

S. 1020, the Motor Vehicle Franchise Contract Arbitration Fairness Act would allow automobile dealers and manufacturers to opt out of binding arbitration clauses contained in their franchise contracts and pursue remedies in court. This is troubling because both parties are generally financially sophisticated and represented by attorneys when they enter into a franchise contract. S. 1020's enactment would allow these wealthy parties to opt out of arbitration, but would not allow customers of the dealers to opt out of arbitration. This position is difficult to justify. Indeed, in jurisdictions such as Alabama the allure of large jury verdicts serves as a powerful incentive for trial lawyers to use S. 1020 to argue against all arbitration. Jere Beasley, one of the Nation's most well-known trial lawyers, is making this exact argument in his firm's newsletter. While abandoning arbitration for dealers and manufacturers might increase attorneys fees, I have serious concerns as to whether such a selective abandonment for sophisticated dealers and manufacturers would increase the fairness of dispute resolution between these parties or would be fair to customers and employees of the dealers.

S. 121, the Civil Rights Procedures Protection Act, would prevent the enforcement of binding arbitration agreements in employment discrimination suits. However, when employment discrimination law suits cost between \$20,000 and \$50,000 to file, many employees cannot afford to litigate their claim in court. Arbitration provides a much more cost-effective means of dispute resolution for employees. Indeed, several studies have shown that in non-union employment arbitration employees prevail between 63 percent and 74 percent of their claims in arbitration, compared to 15 percent to 17 percent in court. Further, an American Bar Association study showed that consumers in general prevail in 80 percent of their claims in arbitration compared to 71 percent in court. Of course, if both employees and employers could avoid arbitration under S. 121. This would give employers the financial incentive to use the \$20,000 to \$50,000 cost of a trial as a barrier to employees suits. This does not appear to be good policy.

I note that the Chamber of Commerce, the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, and the National Arbitration Forum support arbitration and have raised concerns concerning the bills pending before the subcommittee. Their concerns must be explored more fully.

In sum, I believe that the arbitration process must be fair. When it is fairly applied, it can be an efficient, timely, and cost-effective means of dispute resolution. S. 1020 and S. 121 would create exceptions to arbitration that could expose businesses to large jury verdicts and effectively bar employees with

small claims from any dispute resolution. We must examine these bills and the policies behind them more thoroughly before acting upon any legislation.

DEPOSIT INSURANCE FAIRNESS AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY ACT

Mr. EDWARDS. Mr. President, I rise today in support of legislation Senator SANTORUM and I are introducing, the "Deposit Insurance Fairness and Economic Opportunity Act." This legislation would increase the amount of money that is available for banks and thrifts to lend in their communities.

Our financial services industry is incredibly strong, and the public benefits from this strength. Last year, this Senate passed comprehensive banking reform legislation that will increase consumer choice and make our financial institutions more competitive. Throughout the consideration of that measure, I steadfastly supported efforts to improve and increase credit availability to local communities. Though I believe we achieved this goal, I also said that we could and should do more. The legislation I introduce today with my colleague Senator SANTORUM does just that.

This measure would use the extra money that is in the Bank Insurance Fund (BIF) and the Savings Association Insurance Fund (SAIF), money that banks and thrifts have paid, to pay the interest on Financing Corporation (FICO) bonds. As a result, banks and thrifts will be able to use the money they would otherwise pay to FICO to increase lending in their communities. Right now, a financial institution of approximately \$200 million in domestic deposits could expect to pay roughly \$42,000 this year for its FICO obligation. If that \$42,000 obligation can be paid out of our excess money in the insurance funds, without compromising the safety and soundness of the funds, it will mean that institution has \$42,000 more to lend.

Right now, the BIF and the SAIF are beyond fully capitalized. They both contain millions of dollars more than required by federal law. That excess money is sitting here in Washington. The funds keep growing, and the money keeps sitting here. Now, the trouble with pots of money sitting in Washington is that quite often, the money just stays here in Washington and doesn't help our communities. This legislation would change that. By relieving some of the financial burden on our banks and thrifts through this common-sense legislation, we will be opening up opportunities for these institutions to put that money to good use.

The \$42,000 saved in my example could translate into hundreds of thousands of dollars more in available credit. This means money available to help

folks in eastern North Carolina rebuild their homes and lives after Hurricane Floyd. This means money to help revitalize inner-city neighborhoods. This means more money to help farmers who have suffered crop damage. And it means money to help more Americans know the joys of home ownership.

