But the decision to withdraw from Iraq created a crisis of confidence, a capability crisis. When there is a vacuum in the Middle East, people go back to their corners—and that is exactly what has happened in Iraq with the lack of an American presence.

Here is what is so heartbreaking. Some 10,000 or 15,000 U.S. soldiers strategically placed would have held this together and politics would have taken over. But it is hard to do political agreements when you are subject to being killed by people on the other side. You need a certain level of security to advance society.

That security has completely been lost in Iraq, and Syria is a contagion for the entire region.

Our indecision and indecisive action in Syria—it was bipartisan, by the way. Plenty of Republicans said: Stay out of Syria; it is none of our concern. What Senator MCCAIN and I have been worried about in Syria for about 3 or 4 years is that Iran and Russia were behind Assad. It is not in our interest for Iranians to be in Syria because it is very hard to get them to abandon their nuclear program if they think we are weak in Syria, and it is in our national security interest for Syria not to become an Islamic state.

About 3 years ago there were 500 foreign fighters. Today there are 26,000. So to those Republicans and Democrats who said stay out of Syria, don't use airstrikes or air power, I am sad to say that I think you were wrong. I think Syria has become an absolute breeding ground for radical Islamists, and the next attack against our country could very well originate from the people who are fighting in Syria today. And I have never been more worried about another 9/11 than I am right now.

So, Mr. President, if you are willing to adjust your policies, we will sit down with you. If you are willing to sit down with your generals and get some good, sound military advice, we will stand with you because what happens in Iraq and Syria does matter. I don't think we need boots on the ground. I don't think that is an option for consideration. But if our military leaders say that we need to stop ISIS because it is in our national security interests through the use of our air power, count me in if that is what our generals say.

I will stand with you, Mr. President, if you correct your policies. If you continue to be delusional about the world, I will be your worst critic.

With that, I yield back.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair thanks the distinguished Senator from South Carolina for yielding the floor.

Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CRYSTAL NIX-HINES FOR THE RANK OF AMBASSADOR DURING HER TENURE OF SERVICE AS THE UNITED STATES PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC, AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination as follows:

Nomination of Crystal Nix-Hines, of California, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 30 minutes of debate on the nomination equally divided in the usual form.

Who yields time?

No one having yielded time, the time will be charged equally to both sides.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I rise to oppose the nomination of Crystal Nix-Hines to be the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, otherwise called UNESCO. I wanted to speak on this nomination and once again express my firm opposition to the administration's stated intention to circumvent U.S. law—the law that was passed by this body regarding funding of UNESCO—and an intention repeated by Ms. Nix-Hines at her hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last year.

I have nothing personal against this individual. I have not met her. I am sure she is a woman of good character and qualified for the job. But nevertheless I think it is important that we understand before we take this vote what we are doing here and why we shouldn't be doing it and that Ms. Nix-Hines's previous statement is relevant to her confirmation to this organization.

If confirmed, this nomination will result in the administration sending a representative to an organization which we do not fund and in which we have no vote. That is right. We will be sending a confirmed U.S. Ambassador to an organization which we do not support and in which we have no vote. That contradiction can only mean the administration is still attempting to change those circumstances by seeking waiver authority, and that is the reason why I am speaking today and why I am opposing this nomination.

Let me provide some context. In late 2011 UNESCO offered membership to the Palestinian Authority. This was a consequence of a Palestinian campaign to achieve recognition as a state by appealing unilaterally and directly to the United Nations and its agencies. UNESCO's decision to admit Palestine as a full member has further dimmed prospects for negotiated peace in the Middle East.

My fear is that this step—which the Palestinians regard as a success—will encourage them to press for membership in other U.N. bodies as well, achieving a legitimacy through the U.N. that they don't deserve as a state and that they need to understand presents major obstacles to ever achieving some type of reconciliation between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This will harm Israel, it will harm the Palestinians' own interests, harm the U.N. agencies involved, and damage our own national interests.

To prevent this sort of unilateral maneuver by the Palestinians, U.S. law—it is the law—has long prohibited funding to any U.N. agency that admits Palestine as a member. The purpose of this termination and the will of Congress regarding it was to discourage such reckless behavior by the U.N. and by the Palestinians.

