that when you are in a hole, it is advisable to quit digging.

Obviously, we continue to look at ways to add more and more spending and, therefore, more and more debt. The health care bill is not something anybody on my side here in the Senate supported when it passed in 2009 and early 2010. But that too is going to drive up spending and is going to drive up debt as we head into the future.

You heard from the President last night a whole new series of new spending initiatives, ''investments,'' he called them, in a whole range of areas. As he was sort of laying that out, those of us who were listening to that message were thinking to ourselves: Okay, if you put a calculator on this thing, it keeps going and going and going. Yet the President said we did not need to add a single dime to the deficit. Well, I do not know how anybody could accept that with a straight face. It flat does not pass the smell test.

We have a spending problem here in Washington, DC. The facts bear that out. The revenues are going up. They are going to go up 25 percent, according to the Congressional Budget Office, in the next 2 years. In 2015 they will be at 19.1 percent of GDP, an average we have not seen—or a number we have not seen in a long time. Then they will stay roughly at that for the next decade. This is not a revenue problem. This is not a problem where Washington taxes too little. This is a problem where Washington spends too much.

If you look at the other side of the equation, spending continues to go up as a percentage of GDP. We see a little bit of relief here in the next few years, but then when the cost of the Affordable Care Act starts hitting, when you start seeing the demographics of the country, as they continue to change, if we do not do something to save and protect Social Security and Medicare for future generations, it is going to bankrupt us.

We are headed for a train wreck. We have to do something about that and recognize what that problem is. That problem purely and simply is that Washington spends too much. It is a spending problem. That is why, again, when I heard the top Democrat, the minority leader in the House of Representatives, say over the weekend that it is a false argument to say this is a spending problem, I was shocked, because I think most Americans would argue, as they look at this, and they can do the math, Washington has a very serious spending problem which needs to be addressed. It needs to be addressed sooner rather than later.

I thought the report that came out from the Congressional Budget Office last week was instructive for a number of reasons. It pointed out the impact that debt is going to have as we face this debt crisis in terms of interest rates, in terms of inflation, in terms of loss of jobs, and a more sluggish economy. We know from history that when you get a certain amount of debt, it becomes such a drag on your economy that it reduces economic growth. So we have seen this anemic, sluggish economic growth which is going to be continued now for the foreseeable future. We have slower growth, fewer jobs, massive amounts of debt. Eventually what that is going to mean for the middle-class American is higher interest rates when it comes to buying a home, when it comes to buying a car, when it comes to financing a college education. It is going to mean lower take-home pay when the economy slows down and there is not the demand for workers out there. There are so many adverse impacts on our economy from carrying the kind of debt load we are carrying today. I think we have a responsibility to lead.

I hope the President of the United States will lead on this issue; that he in his budget will put forward the types of remedies that are necessary not only to deal with our short-term crisis in the sequestration but also to put us long term on a sustainable fiscal path by proposing reforms, reforms to these programs that are driving Federal spending, that are going to add massive amounts to our debt over the course of the next decade and beyond, and at the same time look at things we can be doing that would generate economic growth, that would create jobs in this country. Because when the economy is growing and expanding, then all of these other problems look much smaller by comparison.

Republicans here in the Senate are ready to work with the President, work with Democrats.

We are anxious to go to work on entitlement reform to save Social Security and Medicare. We are anxious to go to work on reforming our Tax Code in a way that would unleash economic growth to obtain the robust growth we need in the economy to create jobs and make the debt crisis we face look much smaller by comparison.

I hope in the days ahead the President of the United States, the leadership on Capitol Hill, and the Congress will do what we should have done a long time ago. It is long overdue for action. It is high time that we become busy and do the work of the American people, which is about providing a more secure, prosperous, and a safer, debt-free future for future generations. Anything less is negating or undermining the responsibility we have to the American people.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). We are not in a quorum call.

Mr. REID. Miracles never cease.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is true.

The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have spoken with Senator INHOFE, the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. It is very clear that he and a number of Republicans are not willing to enter into an agreement on the Hagel nomination.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF CHARLES TIMOTHY HAGEL TO BE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 10.

The clerk will report:

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to the nomination of Charles Timothy Hagel, of Nebraska, to be Secretary of Defense.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the motion to proceed is agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk and ask the clerk to report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Charles Timothy Hagel, of Nebraska, to be Secretary of Defense.

Harry Reid, Patrick J. Leahy, Sheldon Whitehouse, Barbara Boxer, Al Franken, Christopher A. Coons, Jack Reed, Carl Levin, Kirsten E. Gillibrand, Claire McCaskill, Robert P. Casey, Jr., Richard Blumenthal, Tom Harkin, Dianne Feinstein, Bill Nelson, Jeanne Shaheen, Sherrod Brown.

Mr. REID. This is the first time in the history of our country that a Presidential nominee for Secretary of Defense has been filibustered. What a shame, but that is the way it is.

I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum under rule XXII be waived.

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

Mr. REID. I also ask that under the rule the cloture vote will occur on Friday. Membership should plan accordingly.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, now that the nomination of Senator Hagel is before us, I want to begin this discussion and debate with a few remarks about him. The committee approved this nomination and sent it to the floor of the Senate yesterday by a vote of 14 to 11.

Senator Hagel has received broad support from a wide array of senior statesmen, defense, and foreign policy

organizations. At his January 31 nomination hearing before the Armed Services Committee, Senator Hagel was enthusiastically introduced and endorsed by two former chairmen of our committee, chairmen who have huge bipartisan support and respect by everybody in this body and everybody outside of this body who knows them. Those two chairmen are Sam Nunn and John Warner.

Senator Hagel's nomination has been endorsed by five former Secretaries of Defense who served under both Democratic and Republican Presidents: Bob Gates, Bill Cohen, Bill Perry, Harold Brown, and Melvin Laird. He has been endorsed by three former Secretaries of State—Madeleine Albright, Colin Powell, and George Shultz—and by six former National Security Advisers who served in that position for more than 20 years under six of the last seven Presidents.

Let me just share with our colleagues a few of the words of Senator Nunn when he introduced Senator Hagel to our committee:

I believe our Nation is fortunate to have a nominee for Secretary of Defense with the character, experience, courage and the leadership that Chuck Hagel would bring to this position. First, Chuck is acutely aware that even in an age of rapid technological advances, our military capability and effectiveness depend on the quality and the morale of the people who serve our Nation in uniform, as well as the families who support them.

Continuing:

Chuck received two Purple Hearts in Vietnam, and when he returned home he continued to fight for veterans and for Active-Duty military personnel. He knows that our people are our strongest asset. Second, Chuck's experience in Vietnam shaped his life and his perspective. War for Chuck Hagel is not abstraction. I am confident, if confirmed, he will ask the hard and smart questions before sending troops into battle. Chuck Hagel knows the United States has vital interests that are worth fighting for and dying for. He also knows that war should be a last resort and that our Nation must effectively use all of our tools, not limited only to our military, to protect our important and our vital interests.

Senator Nunn continued:

Certainly there is a tension in these values, but it is a tension that we should welcome in the thought process and in the advice that our Secretary of Defense gives to our Commander in Chief and to this Congress.

From our service together on the Defense Policy Board in recent years, I know that Chuck Hagel has a clear world view and that it aligns with the mainstream of U.S. foreign and defense policy, and also with President Obama. Chuck Hagel believes that we must build and preserve America's strength as a force for good in the world. He recognizes that protecting our interests requires strong allies and friends, as well as strong American leadership.

Senator WARNER's extraordinarily powerful and warm comments included as follows:

There is an old saying in the combat army infantry and Marine Corps. ''Certain men are asked to take the point.'' Which means to get out and lead in the face of the enemy. Chuck Hagel did that as a sergeant in Vietnam. If confirmed, Chuck Hagel will do it again. This time not before a platoon but before every man and woman and their families in the Armed Services. He will lead them and they will know in their hearts that we have one of our own.

