

because the current system doesn't exist. It doesn't work. What we have now is de facto amnesty. If we do nothing, what we have is de facto amnesty because we don't know who the undocumented are. We couldn't enforce it even if we wanted to. That is why we have to deal with this issue.

We talk about the cost of social programs. If you are on a nonimmigrant visa, you don't qualify for the social programs by current law.

Look, there is a lot of work to be done. What we announced yesterday is not a plan, it is a framework. And that framework has to now be turned into legislative language. That is a lot of hard work, but I hope people will take this as an opportunity to come up with a solution to an issue that is solvable, that we can address and bring to a conclusion. It will have to be done the right way, and it will not be easy.

In a few hours the President will give a speech in Nevada, and early press accounts concern me. I don't want to turn this into a partisan thing, though, so let me just say this: If this endeavor becomes a bidding war to see who can come up with the easiest, quickest, and cheapest pathway to a green card possible, this will not go well. We now have a commonsense and reasonable set of principles. And I hope what the President will say today is he hopes that process succeeds. But if his intentions are to trigger a bidding war to see who can come up with the easiest process, this is not a good start. But let's give him the benefit of the doubt. I hope my colleagues will do the same.

I am deeply committed to the rule of law and to having an immigration system that works. I hope we can work together to accomplish that.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:15 p.m. today, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Executive Calendar No. 1, the nomination of Senator JOHN KERRY to be Secretary of State, with 2 hours of debate equally divided in the usual form; that upon the use or yielding back of that time, the Senate proceed to vote without intervening action or debate on the nomination; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that any further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the Record; and that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's

action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 12:30 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JOHN FORBES KERRY TO BE SECRETARY OF STATE

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of JOHN FORBES KERRY, of Massachusetts, to be Secretary, Department of State.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 2 hours of debate on the nomination equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I rise to speak to the nomination of Senator KERRY to be the next Secretary of State.

It has been more than 100 years since a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was directly nominated to be the Secretary of State. The last was Senator John Sherman of Ohio, who was selected to serve as Secretary of State to President McKinley. It is important to note that this historical fact exists because Senator KERRY's path isn't one commonly taken but one that is earned by a select few, and he has earned this opportunity.

From the first time JOHN testified before Chairman Fulbright as a young returning Vietnam war hero in 1971 to the day the President announced his nomination as Secretary of State, he has invested himself in all of his endeavors, always looking for the truth, for answers, uncovering the facts, hearing all the evidence, and then publicly speaking truth to power based solely on what was best for this Nation. I know he will carry those leadership traits with him into his new position, and I can think of no one better prepared to take on the challenges of this position.

As a Senator, as a member of this committee, and as a chairman, JOHN has already built strong relationships with leaders across the world, which will allow him to step seamlessly into the role of Secretary of State. Senator KERRY will need no introduction to the world's political and military leaders and will begin day one fully conversant

not only with the intricacies of U.S. foreign policy but with the understanding of the nuanced approach necessary to effectively interact on a multinational stage.

When Vice President BIDEN was chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, he said on more than one occasion that "good international relationships are always predicated on strong interpersonal relationships." JOHN KERRY understands there is no substitute for strong interpersonal relationships, whether in Senate politics or international diplomacy. Secretary of State is not a desk job. It requires constant personal interactions in the furtherance of American foreign policy.

During his 30 years in public life and more than 25 years in the Senate, Senator KERRY has championed many issues. Earlier today the Senate Foreign Relations Committee favorably reported his nomination to the Senate unanimously and presented Senator KERRY with an honorary resolution highlighting a few of his many accomplishments.

Amongst his accomplishments are the partnership he formed with Senator JOHN MCCAIN that led to an effort to investigate the fate of American soldiers unaccounted for in Vietnam and normalize relations with a former enemy—which is, in essence, Vietnam; his leadership of difficult, sensitive, and comprehensive investigations in the Senate on everything from the Bank of Credit and Commerce International and illegal money laundering, to the Noriega regime in Panama which is well known; advocating for democratic elections in the Philippines and serving with Senator Lugar as part of a Senate delegation that uncovered the fraud that led to the ouster of President Ferdinand Marcos; working with the Cambodian Government and the United Nations to facilitate the creation of the genocide tribunal in Cambodia to prosecute key members of the Khmer Rouge; advocating for programs that help secure nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons stockpiles and materials so they don't fall into the hands of hostile states or terrorists; and leading the Senate to provide its advice and consent to ratification of the New START treaty with Russia.

During the Arab spring, Senator KERRY supported a no-fly zone over Libya, which helped to save thousands of civilians from being massacred, and he was a voice of courage and conscience in calling for President Hosni Mubarak to step aside and begin an orderly and peaceful transition to a democratic political system in Egypt.

JOHN has been a tireless advocate for the cause of peace in the Sudan and South Sudan and played an instrumental role in the successful referendum in 2011.

JOHN is well known for his bipartisan work with former majority leader Bill Frist on comprehensive HIV/AIDS legislation that laid the foundation for

the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a program that provides lifesaving treatment for people with HIV/AIDS and supports broad prevention efforts that save lives every day.

Many of you know that JOHN is a tireless and most convincing advocate for addressing global climate change and supporting the transition to a clean energy future. As chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, he convened eight major hearings and roundtables on climate change and energy security, underscoring their connection to global stability, economic competitiveness, and America's national security.

In his new role, his portfolio will be greatly expanded as he represents the interests of the Nation, from securing our Embassies and protecting our overseas personnel to promoting commerce, enhancing cross-cultural ties, and keeping America secure through cooperation where possible and isolation where necessary, as in the cases of Iran and North Korea.

Whatever the challenges we will face as a nation, in my view, the State Department could not be in better hands. When it comes to America's role in world affairs, I know we all agree that it is critical that the United States remain fully engaged, that we project not only the power of our military strength when necessary but the wisdom of our democratic ideas. I have no doubt that Senator KERRY will rise to meet these challenges as he has so consistently in his many years of service to his State and this country.

I see the distinguished ranking member on the committee, Senator CORKER, whom I look forward to working with as we move forward in the days ahead.

I think all Members will say that even when they did not agree with Chairman KERRY on a given issue, they always felt he had an open ear, an open door, an opportunity for full debate, an effort to seek the common ground, particularly in U.S. foreign policy. I believe those traits are going to serve him extraordinarily well in his role as Secretary of State as he deals with the Senate and the House of Representatives as part of promoting U.S. foreign policy in a way that brings us as cohesively together as we can to promote the national interests and securities of the United States.

