

serious and supportive way at that time, the supercommittee may well have succeeded. But he was busy. He was campaigning and, I would argue, undermining the process instead.

But even after the supercommittee failed, Republicans continued to work to find another way to achieve these spending cuts. We repeatedly called for replacing the sequester with smarter cuts rather than tax hikes, according to the original pact. House Republicans actually passed two bills to do just that. But again, instead of engaging with us, the President just set up more roadblocks. For more than 1 year, he resisted and dismissed every Republican attempt at a compromise. He refused to offer any kind of reasonable alternative, and he even threatened to veto other proposals aimed at averting the sequester.

Now here we are, with the President presenting the country with two options: Armageddon or a tax hike. Well, it is a false choice, and he knows it, but the President is a master at creating the impression of chaos as an excuse for government action—do nothing, fan the flames of catastrophe, and then claim the only way out is more government in the form of higher taxes.

Look, the choice we face isn't between the sequester and tax hikes. Remember, we are only talking about cutting 2 to 3 percent of the budget. Any business owner or middle-class parent will tell you it is completely ridiculous to think Washington can't find a better way to cut 2 or 3 percent of the Federal budget at a time when we are \$16 trillion in debt. Every single working American had to figure out how to make ends meet with 2 percent less in their paychecks just last month when the payroll tax holiday expired. Are you telling me Washington can't do the same? It is absurd. It is utterly absurd.

There is no reason in the world these cuts need to fall on essential services or emergency responders. After all, even with the sequester, Washington will be spending more than when President Obama got here. We are only talking about cutting one-tenth of what the President spent on the stimulus bill. Enough. Enough.

Step 1 in this process of getting to a serious solution is to end the White House's denial of historical reality. We are starting to get there, slowly but surely. More important, though, is the next step, and that is when the President and his Democratic allies actually come to the table and negotiate in a serious way, without gimmicks and without games, on how best to reduce Washington spending. So let's shelve the tax hikes and the endless campaigning.

Finally, I think there is an even larger point to be made. The President has been going around warning of utter chaos if the sequester takes effect. While I agree that those cuts could be made in a much smarter way and I

don't like the fact that they fall disproportionately on defense, what does it say about the size of government that we can't cut it by 2 or 3 percent without inviting disaster? Doesn't that really make our point? Hasn't government gotten too big if just cutting the overall budget by a couple of percentage points could have that kind of an impact? Personally, I don't believe the world will end if the President's sequester takes effect, but our country would be much better served if the Democrats who run Washington would get off the campaign trail and work with us to trim the budget in a more rational way.

Americans are tired of the manufactured crises. I know my constituents in Kentucky are. It is simply time. They want us to work together, and Republicans are ready to do just that.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. Would the Chair announce the business of the day.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CHARLES TIMOTHY HAGEL TO BE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. 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 as follows:

Department of Defense. Nomination of Charles Timothy Hagel, of Nebraska, to be Secretary.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the motion to proceed to the motion to reconsider the vote by which cloture was not invoked on the nomination is agreed to and the motion to reconsider is agreed to.

Under the previous order, the time until 12 noon will be equally divided in the usual form.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I believe the business before the Senate now is the vote on the reconsideration of the motion to end debate on the Hagel nomination. Is that correct?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is correct.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I believe it is now time for us to vote on the Hagel nomination.

Mr. INHOFE. Excuse me. Would the Senator from Michigan yield for a question?

Mr. LEVIN. Of course.

MR. INHOFE. It is my understanding that we have equally divided our time between now and noon. That is about 1 hour 40 minutes. I ask unanimous con-

sent, on the Republican side, that I be given the first 10 minutes and the last 15 minutes of our Republican time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, it is now time for us to vote up or down on the nomination, for many reasons.

The nomination has been before us for an adequate length of time for us to get the information our colleagues have asked for, but also there is the looming fact of sequestration. We need to have a Secretary of Defense who is not only in office but whose leadership is not in limbo but is there. Our troops need it. Their families need it. Our country needs it.

As of today we have 66,000 military personnel in harm's way in Afghanistan. The President of Afghanistan has just directed the United States to remove its special operations forces from a key Afghan province. Our military faces key decisions about the pace of the drawdown between now and the end of 2014, the size and composition of a residual force, and the terms and conditions for the ongoing presence in Afghanistan of the United States and our coalition partners after 2014.

At the same time we face new and growing threats elsewhere, including the ongoing threat posed by Iran's nuclear weapons program and the increasingly destructive civil war in Syria, with the risk that that conflict could result in the loss of control over that country's substantial stockpile of chemical weapons. There is also the growing instability in other countries affected by the Arab spring; the growth of al-Qaida affiliates in ungoverned regions, including parts of Yemen, Somalia, north Africa; and the continued unpredictable behavior of the nuclear-armed regime in North Korea.

We face these challenges at a time when the Department of Defense budget is under unique pressure as a result of cuts previously agreed upon by Congress, the budgeting by continuing resolution, and the impending threat of a sequester. These across-the-board cuts will affect Defense and just about every other agency we have. Those cuts are going to be disastrous in many ways. I hope we can still find ways to avoid them, but as of right now the threat of a sequester is a real one. It is within a few days.

The Department of Defense has already instituted civilian hiring freezes, reduced or eliminated temporary and term employees, deferred facilities maintenance, and begun canceling or postponing the maintenance of ships, aircraft, and ground vehicles. In the next few days, the Department will begin to implement additional actions, including furloughs for most civilian employees, cutbacks in flying hours, steaming hours and other military training, and cancellation of contracts. And those contracts, when they are cancelled, have major costs to the Treasury. Those are not savings, except in the short term, perhaps. But in

the long term, we not only lose the equipment and the product of the contracts, but we also have these cancellation costs which will hit the Treasury.

The result of these looming cuts is truly devastating and it is serious. For example, the Army informs us that if sequestration continues through the end of the fiscal year, two-thirds of its brigade combat teams will fall below acceptable readiness levels. The Air Force says it will not be able to support requirements outside of Afghanistan and will experience significant degradation in its airdrop and refueling capabilities. The Navy says the *Nimitz* and the *George H.W. Bush* carrier strike groups will not be ready for scheduled deployments later this year, resulting in an indefinite extension of the *Truman* and *Eisenhower* deployments, with the resulting impact on morale and retention.

Hundreds of Department of Defense investment programs, acquisition programs, and research and development projects may become unexecutable because we have insufficient funds to enter needed contracts. By the end of the summer, the Department of Defense says it will be unable to pay its TRICARE bills and will be in a position of having to deny that critical health care service to military members, families, and retirees.

Our men and women in uniform need a Secretary of Defense to lead them through these difficult challenges. They need a Secretary of Defense to defend their interests in the budget battles we know are about to come. They need a Secretary of Defense to speak out and ensure that Congress and the country understand the consequences of sequester and, if the sequester cannot be avoided, to help them avoid the worst of those consequences and to end the impacts as quickly as possible. Now, as much as anytime in the recent past, is not a time when we can afford to leave the Department of Defense with leadership that is in limbo.

Information has been requested, appropriately, by colleagues about the nominee. Information has been provided to the best of the nominee's ability. This information falls into two categories: requests for Senator Hagel's speeches and requests for additional financial disclosure.

With regard to the speeches, Senator Hagel and his team have conducted an exhaustive review and have provided us with all of the speeches available to them—not only the prepared statements requested in our committee questionnaire but also transcripts and even videos of speeches he has been able to obtain from outside sources. Before the recess, I placed in the RECORD links to several other speeches that had surfaced on the Internet.

In recent days, Senator Hagel has received additional requests for speeches in the exclusive control of the Washington Speakers Bureau and for access to his senatorial archives at the University of Nebraska.

On the first point, the Washington Speakers Bureau has informed Senator Hagel and the Department of Defense that all speeches given under its auspices are "private, off the record, and not recorded"—except in rare cases where a customer requests that a recording be kept for archival purposes only. Further, the Department of Defense informs us that the Washington Speakers Bureau will not provide any recordings of speeches that were given by Senator Hagel or even confirm which of its clients may have recorded speeches. Since neither Senator Hagel nor the Department of Defense has access to these speeches, they cannot be provided to the Senate.

On the second point, the University of Nebraska holds title to Senator Hagel's archives. The University has publicly stated that once the archives are processed and indexed according to the standards of the Society of American Archivists, they will be open to the public. Until that time, the archives will not be open to the public. Again, since neither Senator Hagel nor DOD has access to these materials, they cannot provide them to us. It is also worth noting that these archives cover the period of Senator Hagel's service in the Senate. Senator Hagel has an extensive record of speeches and votes during this period that are readily accessible to the Senate and the public through the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD and other official documents.

With regard to financial disclosure, Senator Hagel has complied with the same disclosure requirements and conflict of interest rules that have applied to at least the last eight Secretaries of Defense and to hundreds of other nominees for senior DOD positions over the course of the last five administrations.

Despite his compliance with the same disclosure rules that apply to everybody else, we have heard innuendos that Senator Hagel is trying to hide something. Senator Hagel serves with a number of distinguished individuals on the Board of Advisors of a private equity firm. We had one Senator suggest, without any evidence, that "it is, at a minimum, relevant to know" if the fees that Senator Hagel received for his service on this Board "came directly from Saudi Arabia, [or] . . . from North Korea." Another Senator suggested that we should postpone a vote on the nomination because "FOX News is going to run a story tomorrow regarding some speeches . . . which were made and paid for by foreign governments . . . [that] may not be friendly to us." This story apparently died before it was aired, because it was apparently based on a hoax.

These are unfair innuendos and they have been answered even though they are unfair.

Senator Hagel has an extensive record of service to his country. As a young man, he enlisted in the Army and served with distinction in Vietnam. He served as the head of the USO, and as the Deputy Administrator of the

VA during the Reagan Administration. He was a businessman. Many of us served with him during his two terms in the Senate. Since he left the Senate, he has continued to serve, as co-chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, a member of the Defense Policy Board, and a member of the Energy Department's Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future.

Senator Hagel has been endorsed by five former Secretaries of Defense, three former Secretaries of State, and six former National Security Advisors, who served under both Democratic and Republican Presidents. He has been endorsed by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, AMVETS, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the American Legion. He has received the support of the Military Officers Association of America, the Foreign Area Officers Association, and the Non Commissioned Officers Association.