Senator Hagel has received a letter of endorsement from 11 retired senior military officers who say Chuck Hagel is uniquely qualified to meet the challenges facing the Department of Defense and our men and women in uniform.

He has received a letter of endorsement from nine former Ambassadors who worked with him on Middle East issues. That letter says, in part:

Each of us has known the Senator over the past 20 years and has found him invariably one of the best informed leaders in the U.S. Congress on the issues of U.S. national security. . . . Senator Hagel's political courage has impressed us all. . . . Time and again he chose to take the path of standing up for our nation over political expediency. . . . He has invariably demonstrated strong support for Israel and for a two-state solution and has been opposed to those who would undermine or threaten Israel's security. We can think of few more qualified, more nonpartisan, more courageous, or better equipped to head the Department of Defense.

That is from nine former Ambassadors who worked with Senator Hagel on Middle East issues. Let me read who those Ambassadors are: Nicholas Burns, former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Ambassador to NATO and Greece; Ryan Crocker, former Ambassador to Iraq and Afghanistan; Edward Djerejian, former Ambassador to Israel and Syria; William Harrop, former Ambassador to Israel; Daniel Kurtzer, former Ambassador to Israel and to Egypt; Samuel Lewis, former Ambassador to Israel; William Luers, former Ambassador to Venezuela and Czechoslovakia; Tom Pickering, former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Ambassador to Israel and Russia; and Frank Wisner, former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and Ambassador to Egypt and to India.

Senator Hagel's nomination has been supported by the major groups of American veterans, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, AMVETS, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the American Legion. He has received support from the Military Officers Association of America, Foreign Area Officer Association, and the Non Commissioned Officers Association.

Senator Hagel has been endorsed by numerous newspapers, including USA Today, which stated:

Many of the supposed weaknesses that Republican Senators hammered him on are actually proof that Hagel takes thoughtful positions and doesn't bend easily to pressure.

I would like to read just a few quotes from those organizations of veterans who have endorsed him. The Veterans of Foreign Wars says the following:

It is not the place for America's oldest and largest combat veterans organization to advise or recommend to the President who he should nominate for cabinet positions. However, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States considers Chuck Hagel, twice wounded Vietnam War veteran, war infantryman, and former two-term United States Senator from Nebraska, to be uniquely qualified to lead the Department of Defense.

That is signed by Robert Wallace, who is executive director of the VFW.

The Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America wrote the following:

Without Senator Hagel's leadership in Washington, there would not be a post 9/11 GI bill. Senator Hagel has always been a strong advocate for veterans at the Department of Defense. There is no doubt he will continue that legacy. Time and time again, from Vietnam to the VA to the USO, Senator Hagel has answered his country's call to serve, demonstrating courage, character and resolve at every turn. We encourage the Senate to approve his nomination swiftly.

Paul Rieckhoff, Founder and Chief Executive Officer.

The AMVETS National Commander Cleve Geer endorsed President Obama's nomination of Chuck Hagel with the following comments:

AMVETS fully supports President Obama's nomination of Chuck Hagel for the future Secretary of Defense. As a veterans service organization, AMVETS' main mission is to serve as an advocate for veterans, their families and the communities in which they live. I am confident that former Senator Hagel will utilize his experience and understanding of America's military to lead this Nation's troops and the Department of Defense.

The organization votevets.org wrote the following in a petition signed by over 8,000 veterans and military families:

Senator Hagel is a tremendous pick for Secretary of Defense who I know very well, and I have little doubt that he will serve President Obama with distinction both as a voice of reason within the administration and as a faithful advocate for carrying out the policies of the Commander in Chief.

That was signed by John Soltz.

The Military Officers Association of America wrote the following:

While the Military Officers Association of America does not endorse or oppose specific candidates for elected or appointed office, we believe Senator Hagel is certainly a candidate who is fully qualified for appointment to this extremely important position. Our past work with Senator Hagel has been very positive, and we believe that he brings an important sensitivity to the human side of budget and operational considerations. His experience as a combat wounded Vietnam veteran, as deputy administrator of the VA, and his two terms in the Senate provide a range of perspectives that would serve any Secretary of Defense well. We previously recognized Senator Hagel's efforts to protect the interests of military beneficiaries with our Arthur T. Marix Congressional Leadership Award. We do not believe that cabinet nominees should be held hostage to political litmus tests.

That was signed by ADM Norbert Ryan, USN, retired, President of the Military Officers Association of America.

The Non Commissioned Officers Association of the United States wrote the following:

We strongly support the appointment of Chuck Hagel to be Secretary of Defense. His

military service, including being twice wounded in action, has instilled the values of service and personal sacrifice for which he knows well the human cost of war. He has been an advocate for soldiers, Marines, sailors, airmen and coasties to ensure the training and equipage of America's 21st military force coincide with a solid revised defense posture to meet conventional and unconventional world challenges. Senator Hagel has also championed personnel issues relating to combat dwell time, force protection, transition issues, including electronic medical issues, preparation for future employment and training, and veterans benefits, including enhancements to post 9/11 educational benefits. He also recognizes the value and the sacrifice of families of the men and women who serve in this Nation's uniformed services.

That was signed by Richard Schneider, executive director for government affairs.

The Vietnam Veterans of America wrote:

We like Hagel. We think he is a great guy, and having a combat veteran in there would be a good thing.

The American Legion wrote:

Hagel is a long-time member of the Legion. He served right after he returned from Vietnam. He is a long-time advocate for veterans in the VA, and especially for veterans exposed to Agent Orange. Our organization has consulted with him, among others, on various national security matters. Having said that, the American Legion is prohibited by our congressional charter from endorsing any candidate for elected or appointed office.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Jan Scruggs, founder and president, wrote the following:

I first met Mr. Hagel in 1981 when he was the No. 2 man at the Veterans Administration. He had just thrown out of his office some people who were demanding that he stop his support for Maya Lin's design for the Vietnam veterans memorial. His integrity and toughness were impressive then. Both qualities have grown since. Long before he became a Senator, Mr. Hagel was an infantryman in Vietnam. He fought the enemy up close, and he had to put Americans in body bags. I am sure as defense secretary he would not hesitate to use military force aggressively if our Nation or its allies are in danger, yet he knows well that war is terribly unpredictable and needs to be avoided. He has shown some fury at those who have never seen war, but encouraged it during the past decade. This is called courage. He has earned his stripes.

Senator Hagel's credentials are underscored by the service in war and in peace that has been described so eloquently in all those letters from those veterans organizations. As a young man, Senator Hagel enlisted in the Army and served in Vietnam, where he received two Purple Hearts, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Combat Infantryman Badge for his service.

He volunteered to go to Vietnam. He answered the question, where are you, by answering, here I am. Senator Hagel served as Deputy Administrator of the Veterans' Administration during the Reagan administration. He was twice elected to the Senate, where he served on the Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees.

Since he left the Senate 4 years ago, Senator Hagel has served as chairman of the board of directors of the Atlantic Council. The Atlantic Council counts among its other directors and honorary directors seven former Secretaries of State and four former Secretaries of Defense, along with numerous other senior officials from the administrations of both parties. The Atlantic Council is very much a part of the mainstream of the American foreign policy establishment.

Much of the time and attention at our committee hearing was devoted to a handful of statements Senator Hagel made over the course of his career that raised questions about his views on Israel, Iran, and other issues.

Senator Hagel explained and clarified these things and placed them in context. He apologized for one remark, and told the committee he would say other things differently if he had the chance or was making them over. Senator Hagel was clear in the positions he takes today and that he will take if confirmed as Secretary of Defense. In particular, Senator Hagel stated unequivocally, first:

Iran poses a significant threat to the United States, our allies and partners, and our interests in the region and globally. Iran continues to pursue an illicit nuclear program that threatens to provoke a regional arms race and undermine the global non-proliferation regime. Iran is also one of the main state-sponsors of terrorism and could spark conflict, including against U.S. personnel and interests.

