

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 trucks and safe highways. They are interested in their own safety. Frankly, I think it is terribly important that all of us support Senator MURRAY's amendment.

For my own part, I also want to give a lot of credit to what Congressman SABO from our State of Minnesota has done on the House side. He basically has said, we are not going to have the funding to grant the permits because there is just simply no way that right now we are going to be able to have any assurance that the safety standards are going to be there.

I want to make one point that perhaps was brought up yesterday in the debate but which I think is really important as well. As a Senator, I do not really make any apology for also being concerned about—above and beyond safety—the impact this is going to have on jobs in our country, frankly, the impact of NAFTA on jobs in our country.

In particular, I think the very powerful implications of all this are as we see more and more subcontractors crossing the border at maquilas, it is far better, from the point of view of people in Minnesota, that the subcontractors to our auto plants or to other parts of our economy are located in the United States. With a lot of the transportation being done by American trucks, that is what happens.

The Bush administration is pushing this full force, and they are not even interested in respect for the safety standards.

The other thing that is going to happen is, you are going to have more and more subcontractors basically located in Mexico because Mexican trucks take whatever is produced there right to wherever it needs to go in the United States, thus eliminating a lot of other jobs.

So I think this is not just about truckdrivers, not just about Teamsters, not just about safety—all of which I think is very important—I think it is also about living-wage jobs

in our own country. It is also about our economy. Frankly, in some ways, though I support the Murray amendment, I really appreciate Mr. SABO's effort. And we will see what happens on the floor of the Senate, whether or not we will have an amendment similar to Mr. SABO's amendment in this Chamber.

But I think, at the very minimum, we have to insist on the safety standards, and, at a maximum, eventually we are also going to have to have yet more honest discussion about this new global economy and where people fit into it. All that happened in Italy and 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 raising 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 certainly interested in the politics that speak to the center of their lives.

I want to see us eventually pass a bill that calls for health security for all citizens. Before we do that, we ought to have a decent prescription drug benefit. I recommend to my colleagues a Sunday story in the New York Times, front-page story by Robert Perrin. I forget the name of the coauthor; I apologize.

The gist of the piece was that it is going to be very difficult, within the \$300 billion allowance over the next 10 years because of the tax cuts, to have a benefit that is going to work for a lot of elderly people. If the premiums are too high and the copays are too high and the deductibles are too high, many people can't afford it. Quite to the contrary of the stereotype of greedy geezers traveling all over the country playing at the most swank golf courses, the income profile of elderly people is not high at all. Disproportionately, it is really low- and moderate-income people.

So, A, people will not be able to afford the benefit. And then, B, if we don't deal with the catastrophic expenses—that is to say, after \$2,000 a year, people should not be paying any more additional expenses—then it is going to be a proposal or a piece of legislation that is going to invite mutiny. People are going to say: We thought when you campaigned that you made a commitment to us. We thought you made a commitment to affordable prescription drugs. But you are not willing to do it.

I have introduced a piece of legislation called MEDS. At a very minimum, we are going to have to understand \$300 billion over 10 years will not do the job. We have to understand that this tax cut that has boxed us all in is a huge mistake. We are going to have to be intellectually honest with the people in the country, and we are going to have to find our courage. Frankly, I predict we will revisit—the sooner, the better—this tax cut proposal. It is too much Robin Hood in reverse, too much going to the very top of the population. And now we are without the revenue and the resources to do well for people with an affordable prescription drug. "Affordable," that is what everyone campaigned on.

In addition, yesterday Senator ROCKEFELLER, chairing the Veterans' Affairs Committee, had Secretary Principi come in. He is a good man. I think he cares deeply about veterans. He was talking 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