

Secretary of Defense is recommending that will be closed for the consideration of the Base Closing Commission.

Mr. President, this will make it very difficult, if not impossible, for the remaining nominees to the Base Closing Commission to be confirmed by the Senate.

Mr. President, I view failure to move forward with the base closing process as an unconscionable act that will deprive the young men and women in the military today of their ability to defend this Nation's vital national security interests. We cannot spend money on bases and infrastructure which are no longer needed in light of the reduction of some 40 percent in the defense budget.

We have, in the words of former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, reduced our defense spending somewhere around 40 to 45 percent since 1985. At the same time, we have reduced our base infrastructure by some 10 to 15 percent.

We have gone through two painful rounds of base closings and now the third one, hopefully the last, will be facing us. If we do not move forward with this base closing process, we will not close bases in this country. We have proven that to anyone's satisfaction, which is why we went to the base closing process to start with.

Mr. President, there are people on both sides of the aisle and both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue who do not want to see this process move forward.

I believe that there is one egregious incident, for example, of a nominee, Gen. J.B. Davis, where incorrect information was spread around Hill offices which tied him to an organization that had considerable financial interests at many installations. I do not know who originated the memorandum setting out this flawed data, but it was further disseminated by consultants and others who somehow failed to check the facts of this matter.

But the primary fact is, Mr. President, if we do not move forward with the base closing process, we have forgotten several things. The cold war is over. The defense budget is small. We have excess infrastructure that needs to be closed. The BRAC will go on regardless of Senate action, but will suffer in quality if the names are not brought to a vote immediately. I believe my constituents and our national security interests deserve the best possible Commission we can provide. I hope that all my colleagues will agree with that.

Mr. President, if we do not approve the nominees, then former Senator Alan Dixon, who is the Chairman of the Commission, by law must proceed with the process. That will leave the review of the entire base closing proposals in the hands of one individual. He will have only one choice and that will be to rubberstamp whatever the Defense Department has recommended.

I am convinced that that is not what the Congress had in mind when we set

up the BRAC process. And I am convinced that the American people will thereby be shortchanged and bases may be closed that do not need to be closed and bases will be kept open that do not need to be kept open.

Mr. President, I think that it is clear that the fact that one of the names was removed almost without cause—or at least for some period of time there was no information—from the nominating list by the White House contributed to this problem significantly. But I think there are ways that we could have worked it out, maybe, by withholding one name nominated by the other party as well as one nominated by the Republicans, and the other names sent forward, we could have worked effectively in that fashion.

I am convinced that if we do not move forward today on these nominations, it places the entire concept of base closing in significant jeopardy.

Mr. President I hope that the leadership will reconsider their decision on this issue and move forward today with the nominees for the Base Closing Commission for the sake of national security and for the sake of young men and women that are in our military today.

Mr. President, I yield to the Senator from North Dakota what remaining time I have.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAMS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

WELFARE REFORM

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I do not intend to use all the time.

I just wanted to observe that the Senator was wondering whether we felt the election meant anything about welfare reform. Well, there will not be that kind of debate, because we will not have that kind of debate. Most of us feel we should reform the welfare system.

My point was not the welfare system. My point was that I do not believe the last election was a message from the American people that hunger among our children is not a national priority, nor would I expect the Senator from Arizona would interpret the election that way, either.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I appreciate the remarks of my friend from North Dakota. I wish that he had taken some measures during the 1986-94 period when he was in the majority to bring forward meaningful welfare reform of the welfare system. And since he did not, this side of the aisle will, both from the other body as well as from this one.

I thank the Chair and I yield back the remainder of my time.

RAY NATTER

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, since 1989, Ray Natter has been the Republican general counsel on the Senate Banking Committee. Ray came to the

Senate in 1987 after mastering the complicated area of banking law as special counsel to the House Banking Committee and senior counsel at the Federal Reserve. Prior to coming to the Hill, Ray also spent 10 years as a legislative attorney at the Congressional Research Service. Without a doubt, Ray knows banking law and the legislative process.

Ray worked on several important issues in the last Congress, including interstate banking, fair trade in financial services and community development banking. In previous years, he had a significant impact on various important pieces of legislation, including the drafting of the Resolution Trust Corporation Completion Act, which helped end the savings and loan crisis.

When Ray worked for Chairman Garn he not only wrote significant portions of FIRREA and FDICIA, he also worked on the important issue of lender liability, which was particularly critical to bankers in my State.

Regardless of how busy he was or how many major banking bills Ray was working on, he always had time for the problems that I needed help with. Sometimes New Mexicans had ideas for legislation that I would ask Ray to review. Sometimes I would have a constituent who felt the RTC needed a little congressional oversight. Ray always gave me good counsel and advised me of all the pertinent laws.

When I was new on the Banking Committee, Ray helped me and my staff navigate the complicated world of financial institution regulation. He was always knowledgeable, accurate and willing to give his time to ensure that we became as well-informed as he was on these difficult issues.

I am not going to serve on the Banking Committee this Congress. I would have preferred to stay on the Banking Committee but too many others wanted an opportunity to participate under Chairman D'AMATO's leadership.

I want to thank Ray for his 8 years of service to the Senate Banking Committee, three chairman, and through passage of numerous public laws. Ray will be joining the staff of the general counsel of the Comptroller of the Currency. The Senate will miss Ray's expertise and his willingness to help members of the Banking Committee and the Senate. I have no doubt that the Comptroller's Office will recognize immediately that they have landed one of the best banking lawyers in Washington.

THE 1995 BIRD HUNTING SEASON

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, on the Senate floor today, one of my colleagues challenged my concern shared by thousands of Minnesotans that S. 219, a bill that would create a moratorium on new regulations, would have the effect of limiting or eliminating the 1995 migratory bird hunting season. I take strong exception to my colleague's comments and will continue to