Second, he is ''. . . fully committed to the President's goal of preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon . . . all options must be on the table to achieve that goal . . .'' and his policy, if confirmed, will be ''one of prevention, not of containment.''

Third, while he believes ''engagement is clearly in our interests,'' ''engagement is not negotiation.'' He stated:

I've never thought engagement is weakness. I never thought it was surrender. I never thought it was appeasement. I think it's clearly in our interest. . . . [G]et the international sanctions behind you, keep military options on the table. If the military option is the only option, it's the only option.

Finally, he said that he is ''a strong supporter of Israel,'' and believes that ''we have a special relationship with Israel.'' If confirmed, he ''will ensure our friend and ally Israel maintains its qualitative military edge in the region, and will continue to support systems like Iron Dome, which is today saving Israeli lives from terrorist rocket attacks.''

Senator Hagel has also recognized the very real risks posed to our national security as a result of the unique budgetary pressure arising out of cuts previously agreed upon by Congress, the budgeting by continuing resolution, and the impending threat of a sequester. Senator Hagel told the committee:

[Sequestration] if allowed to occur, would damage our readiness, our people, and our military families. It would result in the grounding of aircraft and returning ships to port, reducing the Department's global presence and ability to rapidly respond to contingencies. Vital training would be reduced by half of current plans and the Department would be unable to reset equipment from Afghanistan in a timely manner. The Department would reduce training and maintenance for non-deploying units and would be forced to reduce procurement of vital weapons systems and suffer the subsequent schedule delays and price increases. Civilian employees would be furloughed for up to 22 days. All of these effects also negatively impact long-term readiness. It would send a terrible signal to our military and civilian workforce, to those we hope to recruit, and to both our allies and adversaries around the world.

One of our colleagues has alleged that Senator Hagel has failed to provide complete financial disclosure and suggested, despite the admitted lack of evidence of any kind, that Senator Hagel may have received money that ''came directly from Saudi Arabia, came directly from North Korea.'' There is no evidence for that, but that is the kind of innuendo which was made and I believe should not have been made.

As a matter of fact, Senator Hagel has provided the exact same financial disclosure the committee requires of all nominees, including at least the last eight Secretaries of Defense. As required by the Armed Services Committee and by the Ethics in Government Act, he has disclosed all compensation over $5,000 that he has received in the last 2 years. As required by the Armed Services Committee, he has received letters from the Director of the Office of Government Ethics and the Acting Department of Defense General Counsel certifying that he has met all applicable financial disclosure and conflict-of-interest requirements. As required by the Armed Services Committee, he has answered a series of questions about possible foreign affiliations. Among other questions, the committee asked whether, during the last 10 years, the nominee or his spouse have ''received any compensation from, or been involved in any financial or business transaction with, a foreign government or an entity controlled by a foreign government.'' Senator Hagel's answer was, ''No.''

Senator Hagel, like all of our nominees, has undergone a thorough FBI background investigation. Senator INHOFE and I have reviewed the FBI file. The innuendo that Senator Hagel could somehow be hiding the fact he is on the payroll of a foreign power is offensive to those of us who have served with him and beneath the dignity of the U.S. Senate.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a series of letters in which certain Senators requested certain financial disclosure and the letter with which I responded.

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

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, February 8, 2013.

Hon. JIM INHOFE,
Ranking Minority Member,
Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate.

DEAR JIM: I read with some concern a February 6, 2013, letter that you signed with 25 other Republican Senators, demanding that former Senator Chuck Hagel provide additional financial disclosure information in connection with his nomination to serve as Secretary of Defense. This letter appears to insist upon financial disclosure requirements that far exceed the standard practices of the Armed Services Committee and go far beyond the financial disclosure required of previous Secretaries of Defense.

Our committee has a well-defined set of financial disclosure and ethics requirements which apply to all nominees for civilian positions in the Department of Defense. We require each nominee to provide us with the following: a copy of the Nominee Public Financial Disclosure Report required by the Ethics in Government Act—OGE Form 278; a response to a standard committee questionnaire, which includes questions on future employment relationships, potential conflicts of interest, personal financial data, and foreign affiliations; and a formal ethics agreement, which outlines the steps the nominee will take to avoid any potential conflict of interest, including a commitment by the nominee to divest DOD contractor stocks within 90 days of appointment to office, avoid buying DOD contractor stocks while in office, and resign from non-Federal boards and activities.

Before these materials are provided to the committee, they are reviewed by the U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE) and the DOD General Counsel's office—both of which are familiar with the unique conflict of interest requirements imposed by our committee—to ensure that the required disclosures of information meet our standards. The leader of each of these offices sends us a letter certifying that the office has reviewed the financial disclosure and determined that the nominee will be in compliance with applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest. Our majority and minority counsels review these materials and work together, through the DOD General Counsel's office, to address any questions that may arise about the completeness of the materials provided or the nominee's compliance with our requirements.

We have applied these disclosure requirements and followed this process for all nominees of both parties throughout the 16 years that I have served as Chairman or Ranking Minority Member of the committee. I understand that the same financial disclosure requirements and processes were followed for at least the previous 10 years, during which Senator Sam Nunn served as Chairman or Ranking Minority Member. During this period, the committee has confirmed eight Secretaries of Defense (Secretaries Carlucci, Cheney, Aspin, Perry, Cohen, Rumsfeld, Gates, and Panetta), as well as hundreds of nominees for other senior civilian positions in the Department.

There are two unprecedented elements to the financial disclosure demanded by the February 6, letter: (1) the disclosure of ''all compensation over $5,000 that [Senator Hagel has] received over the past five years''; and (2) the disclosure of any foreign funding of eight private entities from which Senator Hagel has received compensation since leaving the Senate (including the date, source, and specific amount of each foreign contribution). Each of these demands goes well beyond what the committee has required of any previous nominee.

With regard to the demand that Senator Hagel disclose all compensation over $5,000 that he has received over the past five years, the standard financial disclosure form which the committee requires all nominees to provide calls for the disclosure of all entities from which the nominee has received compensation in excess of $5,000 (including clients for whom the nominee personally provided more than $5,000 in services, even if the payments were made to the nominee's employer, firm, or affiliated business) during the previous two years. The two-year disclosure requirement that has been consistently applied by the committee is established in section 102(b)(1)(A) of the Ethics in Government Act and applies not only to all nominees for Senate-confirmed positions, but also to all candidates for federal elective office.

With regard to the demand that Senator Hagel disclose foreign funding for private entities from which he has received compensation, the February 6 letter asserts that this information is needed because ''If it is the case that [Senator Hagel] personally [has] received substantial financial remuneration—either directly or indirectly—from foreign governments, sovereign wealth funds, lobbyists, corporations, or individuals, that information is at the very minimum relevant to this Committee's assessment of your nomination.''

In fact, the committee questionnaire addresses the issue of foreign affiliations in a manner that is equally applicable to all civilian nominees coming before the committee. Among other questions, the committee questionnaire asks whether, during the last ten years, the nominee or his spouse has ''received any compensation from, or been involved in any financial or business transactions with, a foreign government or an entity controlled by a foreign government.'' Senator Hagel's answer to this question was ''No.''

The demands of the February 6 letter go beyond this standard disclosure regime and would subject Senator Hagel to a different requirement from all previous nominees, under which he alone would be required to somehow ascertain whether certain entities with whom he has been employed may have received foreign contributions. In particular:

Senator Hagel serves without compensation as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Atlantic Council—a ''think tank'' that includes among its other Directors and Honorary Directors seven former Secretaries of States and four former Secretaries of Defense. The Atlantic Council's public website provides a diverse list of corporate contributors, including both domestic companies (such as Chevron, General Dynamics, Lockheed, Raytheon, Boeing, Citigroup, Duke Energy, and Exxon Mobil) and foreign entities (such as Polish Telecom, Saab, All Nippon Airways, and the Istanbul Stock Exchange). Over the 16 years that I have served as either Chairman or Ranking Minority Member of the committee, we have considered numerous nominations of individuals who were associated with similar think tanks, universities, and other non-profit entities. Even in the many cases where a nominee received compensation from such a nonprofit entity, we did not require the nominee to disclose the sources of funding provided to the nonprofit entity.

