TRIBUTE TO AMBASSADOR BATU KUTELIA

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I rise today to mention a distinguished Ambassador who is leaving Washington after a regrettably short tenure. Batu Kutelia, Ambassador of Georgia to the United States, is returning to his country to assume an important post in his government as Deputy National Security Adviser.

Although Ambassador Kutelia was only in Washington as Ambassador for less than 2 years, he and his wife Sofia and their young family will be missed by the many friends they leave behind. He will also be remembered for reinforcing and advancing his country’s relations with the United States.

Ambassador Kutelia represented Georgia in Washington in challenging times. Following the 2008 war with Russia, in which he served as First Deputy Minister of Defense, the Ambassador helped facilitate the economic and political assistance necessary to rebuild and continue Georgia’s economic development. He also ensured that Georgia’s agenda within the United States, is returning to his county to assume an important post in his government as Deputy National Security Adviser.

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Ambassador Kutelia’s work with our government on the training of Georgian forces participating in the NATO International Security Assistance Force mission expedited their successful deployment to Afghanistan.

Ambassador Kutelia possesses a sophisticated understanding of Congress and its responsibilities within our democratic system. He was extremely accessible, maintaining strong working relationships and friendships with many Members and staffs. During the Ambassador’s tenure, it is a fact that Georgia had a persuasive and effective representative whose passion for his nation never flagged and whose engagement with Congress far exceeded that of bigger countries with much larger embassies. Rarely did a Georgian official pass through Washington without at least one interaction with Congress, an admirable record which did a great deal to stimulate and enhance engagement between the United States and the country of Georgia.

Many of us on Capitol Hill have come to know and respect Georgia and its people. Georgia’s future will be written by young leaders such as Batu Kutelia. I cannot help but believe that the country’s future will be bright if it continues to produce leaders of his caliber. I wish him the best at his coming service in Tbilisi. I, along with my colleague, Ms. Murkowski, have proposed legislation, S. 1673, which would provide parity. Our proposal is imperative to the long-term survival of Alaska-Native communities and Alaska’s nature resources, which makes this critical legislation timely.

Development pressures are increasingly significantly in many parts of Alaska. This legislation will allow private funds provided by non-Federal entities to be used to protect subsistence sustainability in the region. This is an extraordinary achievement, not only to be rated first in the Nation, but to so highly exceed the private sector. I congratulate VA, and especially commend Secretary Shinseki and Mr. Michael Valenti, Chief Con-