Last month, Senator Hagel was endorsed in a letter signed by six former U.S. Ambassadors to Israel, along with dozens of other retired senior diplomats. The letter stated:

We support, strongly and without qualification, President Obama's nomination of Chuck Hagel to be the next Secretary of Defense. Most of us have known the Senator for a decade or more and consistently have found him to be one of the best informed leaders in the U.S. Congress on national security issues.

Senator Hagel's political courage has impressed us all. He has stood and argued publicly for what he believes is best for the United States. Time and again, he has chosen to take the path of standing up for our nation, rather than the path of political expediency. He has always supported the pillars of American foreign policy: a strong military; a robust Atlantic partnership; a commitment to the security of Israel, as a friend and ally; a determination to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons; and the defense of human rights as a core principle of America's role in the world. . . .

We urge speedy confirmation of this outstanding American patriot to be the next Secretary of Defense.

If confirmed, Senator Hagel would be the first former enlisted man, and the first veteran of the Vietnam War, to serve as Secretary of Defense. This background gives Senator Hagel an invaluable perspective not only with respect to the difficult decisions and recommendations that a Secretary of Defense must make regarding the use of force and the commitment of U.S. troops overseas, but also with respect to the day-to-day decisions a Secretary must make to ensure that our men and women in uniform and their families receive the support and assistance that they need and deserve. It would be a positive message for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines in harm's way around the world to know that one of their own holds the highest office in the Department of Defense.

The President needs to have a Secretary of Defense in whom he has trust, who will give him independent advice,

a person of integrity and one who has a personal understanding of the consequences of decisions relative to the use of military force. Senator Hagel certainly has those critically important qualifications and he is well-qualified to lead the Department of Defense.

The vote which is coming at noon is a vote to invoke cloture to end the debate so we can finally, later on today, hopefully, but at some future hour, finally vote on this important nomination and end the situation where this nominee is in limbo and the leadership of the Department of Defense is uncertain and in limbo as well. The time has come to vote on the nomination of Senator Hagel, and to do that we must end debate and invoke cloture.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, first of all, I agree with a lot of what the distinguished chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee has said. Certainly Senator Hagel has had a brilliant military career. I sometimes look at my time in the Army and his time in the Army and mine is very unimpressive. That is not what the issue is.

I do think it is interesting in the debate we have had on the floor, all the time from the Democrats has been talking about his military record. Nobody disagrees with that. That is a fact. But there are some things that have to come out because they are very significant.

First of all, what we are going to vote on at noon is the vote. There is not any other vote. The vote after that is merely a simple majority and that would be automatic. Those who are expressing where they are on the Hagel nomination must be reflected in the vote that takes place now, the cloture vote at noon today. Our time is equally divided. Leadership time did take up some of that so we are a little bit scarce on time. First, let me make it real clear this is the one vote that makes a difference. If they are able to get 60 votes for the Hagel nomination, it is history. It is over.

I do wish to say a couple things for clarification before others on our side start speaking. One is about the whole idea of a 60-vote threshold. I have been listening to some of the pundits on television. One of my favorites—I will not mention her by name, but she is kind of the leader of the far left on television. I was watching her a couple days ago and she was talking about how this is something that never happened before, we have never had a 60-vote margin on a Cabinet-level position.

This is not true. It happens all the time. It is normal. This is how significant this confirmation vote is. It is not something that would make it go for a long period of time. Actually, I have lists. Later on, if there is time, I am going to go over some of these. Kathleen Sebelius, for example, that was a

60-vote margin; John Bryson for Secretary of Commerce, 60-vote margin.

Here is an interesting one. Back when President Bush, who was a Republican, was President, he nominated Stephen Johnson to be the EPA Administrator. He was a Republican. The President was a Republican. Stephen Johnson was a Democrat. Of course the other side was saying, no, we are going to demand to have cloture, and they finally did get 61 votes on that; Dirk Kempthorne, same thing, Secretary of the Interior.

This idea that this is the first time is just not right. I would appreciate it if people would be a little more honest when they are looking at that issue.

They also have said we are in the middle of the wars, which we are. I am the ranking member on the Armed Services Committee. No one is more sensitive to it, no one spends more time talking to the troops than I do, and we do need to have confirmed a Secretary of Defense. Leon Panetta has said he will serve until such time as one is confirmed. But if we go ahead and if this should for some reason not be able to come up with 60 votes, I suggest they go ahead and nominate someone else and we will run it through. I would even help them.

I called Leon Panetta not too long ago—I guess I should not say this on the floor—and asked: Why don't you agree to serve again? He has, of course, family reasons, and I certainly understand he was unable to do it. Michele Flournoy, I commented, would be one. I don't agree with her philosophically on a lot of things, but I think she is one who would not be controversial. Ash Carter—we have a number who could be confirmed in a matter of minutes, and I would be right there with them in order to help that take place.

I do wish to say something about advice and consent. Sometimes people do not understand it. I had someone go back and research this. It started back in 1787. At the Constitutional Convention they talked about it. Back then they used the term "approbation or rejection of the Senate." It means the same thing. This has been going on for a long period of time. Certainly, in the Federalist Papers, Hamilton talked about it as long as he talked about any other subject. So "approbation or rejection of the Senate" is the rejection language that was used at that time that is advice and consent today.

Where are we today? Certainly, the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee, from whom we just heard, is one of the strongest supporters of advice and consent who has said: "It is shocking and sad to me that the Senate may vote on this nominee"—it doesn't matter, it could be any nominee—"while Senators are being denied critical, relevant information."

The leader of the Senate has also said many times, he said "raising the impression that the nominee and the White House have something to hide."

This is exactly what now is going on in reverse. It goes on and on with different ones who have stated over and over again the significance of the role that the Senate has in advice and consent.

John Kerry said: What the Senate has to decide is whether it is going to stand for the rights of the committees, the rights of advice and consent. The Senators ought to respect the fact that both the chairman and ranking members had requests and those requests had not been fulfilled.

That is exactly what happened. We have one of the new Senators for whom I have a great deal of respect, Senator Cruz. I was talking to him last night. I said: You ought to come down and let them know why it is you are not speaking on this. He said: Look, what else can I do? I have requested over and over and over again for information on our nominee for Secretary of Defense and I have been denied. I have been stonewalled. What else can I say?

I said—maybe it sounded a little extreme the other day when I said I would walk through fire for the ability of our members on the committee to get all the information they are entitled to. Senator Cruz has not received that information. That is something that I think is very critical.

What I want to do, in the short time I have left over—by the way, I ask unanimous consent, if following me, if Senator COATS could be acknowledged for 5 minutes.

Mr. DURBIN. Reserving the right to object, I have been waiting to speak on this subject.

Mr. INHOFE. After the remarks of the Senator from Illinois, I have no objection.

Mr. LEVIN. I have no objection after the Senator from Illinois is recognized.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. INHOFE. The problem I had is not with information I had. I didn't need any additional information. I didn't request additional information. Many of the members on the Republican side of our committee did not receive the information they asked for. That was the case with Senator Cruz.

I had a different reason. My reason is that while I think so highly of Senator Hagel and the work he did while he was in the Vietnam war—he was, in fact, a hero—I have to also look at nominees and ask what their philosophy is. Senator Hagel was one of only two who voted against sanctions for Iran. He was one of only four who voted against an effort to designate the Iran Revolutionary Guard a terrorist group, and one of only four who refused to sign a letter of solidarity with Israel.

The Global Zero movement advocates a nuke-free world. That sounds so good, and it is something President Obama has talked about. He wistfully looks to the day when we have a nuke-free world. That sounded good back in the days of the Cold War. I look wistfully

back at the days of the Cold War. Back then we had two superpowers. They were predictable. We knew what they had. Mutual assured destruction meant something to them. Mutually assured destruction doesn't mean much to some people in the Middle East, and I think we all understand that. So Global Zero sounds good until we realize that we have countries such as Iran—even our nonclassified intelligence says it is going to have the nuclear capability and delivery system by 2015. I am concerned with that.

I was in shock—and, first of all, I have to thank the chairman of the committee because in the years I served on the Armed Services Committee, I have never seen this done before—when the chairman agreed to allow Senator CRUZ, a member of the committee, to use a video that had the Al Jazeera interview where Senator Hagel agreed with Al Jazeera's position that Israel has committed war crimes, that Israel has committed sickening slaughter, and that America is the world's bully. These are things which concern me about the attitude toward Israel. I understand we can go back and get a lot of people in the past to sign a letter, but I have to say that is still very much a concern of mine.

With that, I will yield the floor to my good friend from Illinois.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Senator from Oklahoma and the Senator from Indiana. I rise today to express my support for our former colleague Chuck Hagel to be America's 24th Secretary of Defense. We hoped Chuck Hagel would have been named Secretary of Defense 2 weeks ago and could have led the delegation to Brussels last week to meet with our NATO partners on the challenges we face in Afghanistan and around the world.

Instead, he was subjected to a rare and historic filibuster by the other side of the aisle. What a way to give an opportunity to a man of Chuck Hagel's background to serve our Nation. What we have seen over the past 2 weeks is the cost of apostasy, the cost of breaking with a party, or a leadership, and what it means when their name comes up again for consideration.

There is no question that there are some who bear some negative feelings toward Chuck Hagel because of his independence and some of his votes in the past—even his support of President Obama in the last Presidential election. But this has been taken to a level I never expected.

Chuck Hagel is no stranger to most of us in the Senate. We served with him. I served with him on the Intelligence Committee for 4 years. Not once did I have any question about this man's commitment to America and its national defense—not once. I watched votes being taken behind closed doors on some very sensitive issues, and I saw Chuck Hagel respond in a non-partisan way to those votes. I believe,

as many have said on the floor, he is an extraordinary individual who has proven with his life his commitment to this Nation and its defense.

He has big shoes to fill with Secretary Leon Panetta leaving. Leon Panetta has been an extraordinary public servant and a very close personal friend of mine for years now. The fact that he received a unanimous vote to be Secretary of Defense is as solid a tribute as anyone can expect in this life of public service. I believe Chuck Hagel is up to this task.

There is an expression that adversity doesn't build character, it reveals it.