Senator Hagel has also served as an Advisory Board Member, Senior Advisor, Director, Special Advisor, or Board Member to seven domestic for-profit entities identified in the February 6 letter since he left the Senate in January 2009. His financial disclosure report and committee questionnaire indicate that he left four of these entities (Wolfensohn & Company, National Interest Security Company, Elite Training & Security, and Kaseman, LLC) in 2010 and has received no compensation from them during the two-year reporting period covered by the Ethics in Government Act. Nonetheless, the February 6 letter demands that Senator Hagel provide ten years of corporate financial data on foreign investments or funding received by these entities. The forms and committee questionnaire indicate that Senator Hagel continues to serve as an Advisory Board Member for Corsair Capital, a Senior Advisor to McCarthy Capital, and a Special Advisor to the Chairman of M.I.C. Industries and that he has received compensation for his service to these three entities. I am doubtful that, as mere advisor to these companies, Senator Hagel has either access to the corporate financial information that is sought in the February 6 letter or the authority to release such information if he were able to get access to it. In any case, over the 16 years that I have served as either Chairman or Ranking Minority Member of the committee, we have considered numerous nominations of individuals who were employed by for-profit entities of every variety. We have considered board members, officers, directors, and employees of companies doing business across the full range of our economy. In this time, we have never required the nominee to attempt to ascertain and disclose the names of investors in such an entity.

The committee cannot have two different sets of financial disclosure standards for nominees, one for Senator Hagel and one for other nominees.

Sincerely,

CARL LEVIN,
Chairman.

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, February 6, 2013.

Hon. CHUCK HAGEL,
Distinguished Professor in the Practice of National Government, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, 37th and O Streets, NW, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HAGEL: On January 29, two days before your confirmation hearing, you received a request, via email, from several Senators on the Senate Armed Services Committee for additional information necessary to fairly assess your nomination to be Secretary of Defense. The written copy of the letter (delivered the next day) was signed by six Senators, including the Ranking Member of the Committee. The letter requested that you respond to the request before the hearing, so that you could then answer questions concerning your responses.

You declined to respond to the request for additional financial disclosure.

At the hearing, you were told by Members of the Committee that a response to our request for information would be necessary before the Committee could vote on your nomination. The Chairman of the Committee expressly asked you to submit your response by Monday, February 4.

Monday came and went, and you still did not respond.

At the end of the day on Tuesday, February 5, you submitted a short ''response'' to our request. In that response, you explicitly declined to answer many of the questions asked of you.

You were asked to disclose all compensation over $5,000 that you have received over the past five years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—the Atlantic Council has received foreign funding in the past five years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—McCarthy Capital has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so,

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Corsair Capital has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Wolfensohn and Company has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—M.I.C. Industries has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—the National Interest Security Company has received foreign funding in the ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Elite Training and Security, LLC has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Kaseman, LLC has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

Your own financial records are entirely within your own control, and you have flatly refused to comply with the Committee Members' request for supplemental information.

The records from the other firms—more than one of which, you have disclosed, paid you $100,000 or more—are highly relevant to the proper consideration of your nomination. Your letter discloses no affirmative efforts on your part to obtain the needed disclosure, and your lack of effort to provide a substantive response on this issue is deeply troubling.

If it is the case that you personally have received substantial financial remuneration—either directly or indirectly—from foreign governments, sovereign wealth funds, lobbyists, corporations, or individuals, that information is at the very minimum relevant to this Committee's assessment of your nomination. Such remuneration may be entirely appropriate, but that determination cannot be made without disclosure.

If you have not received remuneration—directly or indirectly—from foreign sources, then proper disclosure will easily demonstrate that fact.

Your refusal to respond to this reasonable request suggests either a lack of respect for the Senate's responsibility to advise and consent or that you are for some reason unwilling to allow this financial disclosure to come to light.

This Committee, and the American people, have a right to know if a nominee for Secretary of Defense has received compensation, directly or indirectly, from foreign sources. Until the Committee receives full and complete answers, it cannot in good faith determine whether you should be confirmed as Secretary of Defense.

Therefore, in the judgment of the undersigned, a Committee vote on your nomination should not occur unless and until you provide the requested information.

Sincerely,

(Signed by 26 Senators).

FEBRUARY 8, 2013.

Hon. CARL LEVIN,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.
Hon. JAMES INHOFE,
U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEVIN AND RANKING MEMBER INHOFE: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the February 6, 2013, letter from 25 Senators, including several members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. I remain committed to providing the Committee with complete personal financial disclosure, in accordance with the applicable requirements of law and regulation. In the spirit of cooperation, I have gone beyond those requirements in several areas. For example, although the committee questionnaire requires that nominees provide copies of ''any formal speeches,'' I have sought transcripts of informal speeches of which I did not have copies, and provided those transcripts to the committee.

In that same spirit of cooperation, I have reviewed each of the specific requests for information described in your letter. While some of these requests appear to go beyond what is either in my control or is mine to release under the law, I am committed to providing what I can—and when I cannot, to explain why not.

As you know, I previously submitted all of the information required by the Committee's standard financial disclosure processes. This includes information regarding compensation that I received over the past two years, as reported on the Nominee Public Financial Disclosure Report in Schedule D. To assist you in reviewing this information, I have prepared a chart that reflects all compensation over $5,000 I received for that time period.

Further, you asked questions about whether, and the extent to which, eight identified entities (with which I have been affiliated) have received foreign funding in the past. As I explained in my response to the Committee, dated February 5, 2013, my legal and fiduciary obligations prevent me from releasing this kind of corporate financial information for those entities that are privately owned/held. One of the entities that you inquired about, Atlantic Council, is a 501(c)(3) organization which permits greater public disclosure of its funding Streams. While Atlantic Council does not make public a comprehensive list of all its donors, it does publicly acknowledge its foreign corporate and foreign government donors of $5,000 or more. I have attached a copy of Atlantic Council's publicly available list of these foreign donors over the past five years. Because I serve without compensation, I have not been a direct or indirect beneficiary of these contributions. Of the remaining seven companies, McCarthy Capital, Wolfensohn, M.I.C. Industries, National Interest Security Company, Kaseman, and Elite Training & Security have authorized me to inform you that they have not compensated me with any foreign-derived funds. Corsair Capital has been advised by its outside counsel that it cannot provide further information regarding its finances.

I wish to reiterate that I have not received any compensation from or been involved in any financial or business transactions with a foreign government or an entity controlled by a foreign government. This is reflected in my response to the SASC Questionnaire, Question 3, Part E—Foreign Affiliations.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your questions.

Sincerely,

CHUCK HAGEL.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the Department of Defense right now needs its new leader. Its current leader, who has done a great job, has announced he is leaving and has set a time for that departure.

We face a budgetary challenge of immense proportions—not just in the Department of Defense but in all of our agencies. Our military is engaged in combat operations overseas. North Korea has exploded a nuclear device—highly provocative, highly objectionable—and must be countered. The absence of senior leaders in the Department of Defense will harm our national defense, will harm our men and women in uniform, and sends exactly the wrong message to both our friends and our adversaries around the world.

If confirmed, Senator Hagel would be the first former enlisted man and the first veteran of the Vietnam war to serve as Secretary of Defense. This background gives Senator Hagel an invaluable perspective not only with respect to the difficult decisions and recommendations a Secretary of Defense must make regarding the use of force and the commitment of U.S. troops overseas but also with respect to the day-to-day decisions a Secretary must make to ensure our men and women in uniform and their families receive the support and the assistance they need and deserve. It would be a positive message for our soldiers, our sailors, our airmen, and our marines in harm's way around the world to know that one of their own holds the highest office in the Department of Defense and that he has their backs.