I look forward at the end of this time period to a strong confirmation vote to send a message to the world that this is our Secretary of State, and he speaks for America on behalf of the Obama administration and the people of the United States.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Madam President, I wish to thank the chairman for holding the business meeting the way he held it today and the hearings last week for this confirmation.

I know a lot of people think that because of the way partisan politics are

here in Washington, sometimes we can't be happy for someone on the other side of the aisle when they do well. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I just want to say that I thought Senator KERRY acquitted himself exceptionally well in the hearings we had last week. I thought they were wide-ranging, and I think he had the opportunity to display the depth of knowledge he has on many issues. I don't know of anybody who has lived a life that has been more oriented toward ultimately being Secretary of State than JOHN KERRY, and for that I also am happy for him and his family and the fact that very soon he is going to be able to express himself on behalf of our Nation in this way.

I think most of you know that his dad was a Foreign Service officer. I know that you know he certainly made a splash. Some people thought it was negative, some people, positive, but he certainly made a splash here during the Vietnam era and from that point on has been very, very active. So, again, I thought he acquitted himself exceptionally well.

There are four points I want to bring out. I know that he knows—and many of us have seen recently just because of some of the things that have happened in Libya—we have a State Department that needs some oversight, and we haven't provided it. Neither side of the aisle has provided it now for over a decade.

I know he sees the need for the Senate, through its authorization process—and the House doing the same—to be involved and to be partners with him as we try to cause this organization, which over the years has just built into a sporadic stovepipe entity, to be assisted. A lot of times when a political person comes into an organization, the bureaucracy tries to wait it out until the next person comes along. I don't think it can happen any more in any agency than it does in the State Department.

So I look forward to working with the chairman in whatever way he ends up deciding we are going to work together on this particular issue to really look at the State Department. I know Senator KERRY certainly welcomes that.

We most recently had a hearing with Senator Clinton on Benghazi, and there have been Accountability Review Board recommendations that have been put forth, and I know Senator KERRY has said he is certainly going to see those through and make sure they are fully implemented.

I know we talked a great deal in the hearing—and certainly we have done so personally—about our nuclear posture and nuclear modernization, which is a big part of what we discussed during the Start Treaty—something I supported and worked with him on—and I found his comments about where we need to be in that regard certainly reassuring.

I also think he is very clear-eyed as it relates to the threat we face as a nation, especially in north Africa now but in many places as it relates to terrorist groups such as al-Qaida. As a matter of fact, I look at Senator KERRY as a realist. While we have not always agreed on every issue, as the chairman just mentioned, I have always found him to be someone who is open to discussion. I think he wants only the best for our Nation. There is no question that as he moves ahead over the next several years, I am sure he will take positions that in some cases I and others—maybe Senator MENENDEZ—may view as not exactly the course of action that ought to be taken on behalf of our country. But my sense is that he will be open to listening, and I think he will be willing to sit down and talk about that as we move ahead.

He came out of the committee today by voice vote unanimously. As the chairman mentioned, I think he is going to receive a very strong vote of support today here on the Senate floor. As the chairman mentioned, I think that it is good for our Nation, as he goes out across the world representing us, for people to understand that this is someone who received overwhelming support from the Senate.

All of us know we live in a dangerous world. We live in a world that is changing dramatically. We live in a world in which things come over the transom on a daily and weekly basis that are unexpected. I mean, we look at what is happening right now throughout the country of Egypt, which we might not have expected to occur a week ago. To have someone like Senator KERRY, who has spent a lifetime on these issues and understands the history and institutional issues that have bound us or separated us from these countries—having someone like him representing us will be a very good thing.

I join the chairman in supporting him. I know numbers of people will have comments regarding his service here in the Senate but also his future service, and I look forward to listening to that.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I would like to join with Senator MENENDEZ and Senator CORKER in urging our colleagues to promptly confirm Senator KERRY as our next Secretary of State.

It is a great honor to serve in the Senate. It is a great privilege and honor to represent the people of Maryland here in the Senate. Part of that special privilege is the people we serve with, the incredible public servants we have had the privilege of serving with in the Senate, and I put Senator KERRY at the top of that list.

He has devoted his life to public service in the finest manner. He is so qualified to assume the responsibilities of Secretary of State. He understands this complex world in which we live and the

differences among countries. Many are strategically important to the United States. Yet they don't share our values. Senator KERRY understands that and understands the importance to advance U.S. interests—we need to understand the concerns of other countries and we need to establish relations with other countries.

He has made a personal commitment to understand the world in which we live. I do not think there has been a Member of this body who has spent more time, gone to more places, met with more people in order to represent our Nation on the international stage. Senator KERRY has always done that with the greatest degree of competency and representing our country in the finest traditions. He has broad experience: experience as a soldier serving in Vietnam, experience as a Senator, 28 years representing the people of Massachusetts in the Senate. We know about his service on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I want to talk about two other committees on which he served.

One is the Senate Finance Committee on which I had the pleasure of serving with him. There is no Senator who has taken the fiscal challenges of our country more seriously or understands the impact our fiscal condition has on our national security interests. In fact, during his confirmation hearings he mentioned the need to get our fiscal house in order. I think he understands that and understands the commitment he has, once confirmed and once heading the State Department, to help us bring about fiscal sanity in the United States to do what is necessary worldwide, but also to do it in a most cost effective way.

I also served with Senator KERRY on the Small Business Committee. The small business community did not have a better advocate when Senator KERRY was chairman of that committee. I was pleased how many times we brought out initiatives to help America and small businesses grow because we know the growth engine for jobs has come from small companies. But, clearly, it has been in the last few years that I had the privilege of serving with Senator KERRY as he chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that I got to see so up close and personal his extraordinary commitment to our country and his ability to carry out so many important responsibilities.

Senator KERRY understands our national security, yes, depends upon a strong military, but that also the other key ingredients to national security are diplomacy and development assistance.

We had Secretary Clinton before our committee. Someone mentioned that was about 1.5 percent of the budget, and she corrected it and said it is really less than 1 percent of the budget. Diplomacy and international assistance is less than 1 percent of the budget. We know what we spend on our military is a lot larger than that. All three are important to national security.

Senator KERRY understands that. He understands through diplomacy we can avoid unnecessary military action. He understands through diplomacy we can make America safer. He understands through international development assistance we can strengthen countries, make them more stable, and be less likely to need to use our military. That is the type of leader we need as Secretary of State. We have a great leader today, Secretary Clinton. I think Senator KERRY will follow in that tradition.

