TRANSPORTATION APPROPRIATIONS AND LONG-HAUL TRUCKERS

Mr. WELLSTONE. Madam President, just in the time we have remaining, I really would like for us to move forward on this legislation and, indeed, on other legislation that is important to people's lives.

I want to speak to three different questions.

First of all, on the Murray amendment—and presumably we will have more time for debate; I do not know whether or not we have a filibuster that is going to be sustained or whether or not there is going to be some agreement, but I want to thank Senator MURRAY for her good work.

I tell you, people in Minnesota, as we look at I-35 coming from the south, are interested in safe drivers and safe truckers, not just about safety—all of truckdrivers, not just about Teamsters, not just about safety—above and beyond all that happened in Seattle I would not defend—not all of it, by any means, but what I will tell you is that there are an awful lot of people in our country and throughout the world who are interested in very important justice questions. They are not arguing that we are in a national economy alone. They are not arguing that we ought to put up walls on the borders. But they are arguing, if we are going to have a new global economy and we are in an international time, then above and beyond it working for large financial institutions and multinational corporations; it ought to work for working people; it ought to work for human rights; it ought to work for consumer protection; it ought to work for small producers; and it ought to work for the environment.

Frankly, I think that is part of what is being debated in this Chamber. We have a very, what I would call incremental, pragmatic amendment, which Senator MURRAY has done an admirable job of defending. I am amazed other Senators believe this goes too far by way of assuring basic safety on our highways, I think we need to defend Senator MURRAY's effort.

Above and beyond that, I have some real questions about whether or not all of this will be enforced and then properly certified. Then above and beyond that, I have some real questions about these trade agreements and the impact they have on whether or not we will have living-wage jobs for the people in our country to enable people to earn a decent standard of living so they can support their families.

And above and beyond all that, eventually, I am telling you—it may not be this year; it may be 5 years from now; it may be 10 years from now—we are going to design some new rules for this international economy, so that rather than driving environmental standards down, or wages down, with a complete lack of respect for human rights, we can have the kind of standards that lift up people's lives.

A PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

Mr. WELLSTONE. Madam President, since we are, for the moment, stalemated here, I rise to express my strong commitment to our moving forward on a prescription drug benefit. Obviously, we will not be able to do it now, but people in the country are concerned about prescription drug benefits within the VA. I asked him several times whether or not he felt that their global budget and the discount they insist on has enabled them...
Mr. WELLSTONE. Madam President, today I am going to introduce legislation, the Victims Economic Security and Safety Act, with Senator Murray—she probably will not be able to be at the press conference because she is doing such an admirable job of standing up for victims of sexual assault—Senator Schumer and Senator Dodd; and Representatives Carolyn Maloney and Lucille Roybal-Allard on the House side.

Basically, this legislation deals with what is a huge problem; that is to say, estimates are that as many as 50 percent of the victims of domestic violence have lost jobs in part due to their struggle. The same thing holds true for victims of sexual assault.

The legislation addresses three or four issues. No. 1, it would extend emergency leave for those women—sometimes men, almost always women—who are having to deal with the battering and with the violence, be it in the home, be it sexual assault, be it stalking. It will allow them to take some time off from work to see a lawyer, to see a doctor, to do what they need to do.

No. 2, it would extend unemployment compensation to people who are forced to leave their jobs in the interest of providing for their own safety and their children’s safety. Amazingly, this happens in about 50 percent of the cases. Quite often for these women, the man—be it the former husband, a stalker, somebody who has assaulted them sexually—will come to their workplace and constantly harass them. And in order to be safe, in order sometimes literally to save their lives, in order for their children to be safe, they then have to leave. We want to, with documentation, be able to provide some unemployment compensation.

No. 3, it would prohibit discrimination against victims of domestic and sexual assault. This is critically important. What happens is the employer—and some of the employers are great—sometimes says: This is creating a lot of trouble. Therefore, we fire you.

That is the last thing in the world you want to do. It also provides protection from insurance company discrimination. There is no reason why women should be battered again by an insurance company that says: We understand that this guy has come to work, is threatening you, that you have this problem. We don’t think you are a good bet for health insurance.

Finally, it provides tax credits to companies that will provide the programs and the help.

The PRESIDENT OFFICER. The Senator’s time has expired.

The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that morning business be extended for another 10 minutes.

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

STALKING AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr. REID. Madam President, before the Senator from Minnesota leaves the floor, I wish to say I was not able to hear all of his statement but most of it. He mentioned what we need around here is political courage. That is something that is not lacking in the service of the Senator from Minnesota.

I appreciate his legislation regarding stalking and domestic violence. Stalking is a very evil thing, for lack of a better way to put it. I can’t imagine how difficult it is for people who are stalked.

Senator Ensign and I had the misfortune of having somebody who was stalking us. It was very serious. He felt he had been aggrieved in Mexico and that we should do something about it. Of course, there was nothing we could do about it. It became a very big burden on my staff. He wouldn’t leave my office. Finally, in an effort to get attention, rather than shoot one of my staff members or me, he shot himself in front of my office. He survived the gunshot wound and proceeded to continue to harass us. He was convicted and sent to prison. I only say that because if people of our stature and in the public eye can be stalked, how can’t we imagine people who don’t have the U.S. marshals and other people protecting them. So we need to do more. It is a very insidious thing. We need to do a better job of training law enforcement, although they are trained much better than they were regarding domestic violence. We need to have judges who better understand domestic violence.

I am anxious to look at the Senator’s legislation. It sounds as if it is heading toward the correct destination. We need to focus more attention on this national problem.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Madam President, I thank my colleague from Nevada and tell him that, as we move forward, we have put together model programs. Again, unfortunately, what a bitter irony that for too many of these women—part of what this is all about is control. They have had the courage to come out of the home because the home is very dangerous for them and very dangerous for their children. Still, about every 15 seconds a woman is battered in the United States. Maybe this guy will come to work—and basically he doesn’t want her to be working, so that is part of her independence. He will stalk her and make threats. Then all too often the employer will basically let her go, saying it is too much trouble. Then where is she? Quite often, she is forced back into a horrible situation. In about 50 percent of the cases, it happens where the guy or woman comes to work and the threats are made.

We are saying there has to be a way we can provide additional help and support. So in a number of cases, I am anxious to look at the Senator’s legislation.