The President needs to have a Secretary of Defense in whom he has trust, who will give him unvarnished advice, a person of integrity, and one who has a personal understanding of the consequences of decisions relative to the use of military force. Senator Hagel certainly has those critically important qualifications and he is well qualified to lead the Department of Defense.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN.) The senior Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when Senator LEE concludes his remarks, I be recognized.

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

The Senator from Utah is recognized.

(The remarks of Mr. LEE are printed in today's RECORD under ''Morning Business.'')

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Rhode Island is recognized.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the nomination of Senator Chuck Hagel to be the next Secretary of Defense. He comes to this job at an extraordinarily challenging time for the Department and for our Nation. Among the many issues he will confront, Senator Hagel will oversee the drawdown of our forces out of Afghanistan, the enhancement of our cyber defenses, and the management of various fiscal constraints on the defense budget. In fact, I cannot think of a more critical juncture of national security issues, budget issues, and technology issues, all coming together, facing the next Secretary of Defense.

I have known Chuck for many years, and I know he is particularly well-suited to tackle these challenges. Chuck was born and raised in Nebraska, the oldest of four sons of a World War II veteran. Public service, military service is in that family's core. When his father died suddenly at the age of 39,

Chuck quickly shouldered the responsibility of helping his mother raise his brothers. And when our Nation was in the midst of a bitter and divisive fight in Vietnam, he volunteered to fight, serving alongside his brother Tom. This was an era when there were many people who were looking for ways through deferments to avoid service, to avoid wearing the uniform of the United States. He was unusual in that he not only sought service, but he sought service in Vietnam alongside his brother.

He rose to be an infantry sergeant, and both he and his brother were wounded twice, with each saving the other's life. In that experience as a combat infantryman, he knows, perhaps better than anyone who has been nominated for this office, the ultimate cost of our policies that are made here in Washington.

When he returned home, Chuck used the GI bill to attend the University of Nebraska in Omaha, and after graduating from there, he went to Washington to work for a freshman Congressman from his home State.

In 1980 President Reagan, recognizing his skill, his talent, his patriotism, and his devotion to the country, nominated him to be Deputy Administrator of the Veterans Administration. He ultimately left that post on a matter of principle. He thought there was inadequate support from that department for veterans suffering from exposure to Agent Orange. At that time, the effects of Agent Orange were being dismissed by some as nonconsequential, as something that was just a made-up malady by these veterans.

Chuck knew differently, and later the science would prove him right. He continued to fight as he left the Veterans Administration, helping to ensure that these veterans who were physically affected by their service in Vietnam received compensation as the victims of Agent Orange.

In that tenure as the Deputy Administrator of the Veterans Administration, he had the responsibility of running a large Federal department. So he is now bringing not only his service as a common infantryman but his service running a large department devoted to the veterans of these United States. That will serve him well as Secretary of Defense. Again, it makes him singularly if not uniquely qualified.

But it doesn't stop there because he has extraordinary experience in the private sector. In the mid-1980s he cofounded Vanguard Cellular Systems, which became one of the largest independent cellular systems in the country. Again, someone from modest means with great imagination, after serving his country both as a soldier and as an administrator under the Reagan administration, went back and started a business and made it successful—so successful that he was able to devote himself to other public activities.

He served as deputy commissioner general of the United States for the 1982 World's Fair. He was president and chief executive officer of the USO, the agency devoted to helping servicemembers and their families. Again, his commitment to the American soldier, sailor, airman, and marine has been consistent, constant, and unrelenting.

Then he became chief operating officer of the 1990 Economic Summit of Industrialized Nations—the G7 summit—in Houston, the president of an investment bank, and he was on the board of some of the world's largest companies.

So you already have at this juncture a soldier, a successful entrepreneur, and a successful Federal administrator.

Then in 1996 he came to the Senate to represent the people of Nebraska. He was the first Republican Senator from Nebraska in a generation. We came here together. He came with all of these skills, and he added more skills, understanding the political process from the inside and from the outside that helped shaped national security policy, the budgets and the policies of the Department of Defense and every other Federal agency.

During his time in the Senate as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations and Intelligence Committees, he championed national security policies with the goal of ensuring that our military remains the strongest in the world. Senator Hagel believes in working closely with our allies and partners and that, in his words, ''a nation must strategically employ all instruments of its power—diplomatic, military, economic—to defend its interests.'' So he brings a broad, comprehensive approach to national security, which is essential for our next Secretary of Defense because so many of the national security challenges we face are not simply military; they are diplomatic, they are economic, and they are environmental. They require the kind of broad-ranging approach that he takes to national security policy.

As he stated during his nomination hearing 2 weeks ago, he has one fundamental question he has asked himself on every vote he took while serving in the Senate: Is the policy worthy of the men and women we were sending into battle and surely to their deaths? Is this going to be worth the sacrifice, because there will be sacrifices.

It is one thing to study the art of war in lecture halls and to speak profoundly as a pundit. It is something else to be in the mud, under fire, seeing others fall. I have not had that experience. I served 12 years in the U.S. Army, but very few people, very few people in this Chamber, very few people who would be considered for Secretary of Defense, have been under fire, have seen comrades fall, know that ultimately what we do here is borne by what those brave young Americans do across the globe. He knows it intellectually and viscerally. I know he will bring that perspective, that concern for our men and women in uniform, to every decision before him as Secretary of Defense.

In this role, he will continue to focus our efforts on fighting terrorism in Afghanistan and throughout that region. We are facing a crucial turning point. In his State of the Union Address last night, the President announced his plan to further reduce our force levels in Afghanistan next year as the Afghan National Security Forces will take full responsibility for securing their nation. I think Senator Hagel is very well positioned to carry out this policy, to ensure it is done effectively, to ensure that our forces are protected and that we are able to help enable the Afghan forces to carry the burden to defend their country and provide stability.

Senator Hagel will also lead the Department in preparing for emerging threats to our national security, such as attacks on our cyber infrastructure. We are at a critical point in our history, perhaps akin to the 1920s when air power first began to emerge as a credible military dimension, then later as space became a possible military dimension. Cyber is now a new dimension in warfare.

We are at a similar juncture to the one when some of our colleagues in the 1920s were wondering how we use these contraptions that fly around the sky. But in a short period of time, air power made a profound difference on the world. The attack on Pearl Harbor was launched by aircraft from aircraft carriers, not by the bombardment of battleships and not by the landing of military forces. You can see the effect it had not only through World War II but in every conflict to today.

We are at another critical juncture, and that is with respect to cyber security. How will we defend ourselves? What policies will we adopt to use this new technology to protect the United States and our allies? It will require integration across our government. It will require thoughtful, conscious deliberation. I believe he is prepared to do that and will do that very well.

I am pleased that President Obama has just issued an Executive order that will improve coordination and information sharing with our industry partners so we can better protect our Nation's critical infrastructure, but there is more to be done, and I believe that in the context of a Secretary of Defense, Chuck Hagel can do it.

Perhaps most challenging of all, Senator Hagel will lead the Department in a time of great fiscal constraints and uncertainty. As our Nation continues to find a path forward to rebound from the economic challenges of the last few years, there is an ever-growing pressure to reduce the size of the defense budget, which has nearly doubled over the past 10 years. But we must be very careful to do so in a way that eliminates unsustainable and unproductive costs without losing vital capabilities. That is a great challenge. As a result of the high operations tempo of our services, the multiple operations and deployments, all of our services are facing serious reset and recapitalization

needs in terms of equipment and also significant efforts to help our military members and their families readjust, retrain, reequip, and prepare for a challenging future.