I would like to say a few words about safety and solvency of the insurance funds. These funds, the BIF and SAIF, are administered by the FDIC and are used to pay insured depositors in the event of a bank or thrift failure. I am pleased to say that in these booming economic times, both funds are well above their statutorily required level. Current law requires each fund to have 1.25 percent of all insured deposits. Right now, the BIF and SAIF are both well above this level, and the funds are growing.

In this legislation, we take great care to recognize the importance of protecting the insurance funds. In fact, we actually build in an additional cushion to help insure the solvency of the funds. Only if the funds are above 1.4 percent will excess money above that level be used to pay the FICO obligation. Moreover, we maintain the authority and ability of the FDIC to make necessary adjustments to the funds to protect their solvency, should the need arise.

Right now, the money is sitting in an account here in Washington. I think it can be put to better use in local communities. This legislation represents a method to help do just that, without sacrificing the safety and soundness protections that are currently in place.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNITION OF WEYERHAEUSER COMPANY ON 100TH ANNIVERSARY

• Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, my number one priority as I represent the people of Washington state in the U.S. Senate is protecting the Northwest way of life. An intricate part of that Washington way of life is preserving our healthy and productive forests and streams. With that goal in mind, I am delighted to recognize the Centennial Anniversary of the Weyerhaeuser Company—an organization whose dedication to sustainable forestry has enriched Washington state with both a vibrant timber industry and a tradition of preservation to keep our forests healthy for generations to come.

In 1900, Frederick Weyerhaeuser and fifteen partners began the company that would revolutionize the timber industry. They purchased 900,000 acres of Washington forest land from the Northern Pacific Railway and began the Weyerhaeuser Company. It quickly grew to become one of the most vibrant and remarkable companies, not only in Washington state, but around the world.

The Weyerhaeuser Company had a vision for sustainable and environmentally responsible forest management before "green" became fashionable. In 1904, General Manager George Long sponsored a study to look at the impacts of growing timber as a crop—replenishing the resource with every harvest. Under Long's leadership, Weyerhaeuser pioneered many of the conservation, fire protection and reforestation techniques used in forest management today.

I am proud of and thankful for the great legacy that Weyerhaeuser has given to Washington—the Evergreen State. I hope that with balanced policies and responsible stewardship, Weyerhaeuser will continue to prosper in the next century. ●

SENATOR MIKULSKI'S TRIP TO NORTHERN IRELAND

● Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, Senator MIKULSKI recently returned from a visit to Northern Ireland, where she held productive discussions with both Catholics and Protestants who are working together for community and economic development. As columnist Thomas Oliphant wrote in a perceptive column on March 19 in the *Boston Globe*, Senator MIKULSKI's trip, and her work for grassroots development and cooperation in these communities, are important both symbolically and practically.

As all of us who share the dream of a permanent and lasting peace are aware, much remains to be done to carry out the peace process. I commend Senator MIKULSKI for her initiative and leadership on this issue, and I ask that Mr. Oliphant's column about her trip may be printed in the RECORD.

The column follows:

[From the *Boston Globe*, Mar. 19, 2000]

NEW OPTIMISM OUT OF ULSTER

(By Thomas Oliphant)

The brain connected to the freshest pair of eyes to look into Northern Ireland in some time was somewhat surprised by two things.

The first observation by Senator Barbara Mikulski was that the six counties' political leaders are themselves surprised at their inability to get out of the stalemate-ditches they keep driving into.

The second was that during an intensive visit framed around what's really exciting in the North these days—cross-community, practical efforts by Protestants and Catholics to get basic things done together—it was not until she got to the seat of government at Stormont that she heard the word "de-commissioning," the absurd euphemism that refers to the turning in of weapons by paramilitary organizations.

What this shows is merely how the pull of the violent, unjust sectarian past blocks a settlement that the people want. It has been going on for the two years since the U.S.-brokered Good Friday Agreement put all the building blocks for reconciliation except local political will into place.

"But," says the Maryland senator, "even though the peace process appears to be on

hold, there is another informal but absolutely crucial peace process going on at the community and neighborhood level."

Mikulski was referring to the overwhelming majority's intense desire to put the troubles in their past. That desire is creating a "social glue" that has enormous potential for Northern Ireland's long-range evolution.