Chuck Hagel enlisted in the Army and served in Vietnam. He received two Purple Hearts, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Combat Infantryman Badge for his service. Less well known is how he got there. Hagel was drafted and immediately volunteered for the Army, but he lucked out. He was assigned to Europe during the Vietnam war. There wasn't much of a war going on in Europe, so this brave, future nominee to head the Department of Defense literally told his commanders: I want to volunteer to actually go to Vietnam and risk my life.

As he recounted it to me, he said: "The room just stopped." This wasn't something that many people in Europe saw—in those days an enlisted man, who received a safe assignment in Europe, would volunteer to go to war. He convinced his leaders to give him that chance and he served alongside his brother Tom in the same unit. He said they saved each other's lives more than once, and thankfully they both came home safe to Nebraska. That was the first chapter of Chuck Hagel's public service and his commitment to servicemembers and veterans.

A second chapter came in 1981 when President Ronald Reagan appointed Chuck Hagel Deputy Administrator of the Veterans' Administration. The Washington Post speculated at the time of his appointment that Hagel "might be expected to toe the company line." How wrong they were. He went to work immediately to be an advocate for veterans. He quickly ran into roadblocks while serving Vietnam vets. At one point the head of the VA publicly called Vietnam vets "crybabies."

After months of unsuccessful attempts to bring attention to the care of our veterans, as they deserved, including repeatedly raising the issue to the White House, he did the right thing. As a matter of principle, he resigned in order to bring the poor treatment of veterans to light in America.

He went on to start Vanguard Cellular, a very large multimillion-dollar mobile phone company. He served as president and CEO of the USO, which brings a smile, a laugh, and some comfort and entertainment to our servicemembers around the world.

Later, as a U.S. Senator, he shepherded the post-9/11 GI Bill into law along with fellow veteran Jim Webb. It was a substantial and overdue update

of the law to ensure that we continue to keep our commitment to veterans. It should not surprise any of us that this commitment is among the reasons so many organizations back Senator Hagel's nomination, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, the AMVETS, Vietnam Veterans of America, the American Legion, Military Officers Association of America, and the Noncommissioned Officers Association. They recognize that a person of his character is precisely the person we need to head the Department of Defense.

When I spoke with Senator Hagel in my office a few weeks ago, he discussed his views on security challenges around the world, including the challenges to the Pentagon's budget and the Iran nuclear program and its threat to peace in the world. It included safeguarding our rock-solid commitments to allies such as Israel.

I am firmly convinced that Senator Hagel shares President Obama's commitment to addressing these challenges and supporting our allies. He is committed to the President's Iran strategy and he voted for many multilateral sanction packages against their nuclear program.

My friend from Oklahoma raised one vote when it comes to Iran, but I wish to make a record of the fact that Chuck Hagel voted for the Iran Missile Proliferation Sanctions Act of 1998, the Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000, and the Iran Freedom Support Act of 2006.

In his book "America: Our Next Chapter," Chuck Hagel stated that Iran is a "state sponsor of terrorism," and that it "provides material support to Hezbollah and Hamas." Chuck Hagel's public statements and voting record in the Senate demonstrate a strong commitment to Israel, a commitment that the United States-Israeli relationship will grow even stronger in the future.

As he said in his book in 2008:

[a]t its core, there will always be a special and historic bond with Israel exemplified by our continued commitment to Israel's defense.

He also understands the budget challenges facing the Pentagon. During his testimony to the Armed Services Committee, he said that sequestration "would send a terrible signal to our military and civilian workforce."

On this, and many other issues, Senator Hagel continues to demonstrate a clear-eyed commitment to our core national security interests and a nuanced, personal understanding of the gravity of the use of force. This is not just my judgment; 13 former Secretaries of State and Defense and former National Security Advisors wrote to the Senate recently, urging Senator Hagel's swift confirmation. The signatories included senior leaders from both parties across several decades of Presidential administrations, such as Robert Gates, Colin Powell, Brent Scowcroft, and William Cohen. These

men—all of whom have been part of the responsibility of keeping America safe—believe Chuck Hagel, as Secretary of Defense, will do exactly that. There are some here who may question that, and this is their right. But men who have had that responsibility trust Chuck Hagel, as do I.

Let me quote from their letter:

His approach to national security debates about the use of American power is marked by a disciplined habit of thoughtfulness that is sorely needed and these qualities will serve him well as Secretary of Defense at a time when the United States must address a range of international security issues that are unprecedented in scope.

Allow me to conclude by pointing to the 2002 interview Chuck Hagel gave to the Library of Congress Vietnam History Project. He discussed how he and his brother Tom would volunteer to “walk point.” In other words, to watch, be out in front watching for ambushes, booby traps, leading his men safely through the day. He said, “You know what happens to a lot of point men, but I always felt a little better if I was up front than somebody else.”

Forty-five years after first walking point for our servicemen in Vietnam, I hope Chuck Hagel may be out in front again walking point as our next Secretary of Defense. We need his wise counsel on matters of war and peace and his rock-solid commitment to our men and women in uniform.

Let me conclude by saying that over this past week, in my new capacity as chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, I traveled to Africa and the Middle East. While I was there, I met with some of our great men and women in uniform. It was humbling to see the sacrifice they are making personally for the safety of the United States. I visited places where people we don't even know are working on the job every single day to protect this great Nation. I am confident that Chuck Hagel, as Secretary of Defense, will keep them in mind and keep our national security in his heart.

I hope my colleagues on the other side will relent and spare us this filibuster on Chuck Hagel, and will, in fact, give him an opportunity to continue to serve this Nation in the capacity of Secretary of Defense. I look forward to working with him when that happens.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, normally I would be talking about the sequester and the Nation's fiscal health, but we are about to vote on a critical nomination for a very critical position in this government. I wish to spend a few minutes defining why I came to the decision I have to oppose the confirmation of Senator Hagel to be Secretary of Defense.

Chuck Hagel is a former colleague. He is someone I respect for his honorable service to this country, both in uniform and out of uniform. I respect

him as a human being and as a person and, as I said, a colleague. I also recognize that elections have consequences, and in most situations the President has the right to choose his own advisers, but this is no ordinary Cabinet position. This is Secretary of Defense and one of the most critical positions in this government to protect the American people and to deal with national security issues.

Based on a number of positions Senator Hagel has taken and a number of statements he has made throughout his career, I have serious concern that his nomination and confirmation will send the wrong signal and could have a very adverse effect on our national security. I will list those.

First, and the primary reason, goes to the question of Iran and its relentless pursuit of nuclear weapons capability. As a Senator, Chuck Hagel repeatedly voted against sanctions legislation. He even opposed sanctions aimed at the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps who were killing and maiming our troops in Iraq.

As someone who, as ambassador to Germany, made many trips to Landstuhl, the first stop for those maimed by improvised explosive devices supported by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, I saw the tragic consequences of their action. I could not come to grips with how it is possible to vote against efforts to try to sanction and punish those who were injuring and maiming our soldiers. During his recent testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Hagel also proclaimed the legitimacy of the current regime in Tehran which has violently repressed its own citizens. We have seen that played out before our very eyes. They have rigged recent elections, provided material support for terrorism and denied the Holocaust.

Regarding U.S. policy in Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, Senator Hagel displayed an embarrassing lack of knowledge and confusion regarding our official policy toward Iran—a well-understood policy. One of the most critical topics facing our Nation is Iran's threat to world stability by the possession of nuclear capability and weapons. Senator Hagel had to be handed a note by an aide, indicating he was not aware his answer was contrary to even the administration's position. And his attempt to correct his answer had to be further clarified by the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. This is central to our position, to our policy relative to how we deal with Iran. Yet our next Secretary of Defense stated a position exactly opposite from what that current policy is.

The second issue of concern to me is that it is widely accepted, I think in a bipartisan way, that any sound strategy on Iran must be underpinned by the highly credible threat of U.S. military force if all other efforts fail; if diplomacy fails, if our ever-ratcheting sanctions fail as they have to this par-

ticular point. They may have had an impact on the Iranian public, but it has not had an impact on those leaders who are making the decisions about the pursuit of nuclear weapons. This has broad bipartisan support: Four U.S. Presidents, including President Obama, has declared that an Iranian nuclear arms capability is “unacceptable.” Use of military force as the last option, if all other options fail, is central to our ability to success in preventing Iran from achieving this capability.

Senator Hagel's previous statements and record contradict all that. He has publicly stated that military action to stop Iran's weapons programs is—and I quote his statement: “Not viable, feasible, or reasonable.” Not reasonable? Is it not reasonable to have a policy the administration has adopted and four U.S. Presidents have endorsed? When asked about this at the hearing, he again failed to offer, in my opinion, a coherent response.

Senator Hagel has long called for direct, unconditional talks with the Iranian regime, not to mention direct talks with Hamas, Hezbollah, and Syria as well. He has pressed that such talks should proceed without the backing gained from other more forceful, credible options. This approach is far too weak, in my opinion, to be effective and reveals a person less committed to results than this critical moment—particularly regarding the Iranian intentions—demands. In fact, I fear a military option will have virtually zero credibility if Senator Hagel becomes Secretary of Defense because it sends a dangerous message to the regime in Tehran and undermines our efforts to prevent their intentions as it seeks to obtain the means necessary to harm both the United States and the country of Israel.

Lastly, and the third reason I have problems with this nomination, is that it does not have bipartisan support. Over the last half century, no Secretary of Defense has been confirmed and taken office with more than three Senators voting against him. Further, in the history of this Nation, in this position, none has ever been confirmed with more than 11 opposing votes.

The occupant of this critical office should be someone whose candidacy is neither controversial nor divisive. It would be unprecedented for a Secretary of Defense to take office without the broad base of bipartisan support and confidence needed to serve effectively in this critical position.

At this critical time in our Nation's history, we need a Secretary of Defense who commands bipartisan support and is willing to take every action necessary to defend the United States if the need arises. Based on the years of public statements and actions taken during his career, I cannot say Chuck Hagel meets the criteria needed for this position that is so critical—the position of Secretary of Defense; therefore, I will oppose his nomination when the vote comes before us.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Senator from Oklahoma. Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, I know the distinguished Senator from Delaware, Mr. CARPER, wishes to be heard. He is not on the floor now, so I think it is acceptable to go ahead with another Republican now; is that correct?

Mr. LEVIN. Yes.