Serious decisions will have to be made about the threats we face and as we anticipate new and emerging threats. Again, he is well prepared through his entire life of public service, military service, private service, administrative and business activity to confront this extraordinary range of challenges.

A lot has been made about some comments Senator Hagel has made in the last years, going back 5, 7, 8, or more years. But I know, indeed, which was reflected in his testimony, that he did not seek out this position. President Obama chose to nominate Chuck Hagel because he knew of his record, of his service to our country. He knew of his incredible commitment to the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States. He knew about his experience in the private sector. He knew about his experience as a governmental leader. He knew there was an ability to rely upon his judgments, Senator Hagel's judgments, with confidence in times of crisis. I expect that the President of the United States is not going to turn to Chuck Hagel, particularly among crises, and ask him if can he quote verbatim what he said 10 years ago. He is going to say: What are my options? What is your advice? You know about war better than anyone. You know about military policy. You know about international security. You know about the interaction of diplomacy, economics, and environmental policy. Give me your judgment. I have to make a decision.

I believe, reflecting what the Senator, my chairman, CARL LEVIN, has said, that in this difficult moment, the President of the United States needs a Secretary of Defense to provide that kind of perspective, and the men and women of the Department of Defense have to have the ability to have their voice heard decisively and definitively in those serious discussions, particularly about the deployment of military force.

As I said, I am extremely confident he can do this. Let me also say I am impressed with those who have served our country in diplomatic and military roles who have endorsed Chuck Hagel strongly and enthusiastically. These endorsements are from men and women who have served in both Democratic and Republican administrations. Among them are Bob Gates, William Cohen, Madeleine Albright, William Perry, Brent Scowcroft, Ryan Crocker, and Thomas Pickering. These men and women have devoted themselves to protecting the United States, and they have done it with extraordinary energy and effectiveness. This list of Secretaries of Defense will rank as some of the best we have ever had, and they are absolutely confident Chuck Hagel can and should do this job.

There are Ambassadors on this list who have handled delicate and difficult issues involving international law. There are several Ambassadors who have been Ambassadors to the State of Israel and strongly support Senator Hagel. All of these individuals know him. They also know as well—if not better than I and many of my colleagues—of the threats, dangers, and opportunities which face this country, and they are strongly supporting Chuck Hagel. In fact, they have concluded in a letter that he is ''uniquely qualified to meet the challenges facing the Department of Defense and our men and women in uniform.''

There has been a lot of discussion about Chuck Hagel's appreciation of the strong, important, and critical relationship between the United States and State of Israel. All I can say is I was so impressed by the comments of the Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon, who was also the Ambassador to Washington, and who has met and dealt with Senator Hagel on a number of issues involving the relationship with the United States. The Deputy Foreign Minister said: ''I have met him many times, and he certainly regards Israel as a true and natural U.S. ally.''

In another quote he said:

> I know Hagel personally. . . . I think he believes in the relationship, in the natural partnership between Israel and the United States.

Here is an Israeli patriot who understands and has spent a great deal of time devoted to the relationship of the United States and Israel. In his own words, he concludes that Chuck Hagel regards Israel as a true and natural U.S. ally and will act accordingly. He is a dedicated patriot. He is an individual who has served this country in so many different ways. I support his nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Also, I think it is important to state that this nomination—as we have done with every Secretary of Defense for decades—deserves an up-or-down vote on the floor of the Senate. People may choose to cast a vote against him for many reasons, and that is the prerogative of that Senator. I strongly believe, if we want to stay true to the traditions of this body and to the presumption that the President should be allowed to at least have his nominee voted up or down, then we have to bring this vote to the floor of the Senate for an up-or-down vote as quickly as possible.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). The Senator from New Hampshire.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to enter into a colloquy with my colleague, the Senator from Maine, Ms. COLLINS.

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

SEQUESTRATION

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, Senator COLLINS and I are here because we agree we must take action in this body and in this Congress to avoid sequestration. Sequestration is a term we have all been throwing around, and it refers to the automatic cuts that are scheduled to take effect on March 1. Those cuts were designed to force Congress to make a tough decision and to take comprehensive action on our debt and deficits.

I think we all agree there is no question we need a comprehensive and balanced plan to put us on a more sustainable fiscal path. I think that plan should look at all areas of spending. It should look at domestic, mandatory, and defense as well as comprehensive tax reform. I think there are many areas of bipartisan agreement on deficit reduction, including controlling the long-term cost of health care.

Unfortunately, Congress has missed several opportunities to enact a long-term plan to get our debt and deficits under control. That is why we are again facing a deadline at the end of this month to address those automatic cuts. As a result of that, we are starting to see the very real and negative consequences of our inaction. We are seeing it on our national security, and we are seeing it on our economy as businesses and agencies alike begin to prepare for the automatic cuts under sequestration.

Last week, Senator COLLINS and I wrote to the leadership in the Senate urging bipartisan action on sequestration and the need to find a better approach. In our letter, we talked about the impacts we are starting to see in New Hampshire and Maine, including the threat to jobs, our national security, and to the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, which is critical not only to New Hampshire and Maine but also to this country's national security. We called attention to the drastic effects we face for our economy, for our jobs, and for our national security.

Today we are here to reiterate the importance of addressing sequestration and doing it now.

I wish to thank the senior Senator from Maine, my colleague, for joining me to talk about this important issue, and I am looking forward to hearing her remarks. I know it is something she cares about as much as I do and as much as I think most of the Members of this Chamber do.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, first, let me say, I am very pleased to join with my friend and colleague from New Hampshire to speak out against the indiscriminate meat-ax cuts known in Washington as sequestration that are scheduled to take effect in just 2 weeks' time. We simply must take action to avoid this self-inflicted harm to our economy and to our national security. But what I find inexplicable is a growing acceptance that sequestration is going to go into effect despite the fact that virtually everyone should concede that across-the-board cuts

where we don't set priorities do not make sense.

There are good programs that deserve to be preserved, there are programs that have outlived their usefulness and should be eliminated, and then there are programs that could be cut and reduced. That is not the approach we are taking. We are not going through the budget in a careful way by identifying programs that could be eliminated or reduced, setting priorities, and making investments. No, we are allowing to go into effect across-the-board cuts that fall disproportionately on the Department of Defense.

Indeed, we are already seeing the effects of these cuts on our military because each of the military services has begun planning for the likelihood of deep budget cuts. The Navy is preparing for a civilian hiring freeze and cutting workers at shipyards and base-operated support facilities.

I wish to be clear exactly who these employees are. These are the nuclear engineers, the welders, the metal trades workers repairing submarines and ships at the Navy's four public shipyards, including the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in my home State of Maine, which employs half of its workforce from my colleague's State of New Hampshire. I know the senior Senator from New Hampshire shares the concern about this particular installation on the border we share. But, of course, the damage of sequestration extends far beyond just one installation or two States.

Just this morning I was over at the Pentagon, and I took advantage of the opportunity to sit down with the Navy's top shipbuilding official to discuss what the impact of sequestration would be for our naval fleet. Well, one example we have already seen. The Navy will keep the USS *Abraham Lincoln*, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, in port rather than repairing and deploying it. Across the fleet, the Navy is being forced to reduce deployments, maintenance, and overhauls for critical repairs. When we look at the shipbuilding budget, it is evident that sequestration and the continuation of a partial-year funding resolution, known as the continuing resolution, would be absolutely devastating for our Navy, for shipbuilding, and for our skilled industrial base. That includes Bath Iron Works in Maine, which I am so proud of, which builds the best destroyers in the world. This has consequences not only for our workforce, but also for our national security.

It is important to note Secretary Panetta has made clear that allowing these sweeping cuts to go into effect would be ''devastating,'' in his words, and would badly damage the readiness of the U.S. military.

