Thomas A. Budrejko of Montville, Connecticut; Capt. Michael M. Quin of Purcellville, Virginia; Capt. Benjamin N. Cerniglia of Montgomery, Alabama; Capt. Nathan W. Anderson of Amarillo, Texas; Sgt. Justin A. Everett of Clovis, California; LCpl Corey A. Little of Marietta, Georgia; and LCpl Nickoulas H. Elliott of Spokane, Washington.

Six of the victims were stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in San Diego County. The seventh was stationed at Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma, AZ.

At this time of great sorrow, my thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of these seven marines. Nothing can fully account for the tremendous loss they have suffered, but I hope they can take comfort in knowing that their loved ones will be forever remembered and honored by a grateful nation.

COMMENDING SENATOR CARL LEVIN

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I recently had the privilege of speaking at an event sponsored by the Center for the National Interest which honored our colleague from Michigan, Senator CARL LEVIN, with their 2012 Distinguished Service Award. In addition to being my colleague, I am proud to call CARL LEVIN a dear friend, and I ask unanimous consent that my remarks honoring Senator LEVIN be printed in the RECORD.

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

REMARKS BY SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN IN HONOR OF SENATOR CARL LEVIN, DELIVERED ON FEBRUARY 15, 2012

Thank you. I'm glad to be here, and I'm grateful to the Center for giving me an opportunity to say a few words about your honoree, my friend, Carl Levin.

Carl and I have served on the Senate Armed Services Committee together since I first came to the Senate, which it pains me to recall, was over a quarter century ago. That's not as long as Carl has been there, however. I think you were elected shortly after the Spanish American War, weren't you, Carl? No? I thought I had read you had been on the committee when it refused to authorize Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet.

As you all know, Carl is a proud Democrat, and I'm not. That difference is quite obvious on any number of issues before the Senate. What I hope has always been just as obvious is how greatly I admire and respect the man.

We have our moments on the committee. Debate among the members can get a little passionate at times, though I hope never rancorous. The members are quite proud of the committee's tradition of bipartisan cooperation. I think we appreciate the gravity of our responsibility to help maintain the defense of our country, and the obligation we have to do right by the men and women of the United States Armed Forces, who have risked everything on our behalf. I think Carl and I both feel their example of selfless sacrifice would make us feel ashamed if we let the committee descend into the partisan posturing that often makes it hard for Congress to serve the national interest. When members disagree on the committee, even heatedly, more often than not, it's because we feel sincerely passionate about whatever issue is in dispute. And even then, I think we try to maintain civility and respect for one another, and we do not let it prevent us from completing the committee's business.

That we have managed to keep that reputation in these contentious times is a tribute to the man who has served as the Committee's chairman or ranking Democrat since 1997. He has kept the committee focused on its duties and not on the next election or the latest rush-to-the-barricades partisan quarrel that has momentarily consumed the Senate's attention. He does so in a calm, measured, patient and intelligent manner. He seems to become even calmer and more patient in moments of disagreement when tempers and emotions among the membership start to rise. He and I have slightly different leadership styles, of course. I'm much gentler and less confrontational. But Carl's style seems to work for him.

The committee has a heavy workload every year, and Carl manages to keep us all in harness and working together at a pace and in a constructive, results oriented approach that is the envy of the dozen or so lesser committees of the Senate. Our principle responsibility is to produce the defense authorization bills one of the most important and comprehensive pieces of legislation the Senate considers on an annual basis. The committee has never failed to report the bill, and the Senate has never failed to pass it. That's not an accomplishment that some of those lesser committees I just referred to can claim every year. And no one deserves more of the credit for it than Carl Levin.

When Carl first joined the committee, he explained his reason for seeking the assignment this way: ''I had never served, and I thought there was a big gap in terms of my background and, frankly, felt it was a way of providing service.'' He might have never served in the military, but he has surely served it, and served it well. And he has served the national interests our armed forces protect in an exemplary manner that the rest of us would be wise to emulate.

He is a man of principle, ability, and serious purpose. He has the respect of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle. We all listen to him, and we listen closest to him on the occasions when we disagree with him. That's a great compliment from a Senator. It is a tribute paid to only the most revered members of the Senate. But the greatest compliment one senator can pay another is to credit him or her as a person who keeps their word. Why that's so rare in our work is a mystery. But I can attest Carl possesses the virtue. He has never broken his word to me.

We recently found ourselves in a dispute with the administration over how and where to prosecute detainees captured in the war on terror. Most people on my side of the aisle agreed with my position. Many people on Carl's side and in the administration disagreed with his. But he never wavered. He never backed out of a deal, and he argued our case far more effectively than I could. We did what we usually do on the committee under Carl's leadership. We found a way to settle the dispute without abandoning our responsibilities. Carl deserves most of the credit for that, too.

On a personal note, that controversy reminded me again of one of the great satisfactions in life. And that, my friends, is when you fight for a common cause with someone you haven't always agreed with, whose background, views and personality are distinctly different than yours, and you discover that despite your differences, you have always been on the same side on the big things.

Thank you, Carl, for your friendship and your example.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, today I wish to discuss the current judicial vacancy crisis. We have in many instances abrogated our responsibility to advise and consent in the nomination process. An estimated 160 million people live in districts with a courtroom vacancy that could have been filled last year with the cooperation of Senate Republicans. There are currently 20 nominees who have been approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee or are waiting a simple up-or-down vote which Republicans have historically supported. One of these nominees is Ronnie Abrams.

Ms. Abrams was nominated in July of 2011 by President Obama to serve as a Federal judge for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. She is currently a lawyer with the law firm Davis Polk & Wardwell. She is also an adjunct professor at Columbia Law School, teaching a seminar on the investigation and prosecution of Federal criminal cases. Prior to her current positions, Ms. Abrams distinguished herself as a prosecutor, rising to deputy chief, Criminal Division, at the U.S. Attorney's Office of the Southern District of New York. As deputy chief, she supervised over 160 prosecutors in cases involving violent crimes, white-collar crimes, public corruption, narcotics trafficking, and computer crimes. In recognition of her service, she was awarded the Department of Justice Director's Award for Superior Performance as a Federal Prosecutor. Ms. Abrams is a highly experienced and exceptional attorney, who is extremely well qualified to serve as a Federal court judge. A nominee of this caliber deserves to be quickly confirmed by the Senate.

In particular, we should have a renewed, bipartisan commitment to confirming more women to the bench. Over the past three decades, an increasing number of women have joined the legal profession. In recent years, law schools have seen the number of female students increase. According to the National Women's Law Center, women now make up nearly half of all law students. But the number of women in the Federal judiciary has stagnated and women are woefully underrepresented. It is of critical importance to increase the representation of women and communities of color on the Federal bench. Today, women make up roughly 30 percent of the Federal bench. When women are fairly represented on our Federal courts, those courts are more reflective of our society.

What is disturbing about this vacancy crisis is that the total number of Federal circuit and district court judges confirmed during the first 3 years of the Obama administration is far less than for previous Presidents.