will actually reduce the availability of new positions.

Congress has spent the better part of 2 years developing and refining welfare reform legislation. All of the major bills include tough work participation programs. And most would require the States to have 50 percent of their welfare recipients off of the rolls in the next 6 years. Even if another 15 to 20 percent are granted hardship exceptions, the States will still be hard pressed to find enough jobs to meet the strict work requirements imposed by this legislation.

In my State of Rhode Island, approximately 20,000 families are now on public assistance. If 20 percent of these families are exempt from the work requirement, that leaves 16,000 families who must find their way off of welfare in the next 6 years. Even if Rhode Island must find jobs for only half of these families, we are talking about 8,000 entry-level jobs. Given the stagnant economy within my State, that could prove a very difficult requirement to meet.

Despite the fact that these new workers will undergo intensive job training and must also learn important life skills, such as being punctual for work, most former welfare recipients will qualify for no more than entry-level positions. While there may be a few exceptions, most will have to prove themselves before they will be given greater opportunities in the workplace.

To retain some incentive for employers to hire and train welfare recipients, I believe a strong and effective training wage at the current minimum of $4.25 per hour should be included in H.R. 3448.

Despite my concern that the Bond amendment contained a 6-month training wage, which in my view is too long, I voted for it. In contrast, the Kennedy alternative would have provided only a 30-day training wage, limited to those under 20 years of age. This provision would not have given employers the needed incentive to take a chance on hiring a welfare recipient.

As passed by the Senate, the training wage included in H.R. 3448 has a duration of 3 months, but unfortunately is limited to those under 20 years old. I would have preferred no age limitation on the provision to ensure its full utility in moving people from welfare to work.

Third, in my view, small businesses should have some form of exemption from the minimum wage increases proposed in H.R. 3448. Very few employers who own small businesses qualify for the current exemption, which is flawed and unworkable.

For this reason, I voted for the Bond amendment. This amendment would have enabled employers with gross incomes of less than $500,000 to continue paying the current minimum wage of $4.25 per hour, while larger businesses would have been required to comply with the increase.

Regrettably, as approved by the Senate, the final version of H.R. 3448 contained no change in current law with respect to the treatment of small businesses. And hurting America's small businesses, Mr. President, places big hurdles on the road to economic recovery.

In summary, I am hopeful that some of these problems can be reviewed and corrected before H.R. 3448 becomes law.

RIGHT TO WORK FOR LESS

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today the Senate will take up the Right to Work Act. This legislation hurts union members by giving nonmembers a free ride to get union-negotiated benefits without contributing their fair share—or any money at all—to defray the costs. By repealing parts of the National Labor Relations Act and the Railway Labor Act which give each State the right to determine whether union security agreements should be permissible in that State, this bill would make such agreements unlawful in all States. Mr. President, this is bad public policy.

Currently, the National Labor Relations Act allows States to prohibit union security clauses but does not preempt State law if a State chooses to allow such agreements. That permits employers and unions to agree, if they wish, that employees will be required to give financial support to the union. My State of Massachusetts has chosen to permit such agreements, and workers are the beneficiaries. What the workers in my State of Massachusetts get from this is higher wages, greater benefits which protect them and their families, and a higher standard of living.

This bill unfairly tilts the playing field in favor of employers and against labor unions. Under Federal law, the union is responsible for representing employees in the bargaining unit even if they pay nothing toward the union's expenses. Under right-to-work legislation, these employees get union-negotiated higher wages and benefits as well as union representation during grievance proceedings without contributing a dime. Giving nonmembers a free ride to get union-negotiated benefits without contributing to defray the costs is unfair, and in the long run will weaken the ability of unions to obtain favorable wages and benefits for all workers in a unionized company.

Republicans are insisting on preempting State law despite the fact that only 21 States have seen fit to enact right-to-work laws since they were deemed lawful, 18 of these prior to 1959. And just last year legislatures in six States, Colorado, Maryland, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Oklahoma, defeated statewide right-to-work bills. It is noteworthy that three of these are Republican-controlled legislatures.

Mr. President, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle want to force their sense of judgment and propriety on my State of Massachusetts and take away a free choice that my State ought to have and has always had. Simply speaking, if a State does not want right-to-work laws then these laws should not be imposed on it because some people here in the Senate more greatly value their own judgment on this issue than they do the judgment of the people of Massachusetts. I might point out that most of the Senators voting to do this voted against raising the minimum wage yesterday. This goes too far, Mr. President.

The Republicans' decision to couple the right-to-work bill—which has never been subject to hearings or markup—with the TEAM Act underscores their true disinterest in helping working Americans. And as they decry the role of big government in the lives of working Americans, the Republicans go ahead and tell the people of Massachusetts that they know better, that they know what the people of Lowell or Lawrence or Springfield or Boston or Hyannis want.

Right-to-work laws have not brought economic bonanzas to States that have adopted them. Not 1 of the 21 right-to-work States has a pay level above the national average and not 1 ranks in the top 15 States for annual workers' pay. This bill ought to be called the right-to-work-for-less bill.

Union security clauses are negotiated by a democratically elected union and the employer. Coming on the heels of Independence Day, opposing this bill is the right thing to do for the American worker, and I urge my colleagues to vote against this bill.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1997

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 11:30 a.m. having arrived, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. 1745, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1745) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1997 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe personnel strengths for such fiscal year for the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

The Senate resumed consideration of the bill.

Mr. THURMOND addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. FRIST). The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. THURMOND. Mr. President, the Senate has completed many long hours of debate on S. 1745, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1997.

I would like to thank the distinguished ranking member of the Committee on Armed Services, my good