Take a look at Senator KERRY's record of advancing America's interests. We have a safer world today through Senator KERRY's efforts. As you know, we approved the New START treaty with Russia, reducing the amount of nuclear weapons between Russia and the United States. That makes this world safer. His record on human rights is well known. From Cambodia to Burma to Kosovo and many other places around the world, Senator KERRY has been a leader in advancing the cause of human rights.

We already heard Senator MENENDEZ point out his efforts in Vietnam. He represented America to get an accounting of our POW/MIAs. It was unprecedented in modern times to be able to go to a country with which we are at war and have that kind of accounting. Senator KERRY used his talent in order to bring closure for many American families, and that was an incredible accomplishment. Then he was able to improve the relationship between the United States and Vietnam, recognizing it is in America's interests that we are able to communicate with other countries.

I particularly appreciate his work on elevating the importance internationally of human trafficking. The United States has taken the leadership in saying, whether you are a receiving country or an origin country or a country of transport, we all have a responsibility to stop what we call modern slavery: the trafficking, usually of young girls, but also sometimes boys. The United States has taken the leadership there.

I like to think Senator KERRY's taking leadership on this started with his position on the Helsinki Commission. He is a former member of the Helsinki Commission. I now have an opportunity of being the Senate chair of the Helsinki Commission. We raised the issue of human trafficking and Senator KERRY was one of the great advocates to advance America's leadership internationally to stop human trafficking. He has protected people with disabilities.

As Senator MENENDEZ mentioned, he has been our leader on energy and climate issues, recognizing the importance of the United States to demonstrate international leadership in order to deal with a global problem, a problem that is important for us to deal with as a citizen of the world but also important for us to deal with in regard to America's economy and

America's energy needs and America's security responsibilities. Senator KERRY has been a great leader on that.

He has provided U.S. leadership for humanitarian assistance. I remember the hearings we had in the committee on Haiti and the personal commitment he made to make sure America was in the leadership for a country in our own hemisphere that suffered such a horrible disaster, and his work there was extremely important.

He led our efforts in dealing with HIV/AIDS, in doing the responsible things as far as America's position on that problem. He understands the importance of international development assistance to advance gender equality. It is interesting, if you want to take a look at the health of a country, look at the way they treat their women. We have a pretty strong commitment as far as international development assistance around the world. We need to make sure countries advance the rights of women. It is not only the right thing to do from what we believe as Americans, but it also provides a more stable country for us to have relations with. Senator KERRY understands that.

He has been one of the leaders in fighting corruption in other countries. I will always remember the hearing we had in our committee when former President Clinton and Bill Gates testified before us. These are two individuals who have headed a lot of international development assistance. They have a zero policy in dealing with countries that cannot control corruption because they want to make sure their assistance doesn't go to fuel corruption. Senator KERRY understands we don't want America's international development assistance to be used to fuel corruption. That is the type of leadership we have in the Secretary of State.

The list goes on of what he has been able to do to advance the rights and interests of the United States. I am confident that Senator KERRY's legacy of fighting for democracy, human rights, and global peace will continue as he assumes his new responsibilities as the Secretary of State for the United States of America.

I urge my colleagues to support his nomination.

I thank Chairman MENENDEZ for bringing this nomination to the floor so quickly and thank Senator CORKER for accommodating it. It is important that President Obama has his security team in place as quickly as possible. I am proud the Senate will be doing its share, its work by voting on this nomination later today.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent—it has been agreed to by the Republican side as well—that any time spent during debate time in a quorum call be equally charged against both sides.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. With that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MANCHIN). The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

PASSING A BUDGET

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I rise to speak about taxes, debt, and spending. It is time for President Obama to show real leadership on the biggest threat America faces to our future prosperity. As my good friend the Republican leader has said: If we don't get a handle on spending and debt, not much else matters.

It has now been 1,371 days—almost 4 years—since Democrats, who control the Senate, have brought a budget to the floor and had a vote and passed the budget. Over that time, our national debt has grown by more than \$5.2 trillion. Our credit rating has been downgraded because of fears we may not be able to pay back our debt when it is ultimately due, and we have experienced the longest period of high unemployment since the Great Depression.

Since the end of the official recession in 2009, Americans' median household income has fallen by roughly \$2,500, while the cost of employer-provided family health insurance has increased by more than \$2,300—roughly a comparable amount. Not only has income fallen by \$2,500 but costs have gone up—thanks to ObamaCare—by \$2,300 for the average family.

Until recently, passing a budget was considered not optional. It was considered a basic responsibility under the law. In fact, the Budget Act requires that Congress pass a budget each year, but this law has been defied for almost 4 years in the Senate.

I realize the Democratic leader—the majority leader—has said he did not want to bring a budget to the floor because he did not want to put his Members through a series of politically tough votes.

We cannot get to this problem by dealing with tax increases. This seems to be the preferred method of dealing with our deficits and debt by raising taxes, which, of course, happened as a result of the fiscal cliff negotiations where taxes have gone up on Americans by roughly \$60 billion a year, which will amount to almost \$600 billion over the next 10 years. Nevertheless, the President's budgets continue to ask for more revenue, but the mes-

sage from this side of the aisle has been: The President has gotten his pound of flesh on taxes. Now it is time to deal with spending.

Unfortunately, we no longer have the luxury of delaying our toughest fiscal decisions. Our gross national debt is now larger than our entire economy, and we are now facing more than \$100 trillion in unfunded liabilities for things such as Medicare and Social Security. Those are promises we will not be able to keep unless we act now to put them on a fiscally sustainable path.

I am glad our House colleagues have passed the no budget, no pay bill. I think most Americans appreciate the fact that if Congress doesn't do its basic work such as passing a budget—something every family and every small business in America has to do—then it should not be paid.

That has already prompted Senate Democrats to say they are going to take up a budget this year. Senator MURRAY, chairman of the Budget Committee in the Senate, says she intends to mark up a budget. Senator REID and Senator SCHUMER have said they intend to see that a budget is passed by the Chamber. But they have also said they are going to attempt to extract more taxes from hard-working, middle-class taxpayers in order to double down on Washington's spending binge.