Let me repeat that. The harm that is done through this has caused us—brought us to a point where we passed a law signed by the President that said we will not support any agency that acknowledges and admits Palestine as a recognized state. That is our policy. So funding UNESCO or even providing a waiver for that would be a clear violation of U.S. law.

We have seen the administration try to work around Congress in a number of ways, neglecting to check the law in terms of what they are required to do. We are currently in an embroiled situation here with this detainee release from Guantanamo of five of the top leaders of the Taliban—a blatant violation of the law that exists on the books in terms of consultation with Congress before this is done. Nevertheless, that is not what I am here for today. That is another issue.

Our laws require the United States to cut off budget support to UNESCO, and we will do the same to other agencies that also circumvent the correct path to negotiated settlement. I think that is good policy.

When some administration officials spoke publicly soon after the UNESCO vote about finding a ''work-around'' or seeking a waiver, I introduced legislation not to tolerate such alternatives and said I would not support the waiver. I repeated those efforts in subsequent State and Foreign Operations appropriations bills when the administration included appropriations for UNESCO in its budget request and Secretary Kerry said in his testimony that they would be ''seeking to change or repeal the law.''

In his comments on the subject, Secretary Kerry spoke about the value he saw in this U.N. agency but said nothing about the value of discouraging Palestinian efforts to circumvent negotiations and change its status at the

U.N. before there is an agreed settlement.

Similarly, in Ms. Nix-Hines statement for the Foreign Relations Committee, she spoke forcefully about her views on UNESCO and its importance to U.S. interests. Maybe it is true, maybe it is not true, but nevertheless she said nothing about how the Palestinian end run at the United Nations has harmed our quest for a Middle East settlement. She repeated the administration's intention to seek a waiver of existing law to resume contributions to UNESCO, declaring, ''We are not a country that turns tail when decisions do not go our way. We are not a people who shrink from challenge.''

Well, that is true, we are not. But in stating that, she has equated a principled stance on an important issue—a stance she does not agree with—as an act of cowardice. It is an act of law. It is an act that was passed by this body with support from the House of Representatives and signed by the President of the United States. So her statement makes no sense unless you come to the conclusion that she was handed talking points—as other members of the administration have been—and told: Go ahead and go down and say this if this question comes up. Don't worry about the facts.

I can understand why a nominee to UNESCO would want to restore U.S. funding to the organization and thus restore the U.S. vote there, but to purposely ignore or misconstrue the opposing view—one stated in U.S. law and supported by this Congress for 20 years—and then to go on and imply that such a view is cowardly—that is offensive. That is offensive to those Members who have supported this law, who enacted this law. It is offensive to the President who signed this law. It is offensive to the American people who sent us here to pass laws and to enforce those laws as passed. To call that action cowardly is something that is offensive as well.

The laws that are designed to discourage U.N. bodies from admitting Palestinian authority before a comprehensive settlement are essential if negotiations are to have any chance at all. Far from being anachronistic, as some connected with UNESCO are claiming, they are more current and important now than ever. It is now that the Palestinians are trying to change their status at the U.N. unilaterally, and it is now that we must use the available tools to prevent it.

If we were to grant waiver authority to the administration as they have requested, the floodgates would open. The existence of waiver authority—not to mention the actual exercise of a waiver—would embolden the Palestinians to make even greater unilateral efforts to achieve membership in U.N. bodies, and the result would present repeated funding dilemmas for us and would make a true negotiated peace that much more difficult to achieve.

The nomination of a candidate for the UNESCO position at least gives me this opportunity to restate clearly and unambiguously once again that I remain firmly opposed to providing funds to UNESCO or any other U.N. agency that repeats this serious error, and I hope my colleagues would understand this and support it also. Thus, I cannot support funding UNESCO while Palestine is a member, nor will I support a waiver of existing restrictions, and I don't think anyone else should either because it violates U.S. law.

To repeat, this nomination means the administration wants to send a representative to an organization which we do not fund and in which we have no vote. That contradiction can only mean the administration still wants to change those circumstances by seeking waiver authority, and therefore I will oppose this nomination and hope my colleagues will support the same.

Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, I wish to urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Dr. Stanley Fischer to be Vice Chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. I also urge my colleagues to join me in supporting Mr. Jerome Powell and Dr. Lael Brainard to be members of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors.

Each of these individuals has a unique set of skills and experiences to provide the Board of Governors a diverse perspective on how to continue to help the economy recover and promote a more stable financial system.

Dr. Fischer's background is impressive. In May, he was confirmed by the Senate to be a member of the Federal Reserve. Between 2005 and 2013, he was the head of the Bank of Israel. Prior to his service at the Bank of Israel, Dr. Fischer held positions as the vice chairman of Citigroup and the First Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund. Before the IMF, Dr. Fischer was the Killian professor and Head of the Department of Economics at MIT, where he taught some of the most preeminent economists of our time, including former Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke, former Council of Economic Advisers Chair Greg Mankiw, and European Central Bank President Mario Draghi. Former Fed Chairman Bernanke said of Dr. Fischer: ''Stan was my teacher in graduate school, and he has been both a role model and a frequent adviser ever since. An expert on financial crises, Stan has written prolifically on the subject and has also served on the front lines.''

Mr. Powell became a member of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors in 2012. He has served during a period in which the Fed tackled a number of important issues, including implementing the Wall Street Reform Act and maintaining strong monetary policy that promotes job creation and economic recovery. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Powell was a visiting scholar at the Bipartisan Policy Center, where he focused on Federal and State fiscal issues. Mr. Powell also served as an Assistant Secretary and as Undersecretary of the Treasury under President George H.W. Bush.

Dr. Brainard previously served as Under Secretary for International Affairs at the Treasury from 2010 to 2013. She also served as Deputy Director of the National Economic Council and as the U.S. Sherpa to the G8. She was vice president of the Brookings Institution and an Associate Professor of Applied Economics at MIT Sloan School of Management.

The Federal Reserve Board has many important tasks at hand including effective monetary policy that promotes full employment, continued implementation of Wall Street Reform, and taking steps that will improve financial stability, reduce systemic risk and end ''too big to fail.'' I am confident these three nominees will be extremely valuable in these endeavors and I hope we can confirm them without delay. I urge my colleagues to support Dr. Brainard, Mr. Powell, and Dr. Fischer.

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to speak in support of the nomination of Dr. Stanley Fischer to be Vice Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. I know Dr. Fischer personally and have worked with him over the years, and I am fully confident that he is well qualified to succeed Janet Yellen as Vice Chairman of the Fed, as she begins her tenure as Chair.

Dr. Fischer has had an extraordinarily impressive and well-rounded career thus far. After receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees from the London School of Economics and his Ph.D. at MIT, Fischer served in high-level positions in academia, the private sector, as well as at multiple international financial institutions. His knowledge and expertise of economic policy is world-renowned—in fact some of the most influential economic policy makers today, including former Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke and the head of the European Central Bank, studied under the guidance and influence of Dr. Fischer.

Most recently, Stanley Fischer served as governor of the Bank of Israel. Appointed in 2005 by then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Dr. Fischer led Israel's central bank and steered its economy through the global financial crisis. When the global crisis first hit in 2008, Fischer took decisive action to protect the Israeli economy. His decision to lower interest rates actually came a day before the Fed, the Bank of England or the European Central Bank took similar action.

It is largely due to his leadership that while other countries, including the United States, were still struggling in the depths of recession in 2009, Israel emerged more or less unscathed. In fact, by 2009 the Israeli economy had recovered to the point where central bank assistance was no longer needed, and Fischer actually made the decision to raise interest rates. Furthermore, as

the recession spread across the United States and Europe, foreign capital began to flow into Israel, raising the value of its currency, the shekel—which became a big problem for Israeli exports. To offset this inflation, prop up Israeli exporters, and boost the economy, Fischer again had to act quickly to depreciate Israel's currency, buying up $100 million each day in foreign currency. In less than 1 year, he had reduced the value of the currency by 25 percent and given Israel a trade surplus of $5 billion.

His quick and intelligent actions in the face of crisis helped maintain financial and price stability and improve employment. These actions shielded the Israeli economy from the recession and produced strong growth. As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated in 2013, ''Fischer was a key contributor to Israel's economic growth. His experience and wisdom have helped the Israeli market reach many achievements, even in a time of global crisis.''

