

through. All we are asking, as Senators KENNEDY and WELLSTONE have said, is that we have an opportunity to have the motions to instruct, and the minority leader's plan would provide that. That is the reason for my objection. I thank the Chair and the majority leader for the opportunity to comment.

MEASURE READ THE FIRST  
TIME—H.R. 3081

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I understand that H.R. 3081 is at the desk. I ask for its first reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3081) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to provide tax benefits for small businesses, to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 to increase the minimum wage, and for other purposes.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I now ask for its second reading and object to my own request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I did want to propound a unanimous consent request with regard to how to proceed on the crop insurance legislation, which is the legislation that is next in order for consideration. I understand there have been discussions throughout the day to work out an agreement on that. I wish to make sure Senator DASCHLE has had a chance to personally review it.

After consultation with the Democratic leader, I believe we are very close to getting an agreement. We believe we can work this out and be able to proceed this afternoon. Based on that assurance, I will withhold that request at this time. I would like for us to continue to work and see if we can get it worked out as soon as possible so we can begin to have debate and go forward with amendments. We are thinking in terms of maybe six or so amendments and then final passage. We will work on that more and will return to that shortly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I will take a moment at this time to review where we are on the question of the increase in the minimum wage. We have been trying to get, over the period of the last 2 years, a vote on a 2-year increase in the minimum wage—50 cents this year and 50 cents next year—for the 1 million Americans who are at the lowest level of the economic ladder.

These men and women are the ones working as aides for schoolteachers in our schools. They are working in nursing homes taking care of millions of our senior citizens in those conditions. These are the people who clean out the buildings at night so American businesses can continue to function effec-

tively over the course of this extraordinary expansion. But as we see this extraordinary expansion in terms of our American economy, the group that has not benefited is the one at the lowest end of the economic ladder. These are men and women playing by the rules and working hard. They have not been able to see the appropriate kind of increases in the minimum wage.

If the minimum wage today were to have the same purchasing power it had in 1968, it would be \$7.50 an hour. This whole group of Americans have not only not participated in the expansion of the American economy, they have fallen further and further behind.

That is why we believe we ought to have an opportunity to address this issue on the floor of the Senate, and do it in a timely way.

There are questions about what the Senate is doing and how busy the Senate is. We are prepared to have a very short time limit. Every Member of this body knows what this issue is about. I think every Member of this body has voted effectively on the question of the minimum wage over a period of time. It is a rather simple, basic, and fundamental issue. It is an issue of fairness to millions of Americans. It is an issue involving women because close to 70 percent of all of the minimum-wage workers are women. It is an issue of civil rights because the majority of the workers who get the minimum wage are men and women of color. It is a children's issue because the majority of women who are receiving the minimum wage have children.

This has enormous implications in terms of how these children are going to grow up, what kind of home they are going to be in, and how much time their parents are going to have in terms of spending quality time with these children when they are working one or two, and in some instances three different minimum-wage jobs.

It is ultimately and finally a fairness issue where the overwhelming majority of Americans believe, and believe very strongly, I think, that men and women who work 40 hours a week for 52 weeks a year ought not live in poverty in the United States of America.

That is what this issue is basically all about, and we in the Senate are being denied the opportunity to vote on that issue. That is what is offensive.

This body was prepared to vote on a pay increase of \$4,600 to be implemented immediately. They were prepared to go ahead on that. They are not prepared to delay that. But when you talk about a \$150 increase in the minimum wage, they want to spread it over 3 years.

This is an issue of fairness. People ought to have accountability. When Members go to the polls, people in their congressional and senatorial districts ought to know how they stand on this issue of fairness. We are being denied that opportunity by a majority in the Senate. That is wrong.

Anyone who believes we are not going to continue after this issue

doesn't understand the rules of the Senate. We are going to be voting on a 2-year increase in the minimum wage. We are going to be voting on it soon, and we are going to be voting on it again and again and again. So get used to it because you are going to vote on it. You will be able to go back and say: Oh, yes. I voted one time to increase it for 3 years. Yes; I voted against it 15 times for 2 years. And for all those in small business, I voted for a \$73 billion tax break, unpaid for.

The House bill was \$123 billion. We don't want to hear from that side of the aisle about fiscal responsibility anymore—\$73 billion at the drop of a hat and \$123 billion over in the House of Representatives and 90 percent of it goes to the top 5 percent of the American taxpayers. Isn't that interesting?

We are trying to get a 50-cent increase for the lowest paid Americans—tax break; 90 percent of it goes to the highest paid. We are not going to permit Members of the Senate to vote. We have a majority. We are not going to permit a majority of the Senate to vote on whether we are going to have a very simple concept of 50 cents this year—50 cents. No; we are going to take our \$4,600 and put it in our pockets and walk out of here. For every single year of that, an increase in the minimum wage is being delayed.

Do you think they are going to forget that? The other side thinks it is going to go away. It isn't going to go away. No matter how many times these little proposals are going to come up in terms of consent agreements, no matter how many times you are going to try to close out opportunities to bring this up, no matter how many times you go through the parliamentary gymnastics on this kind of issue, it is coming back again and again and again. So get used to it because you are going to get it. You are going to vote on it. Americans are going to know who is going to stand for fairness and decency and who is opposed to it and blocked it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana is recognized.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be recognized in recognition of the fact that very shortly we may have an agreement on the crop insurance risk management debate. At the suggestion of the leadership, I would like to initiate debate on the subject, and perhaps we can move along expeditiously in the event we finally have a parliamentary structure in which to work.

AGRICULTURE RISK MANAGEMENT  
ASSISTANCE

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, today we will debate a matter of special significance and timeliness to agriculture producers throughout the United States, and that is the subject of risk management legislation.

During many full committee hearings, a public roundtable and hundreds