Our biggest fiscal problem is excessive spending, not insufficient taxation. We can't raise taxes high enough to close the trillion-dollar-plus annual deficits or to make up this \$16.5 trillion hole we have dug. If we don't reduce spending and save Social Security and Medicare, then we will eventually find ourselves in a debt crisis. When that happens is when our creditors—the people who lend us money, including the Chinese and other governments—demand more interest on our loans and, eventually, interest rates go up to historic norms, the debt spirals out of control, and we reach a crisis of monumental proportions: It strangles the economy; it destroys jobs; it destroys our standard of living.

Don't take my word for it. President Obama himself has acknowledged that no amount of tax increases could sustain Medicare in its current form. He has also said public officials who are concerned about preserving government assistance for the elderly and the vulnerable have an obligation—those are his words—have an obligation to reform our entitlement programs and ensure their long-term viability. In other words, the debt is not only the single greatest threat to our national security, as former Chief of Staff Mike Mullen has said, it is also a threat to our ability to provide a safety net to the most vulnerable in our country.

I know Democrats and Republicans alike in this body understand the problem. The President himself understands the problem. In December of 2010, his bipartisan fiscal commission known as Simpson-Bowles reported the

nature of the problem and a proposed beginning of a solution. Three of the most conservative Republican Members of the Senate agreed with that commission report. However, rather than embrace it, the President walked away from it, and he has not come back to the table.

We also have another bipartisan commission headed by Alice Rivlin, who was the Director of the Office of Management and Budget under Bill Clinton, and Senator Pete Domenici, longtime chair of the Senate Budget Committee—people who understand these matters better than just about anybody. So there are solid, bipartisan proposals on the table. Yet here we are, trillions of dollars later since the Obama administration began, with no solution in sight.

The President had the American people with their back against the wall with the expiring tax provisions on December 31 which led to the so-called fiscal cliff. If we hadn't acted, taxes would have gone up more than \$3 trillion on all Americans. There would have been an enormously negative impact on the economy and jobs. So we had to come up with some sort of stop-gap solution. But the President got his pound of flesh. He got his revenue: \$600 billion over 10 years.

Now is the time to return to what the President himself has called a balanced approach to deficit reduction. Unfortunately, the President has never even proposed a balanced approach, much less a balanced budget. I can only hope that with his final election campaign behind him and with the new term ahead of him, the President can begin to grapple with and join us as we deal with our long-term fiscal challenges.

I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here to speak first and very personally in support of the nomination of Senator KERRY to be our next Secretary of State. There is a time when the man and the moment come together in a profoundly historic way. Senator KERRY's nomination to be Secretary of State of the United States at such a time when his leadership can be pivotal in shaping America's role in the world, as a leader for human rights, as well as the use of its extraordinary strategic power for peace.

There is also a time when the woman and a moment come together and that has been so for Hillary Clinton, who has done such extraordinary work, incomparable in transforming America's role in world history. I believe that just as she has met the challenges in guiding American foreign policy and

leading the dedicated men and women of our Foreign Service, so will Senator KERRY rise to the difficult challenges ahead. Senator KERRY's whole life has prepared him for this job, and I have every confidence he will help keep America safe and secure and build our capacity and alliances in pursuit of democracy and a more peaceful world.

Last week, I met with Senator KERRY to share my experiences from a recent visit to the Middle East and Afghanistan and to urge him to immediately take up the issue of the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe occurring within Syria and across its borders in Turkey and Jordan. My experiences came from a trip I took with Senator MCCAIN and Senator WHITEHOUSE, and others of my colleagues who share my impression that drastic and dramatic humanitarian aid must be provided for those refugees.

I am pleased the President has announced an additional \$155 million for the Syrian people today. I believe we must also provide aid and assistance to the Syrian Opposition Council. It matters as much how we provide this aid as the total amount we provide. I am very encouraged by Senator KERRY's listening and hearing us, and I look forward to continuing our work with soon-to-be Secretary of State KERRY on this issue and many other vital security concerns.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

One of those concerns on which I also rise concerns and affects American immigration policy. We are truly at a moment when Secretary KERRY and the administration can transform this debate and national conversation with the leadership of Members of this body, including most prominently my colleagues Senator SCHUMER, Senator MCCAIN, and the other members of their bipartisan group who recently unveiled a bipartisan blueprint for comprehensive immigration reform.

One of the things I do as a Senator and did when I was attorney general of our State is to visit the citizenship and immigration ceremonies where people become new citizens of our Nation. It is one of the most moving and powerful of experiences I have seen in public life. The tears in the eyes of these new citizens and their families, in celebration and joy and pride of their becoming citizens of the United States and looking forward to contributing, giving back to this country, reaffirmed my faith not only in this Nation—in its strength and decency and generosity—but also in the men and women who want to come here because they see it as a beacon of freedom and democracy. That is the tradition and ethos that should guide us in seeking comprehensive immigration reform. We have a unique opportunity now—and I will work to fulfill it, to reform our broken immigration system as a member of the Judiciary Committee and most particularly its Immigration Subcommittee. I look forward to playing a leading role in achieving this group's

working blueprint for comprehensive reform.

Establishing a path to citizenship, securing our borders, making employers more accountable, ensuring that the DREAMers—young people brought to this country as infants and young children—can find a way to citizenship are all goals that are fulfilled by this blueprint.

We have an obligation, an opportunity that is compelling, absolutely historic, to change the discussion and debate, but also the outcome, and we should seize that opportunity, make sure this moment is fulfilled, I think, particularly for those DREAMers. For them, this moment and every moment is precious. They are young people who are in our schools, in our military, seeking a way to be citizens of the only country many of them know. They speak English. It is the only language most of them know. They have friends and a life here. It is the only life they have.

The administration, rightly and commendably, has provided an administrative route to temporary reprieve from the laws that would result in their deportation. But they need the certainty and security of a law that gives them a real path to citizenship, not at some point in the indefinite future but now.

The DREAM Act that Senator DURBIN has fought so hard and valiantly over so many years to achieve deserves passage now. I will continue to come to the floor with photographs of the DREAMers, as I have done week after week, to make sure their fate and future is on our minds.

Today, I also want to speak about another related immigration issue—the Immigration Innovation Act of 2013, known as the I-squared bill, which was introduced in the U.S. Senate today.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of it. I know firsthand from talking to employers in the State of Connecticut, and all around not only our State but the country, how significant this measure could be to attracting and retaining people with the skills America needs to remain the greatest Nation in the history of the world.

