.2 billion for our farmers each year. Yet, the average herd size of a Minnesota dairy farm is about 60 cows. Sixty cows per farm. So we are really talking about family operations in my State. Family businesses with a total of \$1.2 billion in sales a year, contributing to their small-town economies, trying to live a productive life on the land.

Let me read from a few farmers in my State of Minnesota who are hurting:

Eunice Biel, a Harmony, MN dairy farmer:

We currently milk 100 cows and just built a new milking parlor. We will be milking 120 cows next year. Our 22-year-old son would like to farm with us. But for us to do so he must buy out my husband's mother (his grandmother) because my husband and I who are 47-years-old, still are unable to take over the family farm. Our son must acquire a beginning farmer loan. But should he shoulder that debt if there is no stable milk price? We continuously are told by bankers, veterinarians and ag suppliers that we need to get bigger or we will not survive. At 120 cows, we can manage our herd and farm effectively and efficiently. We should not be forced to expand in order to survive.

Lynn Jostock, a Waseca, MN dairy farmer:

I have four children. My 11-year-old son Al helps my husband and I by doing chores. But it often is too much to expect of someone so young. For instance, one day our son came home from school. His father asked Al for some help driving the tractor to another farm about 3 miles away. Al was going to come home right afterward. But he wound up helping his father cut hay. Then he helped rake hay. Then he helped bale hay. My son did not return home until 9:30 p.m. He had not yet eaten supper. He had not yet done his schoolwork. We don't have other help. The price we get at the farm gate isn't enough to allow us to hire any farmhands or to help our community by providing more jobs. And it isn't fair to ask your 11-year-old son to work so hard to keep the family going. When will he burn out? How will he ever want to farm?

Les Kylo, a Goodhue dairy farmer: