

wage without even debate, but the Republicans now think this is unacceptable; that we cannot give a minimum wage increase without lording billions of dollars in tax breaks on businesses. For goodness' sake, give these people—400,000 of them in Illinois—an increase in the minimum wage of at least 50 cents an hour for the next 2 years. That bill has not passed, and the Republican Congress has had ample opportunity to address it.

We believe on the Democratic side we need tax cuts; use the surplus for tax cuts for families for the deductibility of college education expenses. That is a concern I hear from families as soon as the baby is born. How are we going to pay for this kid's education? When you see the cost of education going up over a 20-year period of time, from the time that child was born until they will be in school—it goes up 200 percent, 400 percent—people ask: How can we possibly do this?

On the Democratic side, we want to give the families deductibility of tuition and fees to help them pay for college. The Republicans oppose it. We support it. That is the difference. When we offered it, they stopped us.

Also, we are talking about education funds to improve our Nation's schools, to reduce class size. This does not take a Ph.D. in education to understand. If you were a teacher, would you rather walk in on the first day and see a classroom with 30 kids or 15 kids? Are you more likely able to help a struggling student if there are 15 children in the classroom or 30? It is not rocket science. It does not take a Ph.D.

We on the Democratic side believe reducing class size is the first step to helping kids from falling behind and helping those better students get a little more attention.

We also believe we ought to be supporting afterschool programs for students. Letting kids go now at 3 o'clock is just a gamble because very few of them have parents at home. They do not have Ozzie and Harriet waiting with cookies and milk anymore. They are by themselves.

Some do pretty well, but a lot of them do not. We think afterschool programs, supervised, so kids have a chance to maybe catch up on their school subjects, maybe appreciate the arts a little more, maybe become better on a computer, or even just play some basketball, makes some sense as long as there is supervision. We support afterschool programs and fought the Republicans every step of the way trying to put this valuable money back into education.

We also believe in commonsense gun safety legislation. The No. 1 story in 1999 in the news was the Columbine tragedy. What has America done to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals? Congress has done nothing. Nothing.

The National Rifle Association and its leader, "Mr. Moses," have decided we are not going to do anything to

keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals, and that is criminal. The Republican-led Congress should be held accountable for that.

If you have an aging parent or grandparent, the Democrats believe you should have a tax break to help pay for their care.

How many folks and families do you know worried about that aging parent and how their last years are going to be? They need a helping hand. We support it, as we support increased targeted tax cuts to help people pay for day care, so kids can be left in a healthy, safe environment and families can afford to pay for it. Stay-at-home moms, who sacrifice for their kids, should get a tax break, too. They are making a sacrifice that will enhance that child's future. We should invest in them as well.

When it comes to these myriad issues I have just given you, these are the issues with which working families, middle-income families, and single people as well can identify. Yet we have had no help whatsoever on the Republican side of the aisle. The Republican Congress has failed to address the basic issues of education and health care, taxes that are reduced and targeted tax cuts and credits for families who really need them, prescription drug coverage under Medicare, and a Patients' Bill of Rights.

We came to this Congress with all kinds of lofty goals. We are leaving now, unfortunately, with appropriations bills as large as the Washington, DC, telephone book, scarcely read, that serve too many special interests and too few families across this country.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. DURBIN. I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:30 p.m. having arrived, the Senate will stand in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:33 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:13 p.m.; whereupon, the Senate reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. AL-LARD).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington is recognized.

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for not more than 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

PRIVACY LEGISLATION

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, we live in a period of unprecedented prosperity and opportunity.

We can go more places than ever before. We are living longer and healthier lives than ever before. We are employed in jobs today that were unthinkable just a few years ago.

Our lives have changed dramatically because of computers, the Internet and technology.

But with all the good that comes with technology, there are elements that cause us concern. One such concern that has captured our attention is the issue of privacy.

As more of us use the Internet to shop and conduct business, more of our personal information is being spread throughout the web. That information, in many instances, is used properly and in a way that is good for consumers. But as in any field, there are those who abuse the public trust by using this personal information in unethical ways.

Because of concerns about consumer privacy, the Senate has considered how we might do better at protecting consumers while not unwittingly turning off the Internet engine that is such a key part of the economic prosperity we currently enjoy.

The Senate Commerce Committee recently held its third hearing this year on the privacy of information gathered from consumers who use the Internet. Since the Federal Trade Commission recommended legislation in this area earlier this session, I, and I believe a substantial number of my colleagues, have come to agree that we must act on this issue in the not-too-distant-future.

I have come to believe that Federal legislation is needed to protect consumers. I don't think that the current voluntary privacy policies are sufficient. Consumers who use the Internet should be given more information about what data is being gathered about them, and they should be given greater control over how this data is used.

I have also come to believe that Federal legislation is needed to protect and improve Internet commerce which, of course, benefits consumers and businesses alike. Not only will the assurance of adequate, enforceable privacy standards increase consumers' comfort with on-line transactions, but the possibility of States acting to protect consumers in the absence of a Federal law threatens to create a patchwork of conflicting privacy mandates that could be hard to apply to a medium that does not recognize State borders.

Though I know that I support Federal legislation regarding the on-line collection and use of consumer information, I confess to not knowing at this time exactly what should be legislated. At the last hearing in the Senate Commerce Committee we considered three different bills, and additional, and more varied, bills have been introduced in the House of Representatives. I don't know which of these approaches or combination of approaches will best protect consumers without making on-

line transactions overly burdensome. On-line merchants, providers of both goods and services, have touted the benefits to consumers of using the Internet to gather information that facilitates targeted marketing. This could very well be the case but I want to know that consumers are informed of and agree with these marketing practices.