The fact is defense has already taken a huge reduction in future spending. The defense budget has been slated to be cut by $460 billion over 10 years, and that is before sequestration. When this number is added to the defense cuts scheduled to begin on March 1, we are looking at an enormous impact on our national security.

Now, it is important to recognize we are not saying the national debt is not a problem. Certainly, when we have a $16.4 trillion debt, that is not sustainable, and the national debt is a security concern in its own right. Just last year, in 2012, the Federal Government spent $223 billion in interest payments alone. That means we are spending more on interest on the national debt each month than we spent in an entire year on naval shipbuilding and the Coast Guard budget.

Just think about that. The interest payment in one month exceeds the entire Coast Guard budget and the entire budget for shipbuilding in the Navy. The estimates are that by the middle of this decade—not some distant year—our interest payments to China, our largest foreign creditor at $1.2 trillion, will be covering the entire cost of that Communist country's military. Think of the horrific irony of that. At the same time America is bound by treaties to defend our allies in Asia against Chinese aggression, the American taxpayers are bankrolling the threat through the interest payments we are paying to the Chinese.

Neither the Senator from New Hampshire nor I am saying the Pentagon should be exempt from budget scrutiny or even future cuts, but the disproportionate impact that sequestration would have on our troops and on our national security is dangerous and it must be averted. The Department cannot continue to operate on a continuing resolution that increases costs, prevents long-term planning, and makes it impossible for the Department to function effectively.

I yield to my colleague from New Hampshire to expand on some of these points. Then we will talk further about the impact.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Maine for laying out what we are seeing in terms of the potential impact of those automatic cuts. The comments and the statistics the Senator from Maine had about China and what they are going to be able to do with the money we are paying is really eye-opening and scary.

The Senator from Maine spoke about some of the impacts we are beginning to see at the ports of naval shipyards. As the Senator pointed out, it is something very important to both Maine and New Hampshire. It employs about 4,000 workers, almost evenly split between our two States. As a result of the sequester, starting March 1, one of their major projects, the repair of the USS *Miami*, which was damaged in a fire, is going to be halted immediately. Just stopped—16 days from now. The Navy is going to cut over 1,100 temporary civilian workers, mostly from shipyards such as Portsmouth. The needed maintenance and military construction will be postponed indefinitely. It is not just about those jobs at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard or at the shipyards across the country, but that has a ripple effect across our economy, and it affects the grocery stores and the restaurants and all of the small contractors and small businesses doing work at those shipyards.

There will be ramifications for our national defense across the services. Yesterday, we had some harrowing testimony in front of the Armed Services Committee from all of the chiefs of the military outlining what they see coming as a result of the consequences of the sequester and the continuing resolution the Senator from Maine spoke about.

DOD-wide—so across the Department—they expect to lay off a significant portion of the 46,000 temporary and term employees. All services and agencies will likely have to furlough most DOD civilian employees for up to 22 working days. Imagine that. That is a whole month of paychecks that those workers are not going to have to support their families, to be able to spend into the economy, and that is going to have a huge impact.

It is possible that DOD might not have enough funds to pay for TRICARE, health care coverage for our veterans through the end of the fiscal year. As we saw on the front pages of the paper this week, the Department delayed the deployment of the USS *Harry Truman*, the carrier strike group that was headed to the Persian Gulf. If sequestration goes into full effect, the Navy will shrink by about 50 ships and at least two carrier groups.

By the end of the year, the Navy, if we do nothing, will lose about 350 workers a week or 1,400 a month from our civilian industrial base. That will have a huge impact in New Hampshire, as I know it will in Maine as well.

So there are real, significant impacts, as the Senator from Maine pointed out, on the defense industry, on this country's national security, and on the domestic side of the budget. It is already starting to have ramifications on our economy and job growth. We saw in the last quarter of 2012 that our economy contracted for the first time since 2009, and much of that decline was due to sharp reductions in government spending in anticipation of the sequester coming into effect.

We saw it in New Hampshire, in some of our businesses that are dependent on government contracts, particularly in the defense industry. So our failure to act is not only irresponsible, but it is beginning to have a real impact in slowing down this economy.

It is simply unacceptable that we are not addressing this issue. We need to act. If we let the sequester go into effect, we stand to lose, according to the Congressional Budget Office, up to 1.4 million jobs. A recent forecast from Macroeconomic Advisers suggests that sequestration would reduce our gross domestic product by .7 percentage points this year.

We can't risk putting our economic recovery in jeopardy with these indiscriminate cuts. They are going to have an impact on research and education vital to our ability to grow this economy and remain competitive.

The National Institutes of Health would face a $2.5 billion cut. They would have to halt or curtail scientific research, including needed research in cancer and childhood diseases. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would see a $464 million cut. States and local communities would lose billions of Federal education funding for title I, for special education grants, and for other programs.

As many as 100,000 children will lose their places in Head Start, 25,000 teachers could lose their jobs, and we will see those impacts immediately in Maine and in New Hampshire.

I wish to turn back to the Senator from Maine to share what she is seeing in Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, first I wish to commend the Senator from New Hampshire for broadening the debate and reminding all of us of the macroeconomic impact, as well as the impact on our two States.

The estimate is that Maine's defense industry—which includes not just the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, Bath Iron Works, and our Pratt & Whitney plant, but a lot of smaller contractors and suppliers—could lose as many as 4,000 jobs as a result of sequestration. Think about that. That means, as the Senator from New Hampshire pointed out, these are people who are supporting their families and who are supporting other businesses in the community. The impact, the ripple effect, is just devastating.

That is why it does not surprise me that the Congressional Budget Office has pointed to sequestration as the primary cause for the slow growth we have seen already, and CBO projects as well; that our economy would grow at a faster rate—at 2 percent—if we averted sequestration. These aren't meaningless numbers. They affect real people. The estimates are that we would lose between 1.4 million and 2 million jobs if this is allowed to go into effect nationwide.

It is also a failure on the part of Washington to make decisions. If we are going to allow these mindless, indiscriminate cuts to go into effect, why are we here? We might as well have computers or robots making decisions for us. Our job is to do the hard, painful work of setting priorities and making decisions. That is why I am so frustrated by the approach we appear to be on the verge of taking.

The Senator from New Hampshire makes a very important point. While the Department of Defense would take a disproportionate impact from sequestration, and I am extremely concerned about that, there are other important programs that would be affected as well. The superintendents groups have met with me and talked about what it would mean for schoolchildren in Maine if halfway through the school year—more than halfway through the school year—all of a sudden they get a reduction in title I money that goes to low-income schools, to special education grants, to other important programs such as Head Start, and the TRIO Program, which helps low-income and first-generation students attend and excel in college.

Think about the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, biomedical research that is so critical, cuts in the FAA workforce that could reduce air traffic control, disrupting air traffic during the busy summer months.

The list goes on and on: essential education, health care, research, transportation programs that deserve support that do not deserve to all be treated the same.

Again, I want to emphasize that we recognize spending must be cut and the debt, at $16.4 trillion, is way out of control. That amounts to something like $52,000 for each man, woman, and child in this country.

We are committed to seeking pragmatic solutions through compromise and to avoiding this devastation of our economy and our national security. We recognize we have to look at all areas of spending and that we need to overhaul our Tax Code and make it more pro-growth, simpler, and fairer. If ever there were a moment when Members of Congress and the President should put aside their politics for the greater good of the Nation, now is the time.

So I, for one, want to thank the Senator from New Hampshire for caring so much about this issue. We have agreed to work together—and continue to work together—to address this. These automatic cuts were never supposed to take effect. I remember being told: Do not worry. It is never going to happen. It is too unpalatable. It will just never occur.

Well, they were supposed to force us to make the difficult decisions necessary to put our economy on a sound footing and to deal with our unsustainable debt. Our Nation's leaders—the President, Democrats and Republicans alike—have denounced sequestration for the most part, and yet here we are.