Prior to his tenure at the Bank of Israel, Dr. Fischer served as the head of the Economics Department at MIT, chief economist at the World Bank, and as the number two official at the International Monetary Fund, IMF. He also spent time in the private sector as vice president of Citigroup from 2002 to 2005.

Throughout his impressive career, Dr. Fischer has undoubtedly learned valuable lessons in responding to global financial and economic crises. His extensive policymaking experience and expertise make him uniquely qualified to serve in the Fed's number two position and navigate the challenges we face as our economy continues to recover from the worst recession since the Great Depression. Most importantly, I am sure we will see soon, Dr. Fischer is a collaborative leader, a visionary, and an absolute joy to work with. We are truly lucky to have a leader of such courage and character up for this position, and I urge my colleagues to swiftly approve his nomination.

Mr. COATS. With that, I yield the floor and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BALDWIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

All time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Crystal Nix-Hines, of California, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization?

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second. There is a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Missouri (Mrs. MCCASKILL), the Senator from Oregon (Mr. MERKLEY), and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Mississippi (Mr. COCHRAN), and the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN).

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

The result was announced—yeas 52, nays 41, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 188 Ex.]

YEAS—52

Baldwin	Harkin	Pryor
Begich	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Heitkamp	Reid
Blumenthal	Hirono	Sanders
Booker	Johnson (SD)	Schatz
Brown	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	King	Shaheen
Cardin	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Carper	Landrieu	Tester
Casey	Leahy	Udall (CO)
Coons	Levin	Udall (NM)
Corker	Manchin	Walsh
Donnelly	Markey	Warner
Durbin	Menendez	Warren
Feinstein	Mikulski	Whitehouse
Franken	Murphy	Wyden
Gillibrand	Murray	
Hagan	Nelson	

NAYS—41

Alexander	Flake	Murkowski
Ayotte	Graham	Paul
Barrasso	Grassley	Portman
Blunt	Hatch	Risch
Boozman	Heller	Roberts
Chambliss	Hoeven	Rubio
Coats	Inhofe	Scott
Coburn	Isakson	Sessions
Collins	Johanns	Shelby
Cornyn	Johnson (WI)	Thune
Crapo	Kirk	Toomey
Cruz	Lee	Vitter
Enzi	McCain	Wicker
Fischer	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—7

Boxer	McCaskill	Rockefeller
Burr	Merkley	
Cochran	Moran	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that at a time to be determined by the Majority leader, in consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 9, treaty document 112–1; that the treaty be considered as having advanced through the various parliamentary stages up to and including the presentation of the resolutions of ratification; that any committee declarations be agreed to as applicable; and that the resolution of ratification be agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. PAUL. Madam President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, I now ask unanimous consent that I be recognized immediately following the three voice votes that we expect coming up now.

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

NOMINATION OF MICHAEL J. MCCORD TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (COMPTROLLER)

NOMINATION OF R. JANE CHU TO BE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

NOMINATION OF TODD A. BATTA TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read the nominations of Michael J. McCord, of Ohio, to be Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller); R. Jane Chu, of Missouri, to be Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Arts; and Todd A. Batta, of Iowa, to be an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Todd A. Batta of Iowa on his confirmation as Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Congressional Relations. I can personally attest that he is very well qualified and will undoubtedly do an outstanding job in his new position.

It has been a pleasure for me to know Todd and his family for many years. He grew up in Lanesboro, IA, where his parents, Rick and Wanda, currently reside. His aunt, Bev Schroeder, was a member of my staff for over 20 years, both in Iowa and here in Washington, working on education policy and other matters. In fact, Todd's first political work was to help hand out HARKIN information at parades when he was just three or 4 years old.

Todd began serving on my staff as an intern in the summer of 2001, after receiving his B.A. from Winona State University, and later worked for me as a researcher, deputy scheduler, and scheduler. In 2005, he moved from my personal office to work as a professional staff member on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, during the time I served as either ranking member or chairman.

It is Todd's good fortune to be married to Adrianna Logalbo. They began dating when Todd was on my staff. So, as I say, Todd and his family have been good friends to me for a very long time