I thank Senators KLOBUCHAR, HATCH, COONS, and RUBIO for their leadership on this issue. The I-squared bill has a very simple objective, which is to ensure that America's innovative companies are able to access high-skilled workers who would go back to their countries of origin when we need them here.

In some areas, such as computer science, the demand for workers greatly exceeds the labor pool available of U.S.-born workers. Senator HATCH described on the floor of the Senate how in this decade the American economy will create a demand for an estimated 120,000 computer science jobs requiring at least a bachelor's degree, but U.S. universities will generate only an estimated 40,000 graduates in that field.

So just to take that one example—just that one example—there is a gap

we need to fill to keep our companies competitive. I have heard about this issue from Connecticut employers big and small. There are jobs. They exist. We need the people who have the skills to fill them.

The I-squared bill seeks to fill that gap, most importantly, by allowing high-skilled workers, who are foreign born but often U.S. educated, to fill some of those jobs in high-need areas. The legislation makes sense because it makes it easier for U.S.-educated holders of advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math to obtain green cards.

The bill also, importantly, generates new revenue through fees that visas and employment-based green cards will provide, and it directs funds to promote STEM education and worker retraining at the State level—STEM being science, technology, engineering, and math.

This measure is about American competitiveness. We ought to make a priority of STEM education for young people in our country who are born here and raised in the United States. But we must be open to creating jobs for American workers in the most innovative sectors of society and making it easier for those industries to thrive by attracting people from throughout the world to the United States as a beacon of opportunity, a land of unlimited potential accomplishment.

We are a nation of immigrants. We are great because of our diversity. We are strong because we have always attracted people who want freedom and the potential to do their best, accomplish the most, and realize the full extent of what they can achieve.

I again thank Senators KLOBUCHAR, HATCH, COONS, and RUBIO for their leadership. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, as well as the Immigration Subcommittee, I look forward to working with them on this important legislation in the months ahead.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I rise today to express my strong support for the nomination of JOHN KERRY to be our next Secretary of State.

As a friend and colleague for more than 20 years, I can think of no one who is more qualified and better prepared to be our Nation's chief diplomat.

He has the intelligence, judgment, compassion, determination, and above all, leadership experience to help the administration confront and find common sense solutions to the multitude of foreign policy challenges now before us.

His story is well known to those of us who have worked side by side with him for so many years.

The son of a distinguished foreign service officer, his understanding of the

world and America's critical role in it began at an early age. He learned the value of American diplomacy and the indispensable role played by our diplomats here in Washington and at our consulates and embassies around the world.

He served with distinction and honor in Vietnam, earning a Bronze Star, a Silver Star, and three Purple Hearts. He saw first hand the costs of war, and he recognized that military force must be used wisely and only after all other options have been exhausted.

After 2 years as Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts, he came to the Senate in 1985 and took his place on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, rising to the position of chairman in 2009.

As a member of that committee and its leader, he demonstrated the qualities that will serve him well as Secretary of State.

He did his homework, and he asked tough questions. He traveled the world and engaged key leaders, gaining their respect and confidence. He developed an admirable track record of listening carefully to both sides of an issue and developing the relationships on both sides of the aisle necessary to forge bipartisan agreements.

From re-establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam and organizing the ratification of the New START Agreement to managing our relationship with Pakistan and Afghanistan, fighting the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and addressing the threat posed by climate change, Senator KERRY has clearly left his mark on United States foreign policy.

As President Obama noted, "John has played a central role in every major foreign policy debate for nearly 30 years."

And that experience will serve him well as Secretary of State.

Indeed, we live in challenging and constantly evolving times.

We have ended the war in Iraq, and our mission in Afghanistan is winding down. But the threat of global terror endures.

We have seen the Arab Spring topple autocrats and bring hope for a new future. But the ultimate fate of those countries and their commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law remains uncertain.

We have enacted a robust set of bilateral and multilateral sanctions on Iran and launched a diplomatic initiative through the P5+1 process, but its nuclear program continues.

We have built a close and mutually beneficial relationship with China, but there are lingering questions about its human rights record and its growing military assertiveness, particularly in the South China Sea.

And we have seen how our humanitarian and development assistance programs can lift people out of poverty in the developing world; yet nearly 2.5 billion people still live on less than \$2 a day.

These are just some of the items that will be on Senator KERRY's agenda as Secretary of State.

I know he understands that in facing these challenges American leadership is essential but we will also need the help and cooperation of our friends, allies, and partners in the international community.

I know he understands that the strength of this country lies not just in our military but in the power of our ideas.

And I know he understands that in order for the United States to lead, we must maintain a strong and effective international affairs budget.

We will certainly miss Senator KERRY's leadership and experience in the Senate. But I am heartened to know that he will continue to serve his country and bring those skills to the State Department, representing the United States around the world.

I urge my colleagues to support Senator KERRY's nomination to be our next Secretary of State.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I am pleased to stand here today to support President Obama's nomination of my esteemed colleague, Senator JOHN KERRY, to serve as our Nation's next Secretary of State.

Senator KERRY has had a long career of service to the American people. We have served together in the Senate for 26 years and I look forward to continuing our relationship. As a Senator he has always approached his work with seriousness and dedication. Nowhere can this be seen more than in his work as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where he has shown a mastery of the challenges that face our global community.

As the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee he has played a prominent role in the establishment of U.S. foreign policy. He has traveled the globe and built relationships and coalitions with international leaders. Most importantly, he has demonstrated an ability to balance our Nation's long history of diplomacy with our changing national security needs. The unanimous support given to him by the Foreign Relations Committee exhibits the respect and confidence he has earned from this body.

The Department of State faces evolving challenges that reflect our increasingly interconnected world and require a modern approach to diplomacy. Senator KERRY will lead a team that must confront global security challenges and ensure the security of our diplomatic corps and their families. I am confident that Senator KERRY will meet these challenges, and I will work with him to ensure that the State Department and its employees have the resources they need to serve their mission.

While I am sorry to see Secretary Clinton leave her post after 4 successful and productive years, I am pleased to know that Senator KERRY will take on the role with the same dedication. I call on my colleagues to join me in ap-

proving his nomination to Secretary of State.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, JOHN KERRY is a valued colleague and a loyal friend, and we will miss him in the Senate. But at a time when our Nation faces complex and difficult challenges around the globe, he is especially well qualified to serve as Secretary of State, and I strongly support his confirmation.