Mr. INHOFE. I recognize the senior Senator from Texas, Mr. CORNYN.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, we all know the Chamber is about to hold a cloture vote on the President's nominee to be the next Secretary of Defense. If former Senator Chuck Hagel is eventually confirmed, he will take office with the weakest support of any Defense Secretary in modern history, which will make him less effective on his job.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a letter regarding this nomination following my remarks. It is a letter dated February 21, signed by 15 Senators, to the President asking him to withdraw the nomination, noting that no Secretary of Defense since that position has been created has received more than 11 opposing votes. I am confident this vote will eclipse that former record demonstrating what the Senator from Indiana was just talking about, and that is a lack of bipartisan support for this critical position in the President's Cabinet.

What should we expect from Senator Hagel if he is confirmed as Secretary of Defense? Well, it is hard to say. Over the last 2 months he has repudiated many of his past votes and stated positions related to the Middle East and the Defense Department. During his confirmation hearings, he actually said the Defense Secretary was not a policymaking position. I had to scratch my head at that one.

I also had to scratch my head when Senator Hagel described President Obama's policy toward Iran and its nuclear program as containment. When he tried to correct himself, he said President Obama does not have a position on containment, but that is not true either. The U.S. position—as the distinguished chairman of the Armed Services Committee reminded Senator Hagel during that hearing, and which reflects a wide bipartisan consensus—is that we oppose containment and will prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons. That is the U.S. policy, one that people would think the nominee for Secretary of Defense would be aware of.

Unfortunately, I fear Senator Hagel is actually expressing his own personal views. I fear he really does think a nuclear Iran could be contained. He suggested as much in the book he wrote in 2008.

At another point during the hearing, Senator Hagel described the murderous, terror-sponsoring Iranian the-

ocracy as an “elected, legitimate government.” That comment is a slap in the face to all of the courageous Iranian democracy activists who have risked their lives and, in many cases, given their lives to oppose the dictatorship and promote freedom.

There is simply no way to sugarcoat it. Senator Hagel's performance before the Senate Armed Services Committee was remarkably inept, and we should not be installing a Defense Secretary who is obviously not qualified for the job and who holds dangerously misguided views on some of the most important issues facing national security policy for our country. For that matter, Senator Hagel was candid to admit there are many things about the Department he doesn't really know. He has assured us he will learn on the job. That doesn't inspire a lot of confidence in me because I don't think we want a Secretary of Defense who has to learn on the job.

A moment ago I mentioned Senator Hagel holds dangerously misguided views about many critical issues. His supporters have called him a realist. In fact, there is nothing realistic about his world view.

It is not realistic to think that by offering unconditional talks or establishing a new U.S. diplomatic post in Iran it will change the character of a regime that has spent the past 34 years waging war against America and our allies—a regime that was recently discovered to have been plotting to assassinate a Saudi diplomat by blowing up a crowded restaurant in Washington, DC. Likewise, it is not realistic to think that further engagement with Hamas will dissuade it from pursuing Israel's destruction. A terrorist organization that promotes genocidal violence is never going to be reformed by dialogue or concessions.

Finally, it is not realistic to think that browbeating Israel will jumpstart the Middle East peace process. President Obama tried that approach himself during his first term, and it was a spectacular failure. We are further from a lasting peace agreement today than we were in January 2009, and many Israelis, along with many Arabs, believe the United States is no longer a reliable ally.

When we look around the Middle East, not only do we see a theocratic dictatorship trying to acquire nuclear weapons, we see a terrible civil war raging in Syria which is led by a desperate, pro-Iranian regime with massive stockpiles of chemical weapons that has no reservation whatsoever at killing tens of thousands of its own civilians. We see the Muslim Brotherhood attempting to create a new dictatorship in Egypt. We see rising sectarian violence in Iraq because of our withdrawal without a status of forces agreement that would stabilize the country and a democracy earned by the blood and treasure of so many Americans. We see a substantial al-Qaida presence in countries such as Libya and Yemen.

President Obama would like to pivot away from the Middle East, but the region isn't cooperating. Now, more than ever, we need a Secretary of Defense who understands the disastrous consequences of a nuclear Iran.

We need a Defense Secretary who understands the importance of a robust U.S.-Israeli alliance.

We need a Defense Secretary who understands Hamas for what it is: a genocidal terrorist group sworn to Israel's destruction.

In a larger sense, we need a Secretary of Defense who understands why U.S. leadership is indispensable to solving our greatest challenges in the Middle East and beyond.

Senator Hagel is clearly the wrong man for the job. This isn't about personality, this isn't about politics, but I will be voting against his confirmation for that reason: because he is clearly the wrong man for the job.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, February 21, 2013.

President BARACK H. OBAMA,

The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW., Washington, DC.

DEAR PRESIDENT OBAMA: Last Thursday, the Senate voted to continue its consideration of your nomination of former Senator Chuck Hagel to serve as our nation's next Secretary of Defense. While we respect Senator Hagel's honorable military service, in the interest of national security, we respectfully request that you withdraw his nomination.

It would be unprecedented for a Secretary of Defense to take office without the broad base of bipartisan support and confidence needed to serve effectively in this critical position. Over the last half-century, no Secretary of Defense has been confirmed and taken office with more than three Senators voting against him. Further, in the history of this position, none has ever been confirmed with more than 11 opposing votes. The occupant of this critical office should be someone whose candidacy is neither controversial nor divisive.

In contrast, in 2011, you nominated Leon Panetta, who was confirmed by the Senate with unanimous support. His Pentagon tenure has been a huge success, due in part to the high degree of trust and confidence that Senators on both sides of the aisle have placed in him. The next Secretary of Defense should have a similar level of broad-based bipartisan support and confidence in order to succeed at a time when the Department of Defense faces monumental challenges, including Iran's relentless drive to obtain nuclear weapons, a heightened threat of nuclear attack from North Korea, potentially deep budget cuts, a strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific region, military operations in Afghanistan, the ongoing Global War on Terror, the continued slaughter of Syrian civilians at the hands of their own government, and other aftermath of the Arab Spring.

Likewise, Senator Hagel's performance at his confirmation hearing was deeply concerning, leading to serious doubts about his basic competence to meet the substantial demands of the office. While Senator Hagel's erratic record and myriad conversions on key national security issues are troubling enough, his statements regarding Iran were disconcerting. More than once during the hearing, he proclaimed the legitimacy of the

current regime in Tehran, which has violently repressed its own citizens, rigged recent elections, provided material support for terrorism, and denied the Holocaust.

Regarding U.S. policy on Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, Senator Hagel displayed a seeming ambivalence about whether containment or prevention is the best approach, which gives us great concern. Any sound strategy on Iran must be underpinned by the highly credible threat of U.S. military force, and there is broad bipartisan agreement on that point. If Senator Hagel becomes Secretary of Defense, the military option will have near zero credibility. This sends a dangerous message to the regime in Tehran, as it seeks to obtain the means necessary to harm both the United States and Israel.

We have concluded that Senator Hagel is not the right candidate to hold the office of Secretary of Defense, and we respectfully request that you withdraw his nomination. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Cornyn; Lindsey Graham; David Vitter; Mike Lee; Marco Rubio; Ron Johnson; Tom Coburn; Tim Scott; James Inhofe; Roger Wicker; Ted Cruz; Patrick Toomey; Daniel Coats; James E. Risch; John Barrasso.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, it is rare that I disagree with the Senator from Texas—maybe once or twice in the last half a dozen years. Seriously, we disagree from time to time, but we do it in a way that we are not disagreeable with one another.

I support the President's nomination of Chuck Hagel to be our Secretary of Defense, and I wish to take a couple of minutes to explain why.

For folks who might be watching this from afar, this body used to operate very differently than it does today. The President would nominate people to serve in a cabinet or to serve as judges and there would be hearings. There would be debate. Sometimes people would disagree. But, certainly, for Cabinet appointments and for sub-Cabinet level appointments, for the most part, the President got the team he, or someday she, asked for. That is the way we have done it as Governors across the country, and it is the way we still do it. The idea of 4 years of this administration to still be playing a game of executive branch Swiss cheese—we have so many relatively high level positions, confirmable positions that are still vacant—is not good, whether it happens to be a Democratic administration or a Republican administration.

The President, regardless of what party they are from, needs, for the most part, to have the team they want to put in place. They have been elected to lead. Let's give them a chance to lead. If they screw up, we can hold them accountable.

I had the pleasure of serving with Chuck Hagel for, I guess, my first 8 years as a Senator. I like him and respect him as a fellow Vietnam veteran. He is a war hero. He was wounded not once but twice. He has the Purple

Hearts and some other decorations to show, to demonstrate his valor.

He came back, put his life together, built a business, a good-sized business, ran that business, and he has led some large government entities, including those that look out for our veterans and others too.

As to the question of does one have the kind of intimate knowledge of the Department of Defense we would like for a person to have, he has had good training. He has had good exposure. He has been there. He has done that. He has been able to, as an innovator, as an entrepreneur, start a business, grow a business, run that business, build that business.

Here he served on the committees of jurisdiction that actually enabled him to drill down on parts of the Department of Defense and part of our defense policy and foreign policy that you never have a chance to when you are over there serving in Southeast Asia or some other area around the world as a member of our Armed Services.

When I went with Chuck on a codel—I want to say it was maybe in 2005—that is when we actually get to know people around here. We could be here, be kind of airdropped in on Monday afternoons, vote, and then by the time Thursday night rolls around, folks here smell the jet fumes and they are ready to go back to Hawaii or Michigan or Oklahoma or someplace such as that. We go by train to Delaware. But people are ready to head for home, and we just do not have the kind of time together, quality time together, that we used to have when people would actually stay here for weekends, when we were not focused 24/7 on fundraising, and we actually had—believe it or not—dinner clubs and people carpooled to work. Can you imagine that: Democrats and Republicans carpooling to work here? We just do not have those opportunities these days. I do not know that we ever will again.

So one of the great opportunities we have to know people is when we go on codels, these congressional delegation trips. I had the opportunity to go with Chuck Hagel on a codel he led over one-half dozen years ago. We went to the Middle East. We went to Israel. We spent time along Gaza. We went to Jordan. We met with leaders of Saudi Arabia. I had a chance to actually see him interact up close and personal with leaders of all those countries, see how he handled himself, to see his knowledge of the issues, his ability to debate, discuss those issues with the leaders of three of the most important nations, allies of ours in the world.

I was proud of the job he did then. I was proud of the leadership he showed on those occasions. I was proud of his grasp of the issues.