By far the most important example exists under the umbrella of the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust. Beneath this umbrella exists all manner of activities that involve Catholics and Protestants informally in specific tasks. There are groups that include former prisoners as well as families of the victims of violence and their survivors; organizations working on environmental issues as well as community centers and playgrounds; unions and microeconomic development activists; work on mental health issues as well as children's health problems. As Mikulski notes, it is all specific and local—and loaded with implications.

The best symbol, in the North Belfast Community Development Council, is the cellular phones in use during the Protestant marching season. Rumors are chased down, Catholics hear that a particular march will halt at a pre-designated spot without any triumphalist chanting and should thus be of no major concern, and armed with that assurance, keep their own hotheads in check.

A year ago, when some 50 of the trust's most active female activists met with U.S. supporters, they were so fresh to their cause and nervous about the impact that the names of the participants were kept private. Mikulski arranged a meeting for them with women in the U.S. Senate, most of whom came to politics via similar routes of local activism.

Mikulski's involvement at this delicate stage is important both because of what she has done and who she is. She got into her business because of her fight against a highway. Years later she remains a grass-roots political leader, able to understand the byzantine nature of Northern Ireland's street-level culture. And she is a powerful Democratic senator on the Appropriations Committee who is comfortable working across party lines.

Mikulski notes that the Fund for Ireland, the basic aid network to which the U.S. government commits \$20 million, is an excellent operation that has been especially useful in economic development and other brick and mortar activities. But she also suggests that the time has come to "take a fresh look at the U.S. role to think about supporting this cross-communal activity."

She is also blunt about looking at the trust's activities and potential, official U.S. support without blinders. "Their idea, what makes them so worthwhile," she said, "is their very careful focus on specific needs and projects. This is not some gooshy-poo, Irish sensitivity training where everybody gets in a hot tub and bonds. It's serious work. The fund has done a very good job, but I think we're now at a different place."

What she says about U.S. policy also should spark new thinking about private American support for Ireland. Given the roaring condition of the Irish Republic's economy, traditional charity and philanthropy appears to be less important than the cutting-edge activism across sectarian lines of the trust's participants.

They cannot be a substitute for the appalling failure of politicians in the North to transcend the past. But they do demonstrate how much of a difference individuals can make when they band together.

There now exist networks of community organizations that personify the broader refusal to regress, and they need all the support they can get. But they can't fill the vacuum without their so-called leaders. "It's like when you put your VCR on pause," said Mikulski. "It holds for a while, but eventually the old tape starts playing again." ●

RETIREMENT OF MR. BRUCE AKERS

● Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I rise today to extend my congratulations to Mr. Bruce Akers on the occasion of his retirement as senior vice president for Civic Affairs at KeyBank in Cleveland, OH. Bruce's accomplishments are not limited to his 40 years of service in the banking industry, but extend to the difference he has made in the lives of countless citizens. His decades of leadership and generosity have helped make Cleveland the great city it is today.

Bruce has served the public at many levels—in government, the private sector, and in civic organizations. From 1975 to 1977, he served as executive secretary to Cleveland Mayor Ralph Perk. Today Bruce continues to show his dedication to civic responsibility and action in local government through his service as mayor of Pepper Pike, OH.

Bruce is also committed to a number of Cleveland's cultural, educational, charitable and civic institutions including service as chairman of the Key Foundation, a trustee of the Cleveland Council on World Affairs and president of the Cleveland Opera. I don't believe I will ever forget Bruce's "cameo" appearance in the Cleveland Opera's rendition of *Aida* in 1984. He gave a tremendous performance that is still talked about to this day.

Bruce's community commitment also extends to service as a trustee of the Citizens League Research Institute, membership on the Executive, Central, and Policy Committee's of the Cuyahoga County Republican Party, membership on the Advisory Council of the Alzheimer's Association, membership on the Cleveland Leadership Prayer Breakfast Steering Committee, and chairman of Cleveland's Promise, the local branch of America's Promise which strives to create an environment for a better future.

Bruce's belief in volunteerism was recently celebrated in "Cleveland Live," a news and information "on-line" publication serving the Cleveland community, where he shared his philosophy on volunteering. Bruce stated, "volunteering is a four-way win: a win for the organization benefitting from the volunteers' services; a win for the volunteers who gain new perspectives and feel self-fulfilled; a win for the employer because the employee-volunteer is a better-rounded employee; and a win for the community whose quality of life is improved, thanks to effective, dedicated volunteers." I could not agree more with Bruce's assessment.