Unquestionably, Iran is at the top of the list of challenges the next Secretary of State will face. Senator KERRY has supported efforts in the Senate, including sanctions language included in the defense authorization acts for 2012 and 2013, that have helped isolate the Iranian regime. At his confirmation hearing, Senator KERRY succinctly stated the Obama administration's policy on Iran:

We will do what we must do to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and I repeat here today: Our policy is not containment, it is prevention and the clock is ticking on our efforts to secure responsible compliance.

Senator KERRY will be an effective and dedicated executor of that policy as we unify the international community in our efforts to prevent the Iranian government from developing nuclear weapons.

Another significant challenge for our foreign policy is the volatile Afghanistan-Pakistan region. Here again, Senator KERRY's unique qualifications will serve our Nation well. He strongly supports the plan for transitioning the security lead to Afghan forces so they can provide for their own security. He has established a critical relationship with President Karzai that will strengthen our bilateral relations as we define the enduring strategic relationship between the United States and Afghanistan for post-2014. Senator KERRY understands the importance of negotiating a bilateral security agreement that provides our troops the necessary protections, including legal immunity, for a limited force to continue to train, advise and assist the Afghan forces and conduct counterterrorism operations after 2014. Senator KERRY also has significant experience engaging with Pakistan, which remains key to efforts to establish security and stability in South Asia. Through the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act and other efforts, Kerry has led efforts to strengthen civilian institutions in Pakistan and to reset our bilateral relations.

Senator KERRY also recognizes, as he said during his confirmation hearing, that "[m]ore than ever, foreign policy is economic policy." Those words will hearten working families in my State and across the Nation whose well-being is increasingly connected to our economic competitiveness around the world, our ability to engage with other nations to ensure that our companies and workers have the opportunity to compete in the global marketplace on an equal footing, and our recognition that economic competition today is

not just among companies, but also among the countries that support their companies and workers. I look forward to working with Senator KERRY as we bring all the levers of American policy to bear on this issue of paramount importance to American prosperity.

Another issue on which I look forward to cooperating with Senator KERRY is our policy toward Cuba. Senator KERRY and I have similar voting records on United States policy towards Cuba. We also both recognize the need for policy that places maximum pressure on the Cuban regime to democratize. However, our voting records maintain that our Cuba policy is counter-productive in promoting change in Cuba. I look forward to working with Senator KERRY to rebalance our approach to Cuba as we look forward to a new era in that nation's history and its relations with us.

Throughout his public career, JOHN KERRY has proven his dedication not just to America's interests, but to its values. Indeed, he recognizes that our ability to defend our interests around the world depends on adherence to the values that make the United States a beacon of freedom and opportunity. He has spoken with eloquence about the need to combat violence and extremism around the world not just with our military might, but with the power of our ideas. As he said in his confirmation hearing, "America lives up to her values when we give voice to the voiceless." His commitment to aiding those around the world whose lives have been shattered by war, repression or disaster is in keeping with those values.

Senator KERRY knows personally the cost of war and the value of peace. He knows the difficulty of the challenges we face, and the importance of American leadership in facing those challenges—leadership important not just to our Nation's security and prosperity, but to the world's. He has been an outstanding servant of the American people, and I am confident he will continue that record of extraordinary service as our next Secretary of State.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I am proud to support the confirmation of our colleague Senator KERRY to be Secretary of State. Senator KERRY is one of our Nation's great leaders in foreign affairs, and has been since he arrived in the Senate 28 years ago. His remarkable record speaks for itself, but I would especially like to recognize and thank him for his service as chairman of Foreign Relations Committee over the past 4 years.

In addition to his hands-on diplomacy in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, and elsewhere around the globe, Senator KERRY has fought to bring up more treaties for Senate consideration. We of course remember his leadership during the consideration of the New START treaty in 2010, which has enabled a responsible reduction of our nuclear arsenal in concert with Russia. But he also worked to bring forward the Convention on the Rights of Per-

sons with Disabilities and held hearings on the Convention on the Law of the Sea, two important international agreements that the United States has not ratified. Trying to shepherd treaties through the Senate is a much less glamorous task than traveling to summits overseas, but Senator KERRY approached them with the same level of passion and energy. He fought for these treaties because he truly believes in the importance of American leadership in the world, and he understands that that leadership does not come solely from our military strength but our commitment to dialogue and diplomacy.

Senator KERRY will undoubtedly serve as Secretary of State with the same honor and integrity that have defined his career. It will be up to us to continue his legacy in the Senate, and I look forward to continuing to work with him as he takes on this new challenge.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I believe the business before the Senate is the confirmation of JOHN KERRY as Secretary of State, to which I would like to speak. I actually rise in support of two Senators, one former and one current, as America's Secretary of State.

Last week, both were guests at the Foreign Relations Committee which I served on and both did an outstanding job. The Secretary of State, former Senator from New York, Hillary Clinton, has served the U.S. interests with distinction. She championed a diversity of causes that strengthen our security and at the same time improved the lives of so many around the world, particularly women and children.

Secretary Clinton leaves an incredible legacy in her diplomatic efforts. There is no one more suited or more qualified to take up the challenges and promise than my friend and colleague and our mutual friend Senator JOHN KERRY of Massachusetts.

JOHN KERRY came to the Senate almost 30 years ago. From his first days as a freshman, he served with distinction on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As a Navy patrol boat captain in the Vietnam war, he had notable and lasting exposure to complex foreign policy challenges and the wars that result when diplomacy fails.

Certainly one lesson he brought back with him was the heavy and all too personal knowledge of the consequences of war. But his experience in representing the U.S. interests abroad did not begin in this institution. Rather, the journey to his nomination for Secretary of State began when JOHN KERRY was a child, when his own father was a Foreign Service officer. JOHN tells fond stories about his time as a child living in Berlin while his father was stationed there.

During those years, he developed a profound respect for the men and

women of the Foreign Service, their sacrifice, their dedication, and their ability to demonstrate the values of our democracy. During his tenure as a Senator from Massachusetts and from 2009 as the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, JOHN KERRY has been a tireless leader on behalf of the American people to ensure that our security remains strong and our interests well represented around the world.

He has been a leading voice on the Iran-Contra investigation, the war and fragile peace in Afghanistan, arms control and verification, building lasting ties with Pakistan, and perhaps in his most personal contribution, opening diplomatic relations with Vietnam. I would like to speak to that for a moment, if I can, because it is a personal story I would like to share.

