ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

OBJECTION TO NOMINATIONS TO VARIOUS AMBASSADORIAL POSTS

● Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, it is my intention to object to the Senate proceeding to the consideration of Senate Executive Calendar Nos. 756 through 766, Nominations to various Ambassadorial posts. I request that a hold be put on these nominations.

A vacancy has existed since March 31, 1995 on the Board of the Farm Credit Administration. For over a year the White House has had the name of Ann Jorgensen to fill that Republican vacancy. All background work with regard to the nomination has been completed. All that needs to be done is for her name to be submitted to the Senate for confirmation.

I have repeatedly contacted the White House about this nomination and, to date, have not had the courtesy of a reply. The FCA has oversight responsibilities for the farm credit system, the backbone of agricultural finance. It is important for the smooth functioning of the FCS that the FCA have a full complement on its board.

It is my intention to maintain this objection until the White House has disposed of this nomination.●

LEAKING UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANKS

● Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, earlier this week, the House passed H.R. 3391, a bill to amend the Leaking Underground Storage Tank Program.

Given the press of time, the Senate will not be able to address and resolve several potential problems in the legislation before the end of this session. I am sorry this is the case. However, I wanted to call this bill to the attention of my colleagues and point out that the issues raised by H.R. 3391 are serious and deserve the attention of the Senate Subcommittee on Superfund, Waste Control and Risk Assessment, that I chair.

Leaking underground storage tanks have been a major source of groundwater contamination over a number of decades. Frequently, underground tanks that held petroleum products or highly toxic chemicals have eroded with time. These tanks have leaked their contents into the soil, which then washed into aquifers supplying drinking water. This problem is particularly acute in rural areas where a large proportion of the population is dependent on groundwater as their drinking water source.

To curtail the impact of leaking underground storage tanks on the environment and the health of those dependent on groundwater, Congress established the Underground Tank Program in 1986. Significant elements of this program included the establishment of national underground storage tank standards which come into full force in 1998; the establishment of State underground storage tank programs for compliance with and enforcement of the national standards; and the establishment of an underground storage tank trust fund to assist the State programs.

In many ways, the underground tank program provides us a model for cooperative federalism in an environmental cleanup program. There are many lessons to be learned and applied from this cleanup program to other programs like Superfund. Similar to the Superfund Program, however, the underground storage tank program is a discretionary spending program. Therefore, in spite of a dedicated trust fund, it has a significant problem.

The problem, Mr. President, is that after a decade of collecting 1/10th of a cent tax on every gallon of gas sold, nearly $1 billion just sits in the trust fund. I believe that this money should be at work in the States helping to clean up leaking underground storage tanks, and I intend to have my subcommittee staff look further into this issue when the Senate reconvenes next year.●

SURVEYING THE STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE

● Mr. NUNN. Mr. President, the post-cold war era has been in existence for nearly 7 years. Like the period that followed the end of the Second World War, the years since the collapse of the Soviet Union required our Nation to think anew about our security. It has been a time of reorientation and uncertainty as we take stock of our situation and decide on a future course of action. We can no longer, however, afford to continue in a holding pattern that lacks a clear long-term national security strategy. We must put forth the contours of a strategic vision that will guide us through the post-cold war period and that will define and safeguard our vital interests.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The strategic landscape of the post-cold war era includes certain familiar features. One such feature is the resurgence of deeply rooted national, ethnic, and regional rivalries which were unfrozen by the end of the cold war. Amidst this background are other familiar landmarks. The United States stands as the world's lone superpower but due to their economic strength or vast potential, the other great powers, Russia, China, Japan and Europe, also remain in a class by themselves. Great power politics did not end with the cold war. In fact, the international relations of tomorrow may in some ways look more like the 19th century balance of power system than the cold war system that was dominated by two superpowers. We can hope but we should not assume that the semichaotic nature of the post-cold war period we now inhabit will soon transition to a more stable world order. In other words, this may be it.

The end of the cold war brought an easing of the most ominous threat to our security—a Soviet nuclear missile attack on the United States. We are no longer compelled to contain Soviet aggression on a global scale. That struggle absorbed untold national resources; victory came at no small price in terms of blood and treasure. Without question, freedom is in greater supply around the world today thanks to the United States and our allies. The overall prospect for our security has improved. However, while the character of the threats to our security have been dramatically transformed, war and interstate conflict are not obsolete. The means of conflict may have changed, but the sources of human conflict and cruelty remain.

We must, therefore, adapt our security posture to a world in which power, in all its forms, is far more dispersed than it was during the cold war. Technology is also more dispersed, raising the risk that countries or groups hostile to our Nation can more easily acquire the means to harm American interests. It was with a profound sense of irony that those who have devoted so much of their efforts to defeating communism came to the realization that the long-awaited collapse of the Soviet empire—and the easing of the nuclear confrontation between Washington and Moscow that was then possible—actually carried with it a new proliferation threat. The possible leakage of nuclear weapons and materials from the former Soviet Union compound the already complex proliferation threat during a time of rapid change and instability at cold war's end.

We can not afford to wait until we have a clearer picture of the future before taking action. Some of the defining features of the strategic landscape are already clear enough.

First and foremost we need to build consensus in support of a common understanding of America's national interests. During the cold war, there were disagreements about tactics, but the basic sense of mission was clear. This is no longer the case. Liberated from the burden of leading the free world against communism, public interest in foreign affairs has diminished, and consensus about foreign policy has evaporated. Nowhere is the lack of consensus more apparent than in the Congress. As we approach the millennium, we must begin to rebuild consensus with a focused discussion of our fundamental interests.

DEFINING OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS AFTER THE COLD WAR

What are America's vital interests? A bipartisan commission, of which I was a member, recently issued a report brings needed clarity to the discussion of our national interests. The report, America's National Interests, distinguished between vital, extremely important, important, and secondary interests. These distinction are essential to the task of establishing national priorities and building public support for foreign and defense policy. And despite the common use of the term ''vital interests,'' to describe everything from