Determining more specifically what consumers want from privacy legislation is something that I hope we can do in the next session of Congress.

While much, through certainly not all, of the discussion in Congress about privacy is focused on the issue of the on-line collection and use of consumer information, I think it is also important that Congress remain cognizant of the fact that "privacy" as it relates to the Internet is a far broader and more complex issue. For all of its salutary effects, the ease with which the Internet allows for the compilation and sharing of private information gathered in the physical world, information about financial transactions, medical histories, reading habits, eating habits, sleeping habits, information about almost every aspect of one's life raises legitimate concerns that Congress should and will continue to address.

The privacy of medical information, which can be intensely personal, is one such issue about which Congress must remain vigilant. Improved technology along with changes in health care delivery, billing systems, information gathering and genetic testing all increase the number of people who have access to health records. Americans should know that personally identifiable health information is private and they should have control over who has access to it. At the same time our challenge is to find a way to balance legitimate needs for health care information—for example, medical research—and individual privacy rights.

Future Congresses will adopt additional health care reforms. We clearly need to improve our Nation's health care system. Although most Americans are satisfied with their health care, most Americans are also concerned about those in our country who have inadequate health care and no hope of improving their situation. I support reforms that improve access to quality health care for those who have none, that keep intact our wonderful system of hospitals and clinics in all areas of our country and that provide people with meaningful choices.

When future Congresses address this area, one issue I will watch most carefully is the amount of health care information that is provided to the Government, and how this information is used. We must be careful not to adopt measures that give Government regulators the ability to peek into people's private medical records. A few years ago, my home State of Washington embarked on several health care reforms. Most of these reforms were in the wrong direction. Our legislature adopt-

ed reforms that put the government in charge of health care decisions for people and gave a government commission the ability to cancel private health insurance coverage in our state.

I found both of those moves bothersome, but our legislature didn't stop at just controlling health care decisions for our citizens. No, our legislature took one additional chilling step. It decided that if the government was providing health care, as well as dictating which private health plans could remain in business, the government should have access to personal, private medical records.

That is going way too far, and fortunately, the good people of Washington made sure that radical change was not placed into the law.

Over the next year, I am convinced that Congress will adopt meaningful health care reforms that help people, but as we do that, I must constantly advise my colleagues to follow the "do no harm" rules of medicine and not fall prey to those who believe that government-run health care, along with all that it brings, is the right solution to this challenge.

No matter the type of information in question—consumer or medical—Americans have the right to a reasonable expectation of privacy. Thoughtful legislative action is needed at the federal level to address the legitimate concerns many Americans currently have in this regard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for 10 minutes as in morning business.

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

THE UNITED STATES AND NATO

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, there has been an effort in recent days to score partisan political points by misrepresenting Governor Bush's commitment to NATO and southeast Europe. Unfortunately, some of my Senate colleagues have been involved in this effort.

No one in the Senate has been more involved in our policy toward southeast Europe, and no one cares more than I do about that part of the world. I have traveled to the region three times this year—on a factfinding mission, to participate in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and to participate in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. I have been to Kosovo twice and visited with troops.

I have been involved in efforts to bring about alternative leadership in Serbia—something that has finally happened. I have been a leader on the Stability Pact with the belief that its successful implementation is crucial to the long-term stability, prosperity, and peace in the region. I have also constantly watched the situation in Kosovo, outraged at the ongoing ethnic cleansing going on there today.

With this background and involvement, I can say definitely that Governor Bush understands the importance of the region to our national security interests.

I think it is important that we set the record straight. Governor Bush has said that he would systematically review our military commitments internationally upon his inauguration. He will look at them across the world. This will include a review of our deployments in the Balkans. He has said that he will work with our allies to develop a strategy to remove our troops from the region when it is possible to do so without threatening peace and stability in the region or our relationship with our European allies. He understands the important relationship we have with our NATO allies.

There never was and never will be any statement by Governor Bush or, if he is elected, President Bush, regarding a reduced commitment to NATO. He understands how important NATO is.

Vice President GORE has joined Governor Bush in saying that we should pull out of the Balkans when we are no longer needed.

Governor Bush is committed to political stability and security in the Balkans. He emphasized this point repeatedly—that stability in southeast Europe is vital to Europe and hence to the U.S. In other words, we have strategic interests in southeast Europe, which are important to Europe and to the security of the U.S. and, for that matter, peace in the world. So Governor Bush is committed to political stability.

Without the Governor's involvement in the Byrd-Warner debate on our troop commitment to Kosovo, the next President would be facing a July 1 deadline to decide whether to stay or go. Governor Bush stood up and was counted at the time of the Byrd-Warner discussion in the Senate. He demonstrated leadership at a time when leaders from both parties were considering having the U.S. unilaterally withdraw from a NATO commitment. That was a very important thing that he did at that time, because if he had not stood up and said he thought it was overreach, we would have lost that on the floor of the Senate and would have done irreparable damage to our relationship with NATO.

We must remember that the Clinton-Gore administration promised the American people in 1995 that our troops would not be in Bosnia for longer than a year. That promise was never kept. Rather than set a misguided deadline, Governor Bush is simply saying we should not, and will not, be in the Balkans forever. Nothing more.

Governor Bush has said time and again that he would actively consult our European allies in the formation and implementation of our policies in NATO and in southeast Europe. I hope Lord Robertson, who heads up NATO, understands that. I made that very clear when I was at the NATO Assembly in Budapest. We understand how