Do you know the other thing I was proud of? He was willing to be honest and frank with people with whom we need to be honest and frank. He reminds me of one of the old caveats of leadership, which is that leadership is

having the courage to stay out of step when everybody else is marching to the wrong tune. Leadership is also the willingness to speak truth to power, to tell people—sometimes our leaders, whether they be the President or, frankly, sometimes leaders of other countries—what they need to hear, maybe not what they want to hear.

Chuck Hagel is that kind of person. I believe he is principled. I think he is hard working, that he will surround himself with good people, ethical people, honest people, capable people, bright people.

I think as a former Member here, he understands the importance of the interaction between us and the Department of Defense, which I hope he will have the opportunity to lead.

When we passed something called the Chief Financial Officer Act, I think in 1990 in this Chamber, coauthored, I think, by Bill Roth, my predecessor, one of the requirements of that legislation was not only would every major department in our government be required to have a chief financial officer, but also, in addition, there was a full expectation that all these departments which were not auditable—could not be audited—had to become auditable. They had to be capable of being audited. Then there was the full expectation that once they were auditable, they would be able to pass an audit fully without qualification.

Today, there are two departments in the Federal Government that are not auditable and have not passed an audit in an unqualified manner. One of them is the Department of Homeland Security. They are getting real close. They are knocking on the door. I think they will get it done by next year. I congratulate the Secretary and their team for doing that.

The other is the Department of Defense. For years and years and years they would say: Well, manana. We will do that manana, next year or the year after that. They have not. Why is this important? What you cannot measure you cannot manage. What we cannot measure we cannot manage. The Department of Defense is unable to measure well and, as a result, they do not manage as well as they need to.

We just got a high risk update from the GAO, the General Accountability Office, 2 weeks ago. High on their list of issues that need to be addressed is the Department of Defense's need to be able to pass an unqualified audit so their financials, their accounting systems and supply systems, their spare parts systems, personnel systems actually work.

Leon Panetta has done much in the 2 years he has served as Secretary of Defense to make sure the Department of Defense takes this obligation seriously. I commend him and I thank him for that. He has been like a breath of fresh air.

Second, Chuck Hagel has given me his personal commitment that he will not relent, he will not turn back, but

he will continue on this path of undertaking and be in a position by the next 3 years to do what the Department of Homeland Security is about to complete, the benchmark they are about to reach, the milestone they are about to reach, and the milestone that virtually every other Department of the Federal Government has reached.

We are looking down the barrel of a gun this Friday—sequestration. If we are serious about making sure we do not get shot by that gun, mortally wounded by that gun, along with our economy, we are going to have to make sure we are doing three things better.

One of those is, we need some additional revenues. We need to have revenues closer to the level of where revenues were in the 4 years we had balanced budgets under Bill Clinton, where revenues as a percentage of GDP, my colleagues will recall, ranged anywhere from 19½ percent of GDP to 20½ percent of GDP—somewhere in that range. Last year, it was about 15½, maybe 16 percent of GDP.

With the fiscal cliff deal adopted in this body and signed by the President back in early January, revenues as a percentage of GDP by the end of these 10 years will be up to about 18, 18½ percent. But some additional revenues are needed, very much in line with what we had when we actually had four balanced budgets in a row under the Clinton administration. Remember, those were the first balanced budgets we had since 1969. So, No. 1, we need some additional revenues—in smart ways.

The second thing we need to do is entitlement program reform. Over half the money we spend is on entitlements. Is it possible? The President says we need entitlement reform that saves money, does not savage old people, poor people, and actually makes sure these programs are around for future generations. I could not agree more. That is No. 2.

The third thing we need to do is find ways to save money in everything we do—everything we do—from agriculture to transportation and everything in between, including defense.

I am told—and I am going to look over here at Senator LEVIN, the chairman of the committee, and the ranking member, Senator INHOFE, and just ask a rhetorical question. I recall hearing not long ago that we spend more as a nation on defense—I say this as a 23-year veteran naval flight officer, Active and Reserve Duty, a Vietnam veteran—but I am told we spend as much money on defense as maybe the next 5, 6, 7 nations combined.

As important as it is for our next Secretary of Defense to have a good grasp of military issues—foreign issues, intelligence issues, the ability to manage big operations, to have strong managers under him or her—as important as that is, it is important for us to spend more wisely.

A good place to start is the GAO high risk list for high-risk places where we are wasting money and that we get a

good to-do list out of GAO. It is one I think we ought to take seriously. I know the chairman of our committee and the ranking member take it seriously. Believe me, I do too.

One of things we are going to use from our commitment of Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs—on which Senator LEVIN serves, and he chairs the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations—we are going to make sure we hold the feet of the Department of Defense to the fire, and we need a Secretary of Defense who will do that as well—someone who is a fiscal hawk, someone who understands the importance of getting better results for less money in everything we do, including providing for the defense of our country.

That is not the speech I brought with me to the floor, but it is the speech that is in my heart.

I just say to my colleagues, if you are on the fence and you are not sure whether you ought to vote for cloture, someday we are going to have a Republican President again. Someday we will have a Republican majority here. There is an old saying: Every dog has its day. Today we have a Democratic President and we have a Democratic Senate for confirmations. Someday that will not be the case. I will say to our Republican friends, just be careful. Just be careful. I say this with respect: Be careful of the bed we make because someday our friends on the other side will get to lie in it. Do we want to continue to go on with this precedent of maybe even denying an up-or-down vote on the nomination of a Secretary? I do not think so. I do not think that is a good precedent. An even worse precedent is to have all these sub-Cabinet-level positions that are vacant and have been vacant, in some cases, for weeks, months, in some cases for longer. That is a terrible precedent to have, and we need to stop it. A good time to stop it is right now.

I am pleased to stand and endorse the nomination of Chuck Hagel. I think he was a credit to his State, to this body when he served here, and I think he will be a credit to us if he is confirmed. I urge his confirmation starting with today's vote for cloture.

Thank you very much.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I too rise in opposition to the nomination of Chuck Hagel to lead the Department of Defense. Mr. Hagel is probably going to get his vote, but let me say this to my friend from Delaware. If a Republican President in the future brings a nomination for Defense Secretary to this Senate and he does not get as many as 60 votes, I will ask that Republican President to withdraw that nomination, and I wish this President would do the same. This could have been an easy matter. The selection of the Defense Secretary for President Obama's second term could have been a unifying moment. There were a host of quali-

fied, able candidates, both Republican and Democrat, who could have sailed through the process. The President knew controversy was ahead and decided to name Senator Hagel anyway.

There were signals from the right and from the left that Senator Hagel would be a divisive and distracting choice. The Washington Post editorial board gave the President good advice on December 18 by saying: "Chuck Hagel is not the right choice for defense secretary."

The differences surrounding Senator Hagel's nomination during the last few weeks stand in stark contrast to the unanimous support for outgoing Defense Secretary Leon Panetta. Mr. Hagel's nomination is markedly different from the overwhelming confirmation of Senator John Kerry for Secretary of State.

With so much at stake in the coming days, this should be a time for consensus and cooperation. A nominee who could draw unequivocal support would have served our defense priorities better—and those of our allies.

This confirmation fight occurs against the backdrop of severe across-the-board cuts to America's defense programs that are set to take effect this week unless current policy is changed. The Joint Chiefs of Staff reiterated this disastrous reality at a hearing on February 12. The generals and admirals who testified are some of the most respected in the Pentagon. They are some of the most respected in the world. They made it clear that these cuts, at nearly one-half trillion dollars, threaten America's military readiness and national security. Based on their expertise, we are obliged to believe them.

By contrast, Senator Hagel has called the defense budget "bloated." He did not simply say there is some fat we can trim or that there is room for savings, as we all believe. No, he said it was bloated.

Which is it? Are the Joint Chiefs of Staff correct or is Chuck Hagel correct? The testimony from Defense officials is clearly at odds with Mr. Hagel's shortsighted assessment.

Would Senator Hagel defend a robust defense budget in the face of indiscriminate cuts that could weaken our national security or does he believe sequestration is the answer to what he calls a bloated defense budget?

The statement that our national security budget is bloated is only one of many outlandish pronouncements Senator Hagel has used to grab attention rather than give an accurate evaluation of the situation at hand.

Senator Hagel has in fact made a career out of speaking against the bipartisan mainstream and taking positions on the fringe of public opinion. Here are a few other examples: Senator Hagel has accused Israel of "playing games" and committing "sickening slaughter" when it was defending itself from Hezbollah terrorists in Lebanon. He has said that Israel should not keep

the Palestinians “caged up like animals.”

We never had a Defense Secretary who would have said such a thing. Senator Hagel has said the “Jewish lobby intimidates a lot of people up here” and forces Congress to do “dumb things.”

On Iran, Senator Hagel has stated he is both for and against unilateral sanctions. He wrote to Senator BOXER’s office on January 14:

I agree that, with Iran’s continued rejection of diplomatic overtures, further effective sanctions, both multilateral and unilateral—may be necessary.

A week earlier, Senator Hagel told the Lincoln Journal Star that he opposed unilateral sanctions because they “don’t work and they just isolate the United States.”

When speaking about the Iraq war, Senator Hagel has described it as a “meat grinder,” a crude characterization that succeeded, once again, in gaining him some additional headlines.

Perhaps, in an effort to minimize his inconsistent record, Senator Hagel said during the Armed Services hearing on January 31 that he “won’t be in a policy-making position” as Defense Secretary. This comment illustrates either naivety or a disturbing abdication of the Defense Secretary’s responsibilities, which include well-informed policy decisions that will affect the lives of men and women in uniform. Of course the Secretary of Defense makes policy.

During the Armed Services hearing, Senator MCCAIN was correct to try to ascertain what Senator Hagel’s feelings are today about the surge in Iraq. A number of people agreed with Senator Hagel at the time but are now willing to admit with hindsight that the surge went better than expected, but not Senator Hagel.

Let’s not forget that Senator Hagel did not merely oppose the surge. It was not enough to say he had misgivings or doubts. He called it the greatest foreign policy blunder since the Vietnam war. This has been the extreme, outlandish, rhetorical approach of Chuck Hagel throughout his career.

