

became deeply committed to serving his community. I believe this history has instilled in Mr. Martinez an understanding of and empathy for the less fortunate that will serve him well in his new role as Secretary of HUD.

Mr. Martinez most recently served as the county chairman of Orange County, FL. Prior to that, he served on the Orlando Housing Authority Board of Directors for 4 years, including 2 years as its chair in the mid-1980s. He served as vice president of Catholic Social Services in the Diocese in Orlando throughout the 1980s and as president of the Orlando Utilities Commission from 1994 to 1997 and as a lawyer in his own firm. He has served his community in many ways as a volunteer member of numerous organizations.

As chairman of the Orlando Housing Authority, Mr. Martinez worked with his colleagues on the board to pass a measure that took about \$1 million of reserve funds to build affordable housing for the elderly, as well as transitional housing for low-income single mothers. He consistently showed a willingness to meet and work with residents of public housing and other low-income residents of distressed neighborhoods in Orlando.

These efforts lead me to believe that as Secretary, Mr. Martinez will make every effort to make good on his promise "to work hard to ensure that every American has every opportunity to have affordable housing."

Last year, a number of bipartisan proposals providing for funding the construction of affordable housing were offered in the Congress. I look forward to working with the new Secretary on legislation that will help us achieve the lofty goal he has set out.

As many of my colleagues know, HUD has had a history of being a troubled agency. While many of its programs do a good job of providing decent homes to millions of poor and working families, it has proven to be a difficult department to manage.

In 1994, in fact, HUD was placed on the General Accounting Office's high-risk list, the only agency to be so listed. However, as a result of concentrated efforts by Secretary Cuomo and his top staff, the GAO announced last week that HUD is now off the high-risk list. HUD achieved this result by working tirelessly to correct the problems in financial oversight and procurement systems. It is widely recognized that Secretary Cuomo has devoted significant time and effort to address these managerial issues, and I commend him for his success.

This is by no means to say all of HUD's problems have been solved, but it does mean that Mr. Martinez will take over the Department with a management system in place that is moving HUD in the right direction. In his confirmation hearing, Mr. Martinez made it clear that he understood the progress that has been made while committing himself to continue the efforts to improve the operations of the Department.

I was also encouraged that Mr. Martinez recognized the importance of the Community Reinvestment Act in making housing opportunities more available to all Americans. Several committee hearings have established the fact that CRA is a crucial tool that is needed to make a number of other housing programs effective. The low-income housing tax credit, the community development block grant, and the HOME program all depend, to some extent, on bank credit made available largely because of the CRA.

Finally, I note that this nomination has the support of a wide range of housing groups. A number of letters of support have been sent to the committee which are part of the hearing record. Included among these supporters are a number of industry groups, public housing organizations, and others. I note in particular a very strong letter of support sent to us by our former colleague, Senator Mack, who has high praise for the nominee.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator Mack's letter be printed in the RECORD at the conclusion of these remarks.

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

(See Exhibit 1.)

Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, Mel Martinez understands the job ahead of him. He has committed to expanding housing opportunities for all Americans. I look forward to working with him, and I commend his nomination to my colleagues for their approval.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

EXHIBIT 1

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 16, 2001.

Hon. PAUL S. SARBANES,
*Chairman, Committee on Banking, Housing,
and Urban Affairs, Dirksen Building, U.S.
Senate, Washington, DC.*

DEAR CHAIRMAN SARBANES: As a former member of this committee, it is an honor and privilege to introduce my friend Mel Martinez, Secretary-designee of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

As a fellow Floridian, I have had the opportunity to know and personally work with Chairman Martinez in his various roles in local county government since the early days of my Senate career. I have found him to be an exceptional individual who has the intelligence, integrity and compassion to guide this agency and serve its constituents.

The Secretary-designee through his life experiences understands the courage, drive and determination it takes to achieve the American dream. As you and I know, very difficult problems can be overcome when individuals work together. Mel Martinez understands what it takes to bring people together with a deep concern for those who are less fortunate and striving for a better future. With his personal perspective and insight, I am sure you could not find a better person to improve the lives of those that look to us for assistance.

Therefore, with complete confidence, I strongly recommend Mel Martinez and urge your favorable consideration of him for Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Sincerely,

CONNIE MACK.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished majority leader is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. I thank the Chair.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREE-
MENT—EXECUTIVE NOMINA-
TIONS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed en bloc to the consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar No. 7, Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr., to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget; Executive Calendar No. 8, Anthony Principi to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs; Executive Calendar No. 9, Melquiades Rafael Martinez to be Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

I also ask unanimous consent that at 2:45 p.m. the Senate proceed to a vote on the nominations en bloc, and further, that one rollcall count for three votes with respect to the nominations. I further ask unanimous consent that the motions to reconsider be laid upon the table and the President be notified of the Senate's action.

I further ask unanimous consent that the Finance Committee be discharged from further consideration of the nomination of Gov. Tommy Thompson, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of the nomination, with the time on the nomination as follows: 60 minutes under the control of Senator WELLSTONE; 40 minutes for the chairman and ranking member of the Finance Committee; 10 minutes under the control of Senator FEINGOLD; 10 minutes under the control of Senator KENNEDY; and that following the use or yielding back of time, the nomination be laid aside and the Senate proceed to a vote on the nomination at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, and following the confirmation, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, the President be notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, will the majority leader allow 10 minutes under my control, which may or may not be used, following that of Senator KENNEDY?

Mr. LOTT. I amend the UC to that effect: 10 minutes under the control of Senator REID following Senator KENNEDY.

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

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, let me reiterate, we will have the one vote now for the three nominees en bloc. We will then have time for debate on the nomination of Gov. Tommy Thompson to be Secretary of HHS. The next recorded vote will be at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, and we could have another vote or votes at that time on three additional nominees that will be ready to go at that time.