It was JOHN KERRY and JOHN MCCAIN, more than any others, who moved us from that stage in our history where we shunned the people of Vietnam to the point where we recognized their country, established normal relations with them, and built a new relationship. There were no better Senators to do it than JOHN KERRY and JOHN MCCAIN, both of whom were decorated veterans of the Vietnam war, both of whom gave so much in that conflict, particularly Senator MCCAIN, spending 5 years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. They worked hard to establish normal relations with that country and to put behind the bitterness and the war that had divided the two countries, the United States and Vietnam.

It was not easy. One of the issues front and center was the question of prisoners of war and missing in action. There were all sorts of rumors and speculation that, in fact, there were still Americans being held prisoner in Vietnam. That rumor was very strong across America. There was a lot of criticism of the Vietnamese in not cooperating with us in trying to identify anyone still remaining or the remains of American soldiers who died in that conflict.

JOHN MCCAIN and JOHN KERRY came together and put an incredible bipartisan voice to resolving these issues. It came to my attention because it was about the time when I was elected to the Senate in 1996. I served in the House of Representatives with an extraordinary individual, Pete Peterson of Florida.

Pete Peterson had been an Air Force pilot in the Vietnam war, shot down, and himself imprisoned in a POW camp for more than 5 years. He was a quiet person and did not talk much about it. But one day, I kind of provoked him at lunch, and he started talking about what it meant to live in isolation for 5 years, how they coped, how they survived, and the impact it still had on his life.

President Clinton at that moment decided it would be a significant symbol that the first Ambassador of the United States to Vietnam would be Pete Peterson of Florida, a man who

had been held as a POW by the Vietnamese would return as American's voice in that new country. He was brought before the Senate for confirmation.

I remember saying to my staff when I came over here: Be sure and tell me when Pete Peterson's nomination comes to the floor. I want to say a few words about my friendship with him and what he means to me and how important this appointment is. Time passed. I did not hear anything. Then there was a "60 Minutes" program on that I happened to watch. It was all about Pete Peterson becoming the Ambassador to Vietnam. I came back to my staff. I was upset. I said: You were supposed to tell me when this happened so I could get up and give a speech and say something nice. They said: It never happened. "60 Minutes" is speculating. The fact is, Pete Peterson's nomination has been put on hold—a secret hold in the Senate.

I could not believe it. I called Pete Peterson. I think he lived in Jupiter, FL, at the time. I said to him: Pete, what is going on here?

He said: DICK, I am about to give up. It has been almost 1 year since President Clinton named me to the spot and I cannot clear the Senate. Somebody is holding me up. I do not know who it is. I have to get on with my life.

I said: Let me at least talk to some people. So I came to the floor. The first person I looked for was JOHN KERRY and then JOHN McCAIN. They said: Yes; there is a hold, but we are trying to work through it.

I said: You know, if you cannot get this done and done quickly, then I think there has to be a speech on the floor that says: Holding Pete Peterson in a POW camp for 5 years is bad enough, but the Senate holding his nomination as Ambassador is unforgivable. We need to vote on Pete Peterson. He has given so much to this country.

It is credit to JOHN KERRY and JOHN McCAIN that they quieted down this new Member of the Senate and said: Let us get this done quietly. They did. Pete Peterson went on to serve as Ambassador in Vietnam. He was a widower at the time. He met a lovely young Vietnamese-Australian woman. They married. They now live in Australia and we keep in touch from time to time. But I think of that moment in time in our history when JOHN KERRY and JOHN McCAIN showed what diplomacy and careful consideration can do.

We not only established relations with Vietnam, we sent a great individual to serve as its first Ambassador. They did it quietly and effectively. Can he be a great Secretary of State? You bet he can. I will be the first to tell you that I saw his skill firsthand when I came to the Senate. If confirmed, he will bring a breadth of experience to global challenges, some new and some which we cannot even anticipate as we debate this matter. The list is vast and formidable: Iran, Syrian, North Korea, cyber security, failed and fragile

states, and democratic backsliding in Russia, to name a few.

One of the issues JOHN KERRY has tackled for many years that will desperately need attention, and the President highlighted in his inaugural address, is that of climate change. As was mentioned during his nomination hearing last week, climate change is the one of the most pressing and consequential issues of our time. It is not just an environmental issue, it is a moral issue. What kind of planet will our generation leave for our children and grandchildren? How will history judge us if we ignore the evidence and warning signs and do nothing to head off climate catastrophes? Senator KERRY is uniquely qualified to address this great moral challenge. He knows if we are ever going to get China and India to take responsibility for their carbon emissions, we have to start from a strong position of legitimacy, having taken these steps ourselves.

He knows when the United States tackles climate change, it also increases our diplomatic standing and reputation around the world. He knows tackling climate change will help prevent a host of terrible global problems, from famine, water shortages to political instability, any of which can draw the United States into a costly or bloody conflict.

Addressing climate change is in our vital national, economic, and security interests. I know JOHN KERRY will tackle this and many other challenges that await him at the State Department. He has been a trusted and admired colleague of mine and so many others in the Senate. I have enjoyed his work on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I wish to especially thank him for calling the Convention on Disability Treaty for consideration by the Senate. I am sorry it did not pass, but it was not for lack of effort by JOHN KERRY.

His passionate pursuit of a safe and just Nation and world, his deep sense of patriotism and commitment to America's most challenged values are well documented. While I am sorry to lose him in the Senate as a colleague, I can think of no better person to serve as our Nation's next Secretary of State. I congratulate JOHN KERRY on his nomination. As a friend and colleague, I urge my fellow Senators to swiftly confirm JOHN KERRY so he can get about the work of making America a safer nation.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, it is my understanding we are coming to the end of the time on this debate—or

consideration, I should say. There has really been no debate. I think that speaks to Senator KERRY's tremendous standing in the Senate on his nomination as Secretary of State.

This is a Member of the Senate who has an extraordinary American history. After volunteering for the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam war, Senator KERRY was awarded a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, and three Purple Hearts. Upon returning home, he continued his efforts to fight for and protect the veterans who served beside him in combat, joining with others to found the Vietnam Veterans for America organization, working tirelessly for veterans' benefits.

With over three decades of foreign policy and national security experience under his belt, Senator KERRY is uniquely qualified to serve as the next Secretary of State. A decorated Vietnam combat veteran, dedicated public servant, with deep experience in international affairs and close relationships with Presidents and Prime Ministers throughout the world, he will have an extraordinary beginning to his job as Secretary of State.