People involved in a position of this importance need to be careful about what they say. When one is being interviewed for a book, they should choose words wisely. That is why, during the Armed Services hearing, I asked Senator Hagel about why he told author Aaron David Miller “the Jewish lobby intimidates a lot of people up here” and that he “always argued against some of the dumb things they do.”

Let me make this clear. Americans who come to Washington and advocate for Israel do meaningful work to advance a strong, sovereign, and democratic Israel, America’s closest ally in the Middle East. Mr. Hagel did not defend his comments at the hearing. Instead, he blamed his statements on a poor choice of words.

Congressional actions, such as tough Iran sanctions and greater military co-

operation with Israel, are not the products of intimidation. To suggest otherwise challenges the bipartisan judgment of the men and women elected to serve in this Chamber.

When questioned by Senator GRAHAM during the hearing, Senator Hagel could not name one person in Congress who had been intimidated or one dumb thing that Congress had done because of the pro-Israel lobby. One or two troubling statements might not be disqualifying when taken alone, but all of the positions taken together paint what I believe is an accurate picture of this nominee. Our troops and allies need to rely on the words of the Secretary of Defense. Changing viewpoints for the purpose of political expediency or to make headlines is not the hallmark of a steadfast leader.

Weeks after the process began, two conclusions emerged from the totality of the information that has come to light about Senator Hagel: Either we should disregard everything he has said and stood for as merely hyperbole—The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. WICKER. May I ask unanimous consent for 1 additional minute?

Mr. INHOFE. I yield 2 additional minutes to the Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. WICKER. I thank the gentleman.

Let’s say everything the Senator has said is merely hyperbole or this is a nominee with a very unsettling and naive world view. You can’t have it both ways. Either he means what he said over his career or it has all been theater.

The President is entitled to make his nomination, but the Senate must uphold its important constitutional duty to provide advice and consent on this nomination.

Early on, many friends on the Democratic side of the aisle voiced their very real concerns. Let me ask, Has Chuck Hagel truly answered those concerns? Which Chuck Hagel are we being asked to confirm: the one who shoots from the hip and means what he says or the one who is now willing to say anything to be confirmed?

We need a Secretary of Defense who can stand before the world and articulate that America is opposed to a nuclear Iran and rejects a policy of containment. We need a Secretary of Defense who can stand before the world and be clear that the Iranian Government is not a legitimately constituted government. We need a Secretary of Defense who has broad, bipartisan support. Sadly, that Secretary is not Chuck Hagel.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, may I inquire how much time remains on both sides?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan has 11½ minutes remaining, and the Senator from Oklahoma has 11 minutes.

The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, it is my understanding we each have about 11 minutes. I will take my time and request to be acknowledged when I have 2 minutes remaining.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair will do so.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, this has been a good debate. We have repeated a lot of things that have been said before. There are just some things I think are worth repeating.

I need to say over and over again, as often as I can, that nobody is impugning the integrity of former Senator Hagel. Everyone is very complimentary of the great service he has performed in military service. That is not the issue. That has nothing to do with it.

The thing that is important is the fact that they have said continuously, over and over again, this is a filibuster. They have said this is the first time that there has been a filibuster on a Cabinet nominee. That is just not true. This happens all the time. In fact, in recent history there have been six demands for cloture on the Democratic side as opposed to only one on the Republican side. This is not a filibuster.

Rather than take my word for it, take our Vice President JOE BIDEN’s word for it when he said this is not a filibuster. He was talking about a controversial appointee. A letter was sent by him to his colleagues arguing that opposing cloture was not a filibuster. He said: “It is a vote to protect the Senate’s constitutional power to advise and consent to nominations.”

This is worth repeating. Vice President JOE BIDEN said it is not a filibuster. “It is a vote to protect the Senate’s constitutional power to advise and consent to nominations.”

This expresses the frustration of our new Senator from Texas, Senator CRUZ, who finally just gave up. He said: You know, I have been wanting to exercise my constitutional rights all of this time. Senator CRUZ said, I have said it over and over again, and I have requested over and over again the information to which I am entitled and to which I have a constitutional right.

I am in a position to quote—I have already done it several times from this podium—our distinguished chairman, who also agrees we need to have those rights. Certainly, we have quoted Senator Kerry and others talking about the fact that requiring this information is simply something so ingrained in our system. This is not just JIM INHOFE and Alexander Hamilton talking, this is everybody throughout this country’s history.

This is one of the things that people should consider: This is not a filibuster, and we have not received the information to which we are entitled. It is not just Senator CRUZ, it is others too. It doesn’t happen to be me because I am opposing this nominee for many of the same reasons that the previous speakers, Senator CORNYN and Senator WICKER from Mississippi, have stated.

I know we are close to running out of time. I think the senior Senator from

Texas, Mr. CORNYN, brought out and has probably talked more—and has in the last month—about the concerns he has regarding the Middle East, with the attitude of former Senator Hagel to the various Middle Eastern countries and how Hezbollah, Hamas, all of those work into it.

In the case of Iran, I am and have been concerned about the attitude of Mr. Hagel in terms of this group called Global Zero movement that wants to do away with nukes, even if it is unilateral.

This isn't the way it used to be in the old days. As I said a minute ago, I look wistfully upon those days because it is not that way anymore. Our unclassified intelligence says Iran is going to have nuclear capability and a delivery system by 2015. Why would we want to bring down our nuclear capability in an environment like that? We also know and have watched recently what North Korea has done, all of them trading with China, Syria, and these other countries. It is not like it was in the old days.

I need to mention this also because three of the previous speakers spoke about Iran, their concern about the statements that have been made in support of Iran by Mr. Hagel. If you look at some of the quotes that come from Iran, you need to remind people those guys are bad guys over there. One of their statements from their ministry was that people of the Middle East—the Muslim region and North Africa, people from these regions—hate America from the bottom of their hearts. Then they go after, of course, Israel. They said Iran's warriors are ready and willing to wipe Israel off the map. The Zionists will receive a crushing response from the Islamic Republic's armed forces, which will lead to their annihilation.

This is the Islamist Revolutionary Guard, the same group which was to be declared a terrorist group when he was then-Senator Hagel, and he was only one of four Members of the entire Senate who objected to designating the Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist group. This quote is the one that received my attention the most, and it has directly to do with Israel. Iran said:

They launched the myth of the Holocaust. They lied, they put on a show and then they support the Jews.

This is interesting they would have that kind of a strong statement. I asked my staff this morning if they remembered a movie called "Schindler's List." "Schindler's List" was a movie I never saw until it was on national TV 3 days ago, and I couldn't stop watching it. I couldn't turn it off. You need to look at the Holocaust from that perspective. Iran denies it even took place.

You will not find any country or any area we have dealt with in the past that is more anti-Israel than Iran. I have to say also, if anyone wants to know some of my feelings, I have made

over five speeches more than 1 hour each on the floor of this Senate about Israel, and they are entitled to the land. All of these issues are very important—the mere fact Iran would say the Holocaust didn't exist.

Now, keep in mind—and I know the response to this is that we don't have any control over who supports him, but it is interesting, though—that Iran supports Chuck Hagel's nomination to be Secretary of Defense. I mean, Iran arguably could be considered to be the greatest foe that is out there for the United States, recognizing the capabilities they are going to have and the statements they have made about the United States of America. That is frightening.

So those are the reasons I was concerned initially about this nomination—and I think it has been said and said very well by the Senator from Mississippi, who went over all the details—and I think it is something that has to be looked at and looked at seriously.

The idea that this process of requiring a 60 vote margin is new at a Cabinet level—I mentioned that a very prominent leftwing television station was talking about that over and over again, that this has never happened, there has never been a Cabinet position that has been filibustered. First of all, it is not filibustering. We know that because we heard that from John Kerry, JOE BIDEN, and all the rest of the people who have been concerned about the fact that there is something improper about cloture when it comes to nominees. There is nothing more important than a President nominating someone for these Cabinet positions, and it is very common that they are questioned by the opposition, by an opposition party to the President in the Senate. We are the ones who have that constitutional responsibility.

I remember because I was sitting here when Kathleen Sebelius went through the same thing. She, obviously, had to finally have a 60-vote margin. John Bryson, Secretary of Commerce—I remember what he went through. Also, I recall very well Miguel Estrada. I remember being down here with Miguel Estrada, and they rejected him seven different times. They required a 60-vote margin. He always got in the fifties. The highest he got was 55. But he was rejected.

So what we are saying is that this is not anything unusual. We all know about Dirk Kempthorne and Steven Johnson. Steven Johnson happened to be an appointee of Republican President Bush, yet he was a Democrat, and he was one where finally we were able to get the 60 votes. We got 61 votes. So, again, there is nothing unusual about this.

My only plea is that we consider some of the things that are in the background of this nominee to be Secretary of Defense, as has been stated before. The fact that he is one of only two who were against sanctions in Iran, one of only four who opposed des-

ignating the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as terrorists, one of only four who refused to sign a letter of solidarity with Israel, and the fact that—and I do applaud and appreciate the chairman of the committee for allowing Senator CRUZ to show the video of an interview on Al Jazeera—Senator Hagel agreed with the comment that Israel made war crimes or the statement that Israel committed sickening slaughters and that America is the world's bully. These all underscore the fact that Senator Hagel is not the kind of person we need as Secretary of Defense for the United States of America.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. First, on the question of whether this is a filibuster, under our rules Senators have a right to speak and debate as long as they want until 60 Senators decide it is time to end debate. That is the definition, under our rules, of a filibuster. And that is the right of Senators to engage in. That is not the issue, as to whether it is right; the issue is whether it is now time to end debate. Under our rules, in order to bring debate to an end, where Senators insist on continuing a debate unless 60 Senators vote to end it, this is what this vote will be about at noon—whether we want to bring this debate to an end. Why? Well, first of all, we need a Secretary of Defense. But before we can get a Secretary of Defense, there has to be a vote on the nomination itself. The vote at noon will be a vote as to whether we want to bring this debate to an end so that we can, at a later time—hopefully today—then vote on the nomination itself. That is a majority vote, not 60 votes. In fact, the final vote on either a nominee or on a bill is always a majority vote. The 60 votes comes into play when Senators say: We are not going to end debate. We have a right to talk as long as we want in the Senate until 60 Senators vote to end it. And we demand that vote of 60 Senators takes place to see if there are 60 Senators who want to end debate. That is called cloture. That is what we will be voting on at noon. That is the very definition of a filibuster, under our rules.

So it is not unusual, as the Senator from Oklahoma says, for there to be a demand for a cloture vote on positions in the Cabinet. That has happened before. But what has never happened is that that has been insisted upon for a nomination to be Secretary of Defense. That is what is unusual.

It seems to me it is essential now that we get to the vote on the nomination itself, which will come later on today—again, I hope—and the only way to do that is if we vote to end the debate on this nomination, which is what will take place at noon. Whether there will be 60 votes, we will find out at noon, but hopefully there will be because this is a position which needs to be filled.

There have been many misstatements about quotes of Senator

Hagel. Obviously, not all of the statements that have been attributed to him are misstatements, but some of them are. Just one of them we heard earlier this morning was about the fact that he has talked about the sickening slaughter by the Israelis in the case of Lebanon. So here is the quote, and it was a full speech. It was on C-SPAN. The quote is—and this involves the issue of Lebanon—“The sickening slaughter on both sides must end.” So what Senator Hagel was bemoaning was the loss of lives on both sides. I would hope that decent people everywhere would bemoan the massive loss of lives on both sides that occurred during those events in Lebanon. I was there, and I saw what happened—the huge loss of life. So he was bemoaning the sickening slaughter on both sides and saying it must end and calling on President Bush to call for an immediate cease-fire. I find nothing reprehensible about such a call.

This has been a debate which has raised a lot of issues, but, to me, some of the most compelling arguments have been made by former Secretaries of Defense and State urging that we approve and confirm Senator Hagel.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD letters of support to which I will refer. At an earlier time, they were made part of the RECORD, but it is important that they be made a part of the RECORD of today's debate and not just previous debates.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DECEMBER 20, 2012.

Ambassadors' Open Letter: Senator Hagel

Impeccable Choice for Defense Secretary
We support, most strongly and without qualification, President Obama's reported intention to nominate Senator Chuck Hagel to be the next secretary of defense. Each of us has known the senator over the past twenty years and has found him invariably one of the best informed leaders in the U.S. Congress on the issues of U.S. national security. Senator Hagel's credentials for the job are impeccable. As a decorated Vietnam veteran, an extremely successful entrepreneur in the private sector and as a two-term senator, he brings unusually high qualifications and experiences to the Department of Defense at this time of budget constraint and challenges to reshape America's military power while keeping it strong for the coming decades.

Senator Hagel's political courage has impressed us all. He has stood and argued publicly for what he believes is best for the United States. When he was attacked for opposing the war in Iraq as “unpatriotic,” he replied, “To question your government is not unpatriotic—to not question your government is unpatriotic.”

Time and again he chose to take the path of standing up for our nation over political expediency. He has always supported the pillars of American foreign policy—such as: a strong NATO and Atlantic partnership; a commitment to the security of Israel, as a friend and ally; a determination to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons; and the defense of human rights as a core principle of America's role in the world.

Each of us has had the opportunity to work with Senator Hagel at one time or another

on the issues of the Middle East. He has invariably demonstrated strong support for Israel and for a two state solution and has been opposed to those who would undermine or threaten Israel's security.

We can think of few more qualified, more non-partisan, more courageous or better equipped to head the Department of Defense at this critical moment in strengthening America's role in the world. If he is nominated, we urge the speedy confirmation of Senator Hagel's appointment.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Burns, former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Ambassador to NATO and Greece; Ryan Crocker, former Ambassador to Iraq and Afghanistan; Edward Djerejian, former Ambassador to Israel and Syria; William Harrop, former Ambassador to Israel; Daniel Kurtzer, former Ambassador to Israel and Egypt; Sam Lewis, former Ambassador to Israel; William H. Luers, former Ambassador to Venezuela and Czechoslovakia; Thomas R. Pickering, former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Ambassador to Israel and Russia; Frank G. Wisner, former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Ambassador to Egypt and India.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, January 24, 2013.

Re Support Senator Hagel's Nomination

DEAR COLLEAGUE: I wanted to share the attached letter from thirteen former Secretaries of Defense, Secretaries of State, and National Security Advisors in support of Senator Hagel's nomination for Secretary of Defense.

These eminent national security experts advised Presidents Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Clinton, and George W. Bush on a host of international matters.

I hope that you will take a moment to review their letter as you consider Senator Hagel's nomination.

Sincerely,

JACK REED,

U.S. Senator.

JANUARY 24, 2013.

TO MEMBERS OF THE U.S. SENATE: We, as former Secretaries of State, Defense, and National Security Advisors, are writing to express our strong endorsement of Chuck Hagel to be the next Secretary of Defense.

Chuck Hagel has an impeccable record of public service that reflects leadership, integrity, and a keen reading of global dynamics. From his time as Deputy Veterans Administrator managing a quarter of a million employees during the Reagan presidency, to turning around the financially troubled World USO, to shepherding the post-9/11 GI Bill into law as a United States Senator, and most recently through his service on the Defense Policy Board at the Pentagon and as co-Chairman of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, Chuck Hagel is uniquely qualified to meet the challenges facing the Department of Defense and our men and women in uniform. As President Obama noted in announcing the nomination, this twice-wounded combat veteran “is a champion of our troops and our veterans and our military families” and would have the distinction of being the first person of enlisted rank and the first Vietnam veteran to serve as Secretary of Defense.

His approach to national security and debates about the use of American power is marked by a disciplined habit of thoughtfulness that is sorely needed and these qualities will serve him well as Secretary of Defense at a time when the United States must ad-

dress a range of international issues that are unprecedented in scope. Our extensive experience working with Senator Hagel over the years has left us confident that he has the necessary background to succeed in the job of leading the largest federal agency.

Hagel has declared that we “knew we needed the world's best military not because we wanted war but because we wanted to prevent war.” For those of us honored to have served as members of a president's national security team, Senator Hagel clearly understands the essence and the burdens of leadership required of this high office. We hope this Committee and the U.S. Senate will promptly and favorably act on his nomination.

Sincerely,

Hon. Madeleine Albright, former Secretary of State; Hon. Samuel Berger, former National Security Advisor; Hon. Harold Brown, former Secretary of Defense; Hon. Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Advisor; Hon. William Cohen, former Secretary of Defense; Hon. Robert Gates, former Secretary of Defense; Hon. James Jones, former National Security Advisor; Hon. Melvin Laird, former Secretary of Defense; Hon. Robert McFarlane, former National Security Advisor; Hon. William Perry, former Secretary of Defense; Hon. Colin Powell, former Secretary of State and National Security Advisor; Hon. George Shultz, former Secretary of State; Hon. Brent Scowcroft, former National Security Advisor.

NON COMMISSIONED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Alexandria, VA, January 22, 2013.

Hon. CARL LEVIN, Chairman,

Hon. JAMES M. INHOFE, Ranking Member,
Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEVIN AND RANKING MEMBER INHOFE: The Non Commissioned Officers Association of the USA (NCOA) strongly supports the appointment of The Honorable Chuck Hagel to be Secretary of Defense.

The association's membership is comprised of current and former enlisted members of the active duty military, Guard and Reserve Components to include all elements of the United States Coast Guard. The members of NCOA share a common experience with Senator Hagel who personally experienced the rigors of military service to include combat in the Vietnam War.

His military service including being twice wounded in action has instilled the values of service and personal sacrifice and for which he knows well the human cost of war.

He has been an advocate for Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, Airmen, and Coasties to ensure the training and equipage of America's 21st Century Military Force to coincide with a solid revised Defense posture to meet conventional and unconventional world challenges.

Senator Hagel has also championed personnel issues relating to combat dwell time, force protection, transition issues including electronic medical issues, preparation for future employment and training, veterans benefits including enhancements to Post 9/11 educational benefits. He also recognizes the value and sacrifice of families of the men and women who serve in this nation's Uniformed Services.

The NCOA has no hesitation in asking that Senator Hagel receive an expeditious hearing that confirms his confirmation to be the next Secretary of Defense. This Association recognizes the challenges that will be faced as Secretary of Defense and believe Senator

Hagel is well qualified to lead the Department of Defense.

Sincerely,

RICHARD C. SCHNEIDER,
Executive Director for Government Affairs.

AMVETS,

Lanham, Md., January 8, 2013.

AMVETS NATIONAL COMMANDER APPROVES DEFENSE SECRETARY NOMINATION

This afternoon, AMVETS National Commander Cleve Geer endorsed President Barack Obama's nomination of Chuck Hagel as the next Secretary of Defense. Obama announced the nomination yesterday, Jan. 7, 2013.

"AMVETS fully supports President Obama's nomination of Chuck Hagel for the future Secretary of Defense," said Geer. "As a veterans service organization, AMVETS' main mission is to serve as an advocate for veterans, their families and the community in which they live. I am confident that former Sen. Hagel will utilize his experience and understanding of America's military to lead this nation's troops and the Department of Defense."

If confirmed by the Senate, Hagel will be the first infantryman to serve as the Secretary of Defense. He will replace current Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, who has been in this position since 2011. Hagel's experience ranges from serving in the Army during the Vietnam War to representing Nebraska as a senator.

About AMVETS:

A leader since 1944 in preserving the freedoms secured by America's armed forces, AMVETS provides support for veterans and the active military in procuring their earned entitlements, as well as community service and legislative reform that enhances the quality of life for this nation's citizens and veterans alike. AMVETS is one of the largest congressionally-chartered veterans' service organizations in the United States, and includes members from each branch of the military, including the National Guard and Reserves.

To learn more, visit: www.amvets.org.

CHUCK HAGEL WOULD MAKE AN OUTSTANDING SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

JANUARY 16, 2013.

Hon. CARL LEVIN,
Chairman,

Hon. JAMES M. INHOFE,

*Ranking Member, Committee on Armed Services,
U.S. Senate, Russell Senate Office Building,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEVIN AND RANKING MEMBER INHOFE: While some of our organizations cannot recommend whom the President should appoint to his cabinet, we believe that Senator Chuck Hagel would make an outstanding Secretary of Defense, and is uniquely qualified to lead the men and women of America's Armed Forces.

Chuck Hagel is a true patriot who volunteered to fight in the war of his generation when he could easily have opted for a safe assignment. Twice wounded in the service of our nation, this combat veteran knows firsthand what it means to wear the uniform, what it means when the nation sends its young people to war, and the price that our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines sometimes pay in our defense.