He has demonstrated time and time again his ability to build coalitions and craft compromises. He has amassed a broad record of foreign policy accomplishments and has distinguished himself as one of the Nation's most respected voices on national security.

I look forward to a very strong bipartisan vote that sends a very clear message to the world: This is America's representative. This is our Secretary of State. I believe he has earned that vote and that respect through a lifetime of work and the tremendous collegiality he has had among Members on both sides of the aisle, including those who may not agree with him on any given issue but have always respected the manner in which he has approached that issue.

Mr. President, understanding there are no other speakers wishing to come before the Senate on this matter, I yield back all time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Shall the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of John Forbes Kerry to be Secretary of State?

Mr. MENENDEZ. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. KERRY (when his name was called). Present.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 94, nays 3, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 5 Ex.]

YEAS—94

Alexander	Gillibrand	Murphy
Ayotte	Graham	Nelson
Baldwin	Grassley	Paul
Barrasso	Hagan	Portman
Baucus	Harkin	Pryor
Begich	Hatch	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Reid
Blumenthal	Heitkamp	Risch
Blunt	Heller	Roberts
Boozman	Hirono	Rockefeller
Boxer	Isakson	Rubio
Brown	Johanns	Sanders
Burr	Johnson (SD)	Schatz
Cantwell	Johnson (WI)	Schumer
Cardin	Kaine	Scott
Carper	King	Sessions
Casey	Kirk	Shaheen
Chambliss	Klobuchar	Shelby
Coats	Landrieu	Stabenow
Coburn	Lautenberg	Tester
Cochran	Leahy	Thune
Collins	Lee	Toomey
Coons	Levin	Udall (CO)
Corker	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Crapo	McCain	Vitter
Donnelly	McCaskill	Warner
Durbin	McConnell	Warren
Enzi	Menendez	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Merkley	Wicker
Fischer	Mikulski	Wyden
Flake	Moran	
Franken	Murkowski	

NAYS—3

Cornyn	Cruz	Inhofe
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ANSWERED "PRESENT"—1

Kerry

NOT VOTING—2

Hoeven Murray

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

Under the previous order, the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I know Senator KERRY will be speaking tomorrow, so I will be brief. I think I speak on behalf of every one of us here that we so admire the job Senator KERRY has done in the many different phases of his past life. We are excited he will be our Secretary of State, and for JOHN KERRY I think the best is yet to come.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session.

The Senator from New York.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

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

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask to speak in morning business for 15 minutes.

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

TRANSPARENCY AT HUD

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, my fellow Members know the issue of transparency is a very favorite topic of mine, and I come to the floor to speak about transparency as it relates to a very specific problem within the Department of Housing and Urban Development. It is no secret I have worked to bring greater transparency and accountability to all parts of the Federal Government because with transparency I think we get more accountability.

The voters of Iowa have entrusted me to continue my oversight responsibilities no matter who occupies the White House, and since I am a Republican, people might think I am doing it because we have a Democratic President. I think I have a reputation for being an equal opportunity overseer of the executive branch of government.

For several years I have been conducting oversight of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; everybody knows this is commonly referred to as HUD, H-U-D. HUD's core mission, according to its Web site, is to "create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality, affordable homes for all." These responsibilities have grown larger and more complex over the last few years. The mortgage crisis continues to affect the housing market.

Secretary Donovan was recently tapped to oversee the Hurricane Sandy recovery in the Northeast. HUD's yearly budget is nearly \$38 billion. Secretary Donovan should understand the importance of oversight and transparency to combat waste, fraud, and abuse. I have my doubts, though, because while I have sent dozens of letters to HUD, the Secretary has not signed a single reply. The responses I do receive are often months late and don't answer some of my most pressing concerns.

For instance, last August I sent a letter requesting information on conference spending and employee bonuses. HUD provided no conference spending documents but instead urged me to review a list of inspector general audit reports. My staff has reviewed these audit reports, but none of the audit reports provide a comprehensive review of conference spending. What is even more frustrating is that the response never referenced bonus spending at all. It seems oversight and transparency are not high priorities at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Every year HUD provides at least \$4 billion to public housing authorities across the country—along with nearly \$19 billion of section 8 vouchers. In 2009, the Obama administration provided yet another \$4 billion in stimulus funding for the housing authorities—all with little or no oversight. Public housing authorities operate in a gray area. HUD argues that they are State and local government entities, and it is thus—according to HUD—State and local governments that bear the pri-

mary responsibility for the housing authority actions. Up to 90 percent of their total funding comes from the Federal Government, thus making it HUD's responsibility to ensure the money is spent as intended.

My office went to work to determine the compensation packages for a handful of housing authorities spread around the country—mostly in the larger cities. Some authorities would not provide responses, but others responded with some troubling answers. It became apparent many executive directors were living very high on the hog. The fact is executive salaries, and other compensation at some public housing authorities, were a major problem and the amounts were then hidden from the taxpayers.

Some housing authority executive directors were earning high six-figure salaries and benefits that sometimes included a vehicle, housing allowance, and lucrative bonuses. Many of the executive directors were making more than even the Governor of the State they were located in. From Los Angeles, CA, to Boston, MA, they were raking in huge salaries. Unfortunately, no one at the HUD Headquarters in Washington, DC, was watching or even showed any concern.

In Philadelphia, the executive director's salary was \$300,000, plus a \$45,000 bonus. He had a housing authority car and driver, and the housing authority actually paid his mortgage. This money is supposed to help people with very low incomes afford safe and decent housing, but instead they were concerned about their own salary and their own housing. The taxpayers' money was meant to go to the lower income people for safe and decent housing and all the money was not being used for that. It is not supposed to subsidize the housing costs of a government bureaucrat in Philadelphia who already makes \$345,000 a year. In Chelsea, MA, the executive director's salary was \$360,000. He cashed out weeks of unused leave and sick time while only spending about 15 full days per year in the office.

These executive directors used taxpayers' money to build and protect their own fiefdoms, usually at the expense of the poor. In Philadelphia, this included spending millions of dollars on an army of well-connected lawyers. Ironically, these lawyers were paid with taxpayers' money to thwart investigations that were aimed at safeguarding taxpayer money. The HUD Office of Inspector General had done battle with these armies of lawyers over and over around the entire country, and the taxpayers are funding both sides of the fight.

In addition, no-bid contracts and contracts steered toward friends seemed to be common at many housing authorities.

As early as October 2010, I asked HUD to provide salary and compensation information for executive directors at