He has fought with and for our troops his entire adult life: as a 21-year-old infantry sergeant in Vietnam; as the deputy head of the VA who pushed for Agent Orange Benefits and for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; as the President of the USO; and as a U.S. Senator who coauthored the Post-9/11 GI Bill. As Secretary of Defense he will be a

strong advocate of preparing servicemen and women for a smooth transition from the military to the VA system, including making jobs and training, and efficient electronic records a top priority. His door would always be open to veterans' service organizations.

Chuck Hagel knows that, while military force in defense of the nation is unfortunately sometimes necessary, decisions concerning war and peace, life and death, never should be undertaken lightly. This is the least that we can ask of our leaders.

The President has said that "in Chuck Hagel our troops see a decorated combat veteran of character and strength. They see one of their own. Chuck is a champion of our troops and our veterans and our military families." "Chuck knows that war is not an abstraction. He understands that sending young Americans to fight and bleed in the dirt and mud, that's something we only do when it's absolutely necessary." As veterans, we could not agree more. As the nation commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War, it is fitting and proper that the next Secretary of Defense should be a wounded and decorated veteran of that conflict—the first Vietnam veteran and the first enlisted man to hold this post.

Sincerely,

STEWART M. HICKEY,
Executive Director.

Mr. LEVIN. The first letter is a letter of 11 Ambassadors, including four former Ambassadors to Israel, in which these Ambassadors say that Senator Hagel "has always supported the pillars of American foreign policy—such as a strong NATO and Atlantic partnership; a commitment to the security of Israel, as a friend and ally . . ."

The second letter is from 13 former Secretaries of Defense, State, and National Security Advisers, including a number of Republicans who served in Republican administrations. Part of their letter reads as follows:

His approach to national security and debates about the use of American power is marked by a disciplined habit of thoughtfulness that is sorely needed.

It also says:

Our extensive experience working with Senator Hagel over the years has left us confident that he has the necessary background to succeed in the job of leading the Department of Defense.

These, again, are 13 former Secretaries of Defense.

Then there is a series of letters that came in from veterans organizations. These are elegant pleas for Senator Hagel to be confirmed.

This is from the Non Commissioned Officers Association of the United States:

Senator Hagel has championed personnel issues relating to combat dwell time, force protection, transition issues including electronic medical issues, preparation for future employment and training . . . He also recognizes the value and sacrifice of families of the men and women who serve in this Nation's Uniformed Services.

This is from AMVETS:

AMVETS fully supports President Obama's nomination of Chuck Hagel for the future Secretary of Defense. As a veterans service organization, AMVETS' main mission is to serve as an advocate for veterans, their families and the community in which they live. I

am confident that former Senator Hagel will utilize his experience and understanding of America's military to lead this nation's troops and the Department of Defense.

In terms of Israel and in terms of Iran, I wish to read a couple of statements of Senator Hagel and about Senator Hagel—first in terms of his statements about Iran. In his 2008 book, he said:

At its core, there will always be a special and historic bond with Israel, exemplified by our continued commitment to Israel's defense.

And this is a statement made by an Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister whose name is Danny Ayalon. This is what he said just recently:

Senator Hagel believes in the natural partnership between Israel and the United States. Senator Hagel is proud of the volume of defense relations between Israel and the United States, which are so important for both countries. Hagel is a true American Patriot and the support America gives Israel is in America's interest, so I am optimistic.

Relative to Iran, this is what Senator Hagel has said about Iran:

Iran poses a significant threat to the United States, our allies and partners, and our interests in the region and globally. Iran continues to pursue an illicit nuclear program that threatens to provoke a regional arms race and undermine the global non-proliferation regime. Iran is one of the main state sponsors of terrorism and could spark conflict, including against U.S. personnel and interests.

He has also said that he is "fully committed to President Obama's goal of preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon," and he has said that "all options must be on the table to achieve that goal." He specifically said that his policy will be that of the President's policy—one of prevention and not containment.

Relative to sequestration—and we are facing sequestration—Senator Hagel has said the following, which is also what Secretary Panetta has said.

Sequestration, if allowed to occur, would damage our readiness, our people and our military families. It would result in the grounding of aircraft and returning ships to port, reducing the Department's global presence and ability to rapidly respond to contingencies. Vital training would be reduced by half of current plans and the Department would be unable to reset equipment from Afghanistan in a timely manner. The Department would reduce training and maintenance for nondeploying units and would be forced to reduce procurement of vital weapon systems and suffer the subsequent schedule delays and price increases. Civilian employees would be furloughed. All these effects negatively impact long-term readiness as well. It would send a terrible signal to our military and our civilian workforce, to those we hope to recruit, and to both our allies and adversaries around the world.

Mr. President, we must end this uncertainty about this position. It is time for us to end this debate, and that is what we will be voting on now. Later on there will be a vote on whether to confirm Senator Hagel. The vote now is whether to bring this debate to an end. I hope we will do so and get on to the nomination vote.

I yield the floor, as I think it is noon and time for a vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me just say everything has been said, not everyone has said it. However, I would like to make sure everyone understands the actual statements were made by the former Senator Hagel in terms of the relationship of our country with Israel and Iran prior to the time he was nominated because many of those statements were changed at that time.

I encourage a "no" vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

CLOTURE MOTION

Under the previous order, the clerk will report the motion to invoke cloture.

The bill clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Charles Timothy Hagel, of Nebraska, to be Secretary of Defense.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, Al Franken, Christopher A. Coons, Jack Reed, Carl Levin, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Claire McCaskill, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Richard Blumenthal, Tom Harkin, Dianne Feinstein, Bill Nelson, Jeanne Shaheen, Sherrod Brown.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Charles Timothy Hagel, of Nebraska, to be Secretary of Defense shall be brought to a close on reconsideration?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from New Jersey (Mr. LAUTENBERG) and the Senator from Colorado (Mr. UDALL) are necessarily absent.

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

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 71, nays 27, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 23 Ex.]

YEAS—71

| | | |
|------------|--------------|-------------|
| Alexander | Cowan | Levin |
| Ayotte | Donnelly | Manchin |
| Baldwin | Durbin | McCain |
| Baucus | Feinstein | McCaskill |
| Begich | Flake | Menendez |
| Bennet | Franken | Merkley |
| Blumenthal | Gillibrand | Mikulski |
| Blunt | Graham | Murkowski |
| Boxer | Hagan | Murphy |
| Brown | Harkin | Murray |
| Burr | Hatch | Nelson |
| Cantwell | Heinrich | Pryor |
| Cardin | Heitkamp | Reed |
| Carper | Hirono | Reid |
| Casey | Johanns | Rockefeller |
| Chambliss | Johnson (SD) | Sanders |
| Coburn | Kaine | Schatz |
| Cochran | King | Schumer |
| Collins | Klobuchar | Sessions |
| Coons | Landrieu | Shaheen |
| Corker | Leahy | Shelby |

Stabenow
Tester
Thune

Udall (NM)
Warner
Warren

Whitehouse
Wyden

NAYS—27

Barrasso
Boozman
Coats
Cornyn
Crapo
Cruz
Enzi
Fischer
Grassley

Heller
Hoeven
Inhofe
Isakson
Johnson (WI)
Kirk
Lee
McConnell
Moran

Paul
Portman
Risch
Roberts
Rubio
Scott
Toomey
Vitter
Wicker

NOT VOTING—2

Lautenberg

Udall (CO)

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 71 and the nays are 27. Upon reconsideration, three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

The majority leader.

Mr. REID. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that following the recess for the weekly party conferences, the time until 4:30 p.m. be equally divided in the usual form and that at 4:30 p.m. all postcloture time be yielded back and the Senate proceed to vote on the nomination of Chuck Hagel, without intervening action or debate; the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that President Obama be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

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 12:37 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. BALDWIN).

NOMINATION OF CHARLES TIMOTHY HAGEL TO BE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 4:30 p.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

The Senator from Illinois.

TRIP TO UGANDA, DJIBOUTI, AND SAUDI ARABIA

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, as everyone in the Senate knows, and people across the United States, and the sad passing of Senator Daniel Inouye in December, there were a number of changes that were made in the Senate Appropriations Committee—a committee which Senator Inouye skillfully chaired until his passing. He also chaired the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee and served our Nation with the kind of leadership that only a person with his distinguished military service could give.

With this unfortunate change of events, I found myself unexpectedly in

a new role as chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. I never would have guessed 2 months before that it was even in the realm of possibility. Given this new role, I thought it was appropriate and worthwhile during the recent recess to take a firsthand look at some of what our military is doing in an often overlooked part of the world—Africa—and in the nearby gulf.

Before I go any further, let me note how impressed I always am on these trips that no matter where we go in any corner of the world, there is an outpost of America's finest—our diplomatic personnel serving on the front lines and representing the best of our values. They are often joined by American development and military personnel, helping to improve the lives of host nation populations, providing training and security in the area.

I want to thank all of the Ambassadors, their staff, and others who made great personal sacrifice to make my recent short, quick visit a great success.

My first stop last week was Uganda—a good friend of the United States located in a difficult neighborhood of central Africa. Many know that Uganda was recognized around the world for its early efforts to stem the spread of AIDS at a time when many other African nations were in complete denial. Some of that progress has waned over the years, but there has been a renewed effort to rebuild on earlier success.

Uganda is also helping to lead negotiations with various factions involved in the violence in eastern Congo, also known as the rape capital of the world. Last year, the armed rebel group M23 overran key parts of this eastern Congo, bringing further human suffering to an already scarred part of Africa. I want to acknowledge the constructive role Uganda has played in moving these talks forward.

Uganda is also home—originally—to the horrific actions of the Lord's Resistance Army, an army group led by a messianic and violent warlord named Joseph Kony. Kony and the LRA's brutality were once again in the spotlight last year when the group Invisible Children launched an online video detailing more than 20 years of brutal LRA violence, including murder, rape, kidnapping, and the dragooning of child soldiers. To date, this video has had almost 100 million viewers.

In Uganda, I had the chance to meet with two impressive people who were victims of the Lord's Resistance Army. They witnessed some horrific acts.

One young man met with us at the Ambassador's residence. This Lord's Resistance Army invaded his village, dragged all the young men out, put them in a circle, and said: You are about to become soldiers in the army. Before you become soldiers, though, you will be asked to kill your family.

Many of them could not believe it. This young man said he was praying they would spare his father. They