So I hope we can work together to avoid this fiscal cliff which will have such damaging effects for the people of this Nation.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I thank Senator COLLINS very much for her kind words. I know we both care a great deal about this situation we are in, as I think most of the Members of the body do. What is so frustrating is that it is avoidable. This is not something that has to happen because we are facing a crisis. This is happening because of what we have done in our actions. So we can undo these actions, as the Senator points out.

I share the Senator's belief that we need a comprehensive solution. We have to look at all aspects of the budget. We need to look at domestic, defense spending, mandatory programs, and we need to look at revenues. Comprehensive tax reform—that is a way we can address that.

There are areas of bipartisan agreement that we ought to be able to take action on right away. We have had a number of GAO reports that make recommendations on duplicative programs within government. We are already working to control the long-term costs of health care, to close tax loopholes, and on defense spending, we all know there are still reforms that can be done, as the Senator pointed out. We can get better physical controls. We can end some of the fraud and abuse in contracting. That is just the beginning of a list that, I am sure, if we all dedicated ourselves to coming up with a compromise on how we avoid the sequester, we could do.

We should not delay because our failure to resolve this issue is having damaging effects on our economy, and it is only going to get worse if we do not find the solution.

So, again, I thank Senator COLLINS for her commitment to address this challenge we face, for her willingness to come down and engage with me, and for us to work together, along with our colleagues, to try to get a resolution so we do not have these devastating cuts going into effect.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I wonder if the Senator would yield for one moment, without losing his right to the floor.

Mr. INHOFE. Yes, I will.

Mr. LEVIN. Before the Senators from New Hampshire and Maine leave the floor, I just want to commend them for their statements, for their conversation. It is so critically important we avoid sequester. The more Senators and the more Members of the House who look for ways on a bipartisan basis to avoid it, the better. We only have 2 weeks left to go. With the kind of energy and creativity that these two Senators bring to this body, it makes me a little bit more hopeful that we are going to be able to avoid this unbelievably bad outcome.

So I just want to thank both Senators and thank my friend from Oklahoma for yielding for a moment.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, let me, first of all, respond to the chairman of the Armed Services Committee. I agree. We have talked about the anguish.

We had a hearing yesterday where the service chiefs discussed the disaster facing our armed forces if we go through sequestration. I do not think most Members of this body fully understand what it means, not just to the defense of our country as a whole, but to each of the individual States.

In my State of Oklahoma, I am very concerned about Tinker Air Force Base

and its 16,000 civilian employees. What is going to happen there?

Anyway, let me just wind up this part by saying I have been ranked as the most conservative Member for many years. But I have always said: I am a big supporter of using our resources in two areas: One is national defense and the other is transportation and infrastructure.

A short while ago, the majority leader was kind enough to call my office and tell me I would be objecting to the consideration of the nomination of former Senator Hagel to be Secretary of Defense.

However, this is not a filibuster. I keep getting stopped by people out in the hall: Oh, we are going to filibuster. Who is going to filibuster?

What we are doing is not a filibuster. We are seeking a 60 vote threshold for a controversial nomination. If the majority really wanted to move forward quickly, all they have to do is agree to a 60-vote margin, like they did with the Sebelius and Bryson nominations.

In addition, as ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I am obligated to assist the members of the committee.

First of all, the vote in the committee was a 100-percent partisan vote. Every Republican there voted against moving the Hagel nomination out of committee. Well, there has to be a reason for that.

One of the reasons—the major reason, I would say—and if you do not believe this, go back and look at the tape of the meeting yesterday where many of our members said: Why is it we are rushing to confirm Chuck Hagel to be Secretary of Defense when he has not given us the information we have requested? One such Member is the junior Senator from Texas, who is in the Chamber with me right now.

But let me first clarify there is nothing unusual about requesting a 60-vote threshold. This happens all the time. I can remember when the majority leader agreed to a 60-vote threshold in the 2009 nomination of Kathleen Sebelius. She was confirmed.

There is nothing unusual about a 60-vote threshold.

John Bryson was nominated to be the Secretary of Commerce. Several of us had concerns about this nomination. Ultimately, he was confirmed. But once again the entire Senate agreed to a confirmation vote by a 60-vote margin.

I can remember when the majority leader—let me say this about the majority leader. He has been exceptionally good to me on things I have been involved in. I have two major bills that were my bills. One was in concert with BARBARA BOXER—the highway bill. Frankly, I could not have gotten it passed without them. Another was my pilots' bill of rights. I could not get a hearing on it in committee. I tried for a year. He stepped in and helped me. I have said in national publications I could not have gotten it passed without Leader HARRY REID. So we have a very good relationship, and one which will continue.

However, Senator REID, on numerous occasions, was concerned about Republican nominations. During the Bush Presidency, Stephen Johnson—who, incidentally, was a Democrat—was nominated to be EPA Administrator. I thought he would be good Administrator. There were several Democrats who thought he would not be good Administrator. So HARRY REID did what he is supposed to do, and he interceded on behalf of the Democrats who opposed him. As result, cloture was filed and, therefore, the nomination needed 60 votes to proceed. Well, the Administrator got 61 votes.

Another example was Dirk Kempthorne. He was nominated to be Secretary of the Interior. My colleagues will remember he is a former Senator from Idaho. Some objected to his confirmation. Of course, this was during the Bush administration. Senator Kempthorne was nominated, and he went ahead and was confirmed. It was a 60-vote margin. There is nothing unusual about this.

Getting back to Stephen Johnson, this is even more analogous to what we have right now because he was a Democrat who was nominated by a Republican President. Unfortunately, once again we were forced by the Democrats to have a cloture vote which requires 60 votes.

Stephen Johnson was a Democrat. So here we had the Republicans wanting Stephen Johnson and the Democrats not wanting Stephen Johnson. It is very analogous to what we have today. Today, we have former Senator Chuck Hagel, who is a Republican.

But in this case, we have a situation where cloture has been filed by the majority leader. I have no objection to voting. I do not want to wait. I do not want to string this out. I have other places to go other than hanging around here. I would vote tonight if we could just get the information that has been requested by the Republican members of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Keep in mind, the Hagel nomination was reported out of committee by a 100-percent partisan vote. All Republicans voted against sending him out. Why did they do it? They did it because we have not gotten the information we want.

I have a letter. This is a letter that is signed by 25 Republicans stating that we have not received the information necessary for a proper vetting of the Hagel nomination.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent it be printed in the RECORD.

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

U.S. SENATE,
Washington, DC, February 6, 2013.

The Hon. CHUCK HAGEL,
Distinguished Professor in the Practice of National Government, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Gerorgetown University, Washington, DC.

DEAR SENATOR HAGEL, On January 29, two days before your confirmation hearing, you received a request, via email, from several Senators on the Senate Armed Services Committee for additional information necessary to fairly assess your nomination to be Secretary of Defense. The written copy of the letter (delivered the next day) was signed by six Senators, including the Ranking Member of the Committee. The letter requested that you respond to the request before the hearing, so that you could then answer questions concerning your responses.

You declined to respond to the request for additional financial disclosure.

At the hearing, you were told by Members of the Committee that a response to our request for information would be necessary before the Committee could vote on your nomination. The Chairman of the Committee expressly asked you to submit your response by Monday, February 4.

Monday came and went, and you still did not respond.

At the end of the day on Tuesday, February 5, you submitted a short ''response'' to our request. In that response, you explicitly declined to answer many of the questions asked of you.

You were asked to disclose all compensation over $5,000 that you have received over the past five years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—the Atlantic Council has received foreign funding in the past five years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—McCarthy Capital has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Corsair Capital has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Wolfensohn and Company has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—M.I.C. Industries has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—the National Interest Security Company has received foreign funding in the ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Elite Training and Security, LLC has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

You were asked to disclose if—and to what specific extent—Kaseman, LLC has received foreign funding in the past ten years. You declined to do so.

Your own financial records are entirely within your own control, and you have flatly refused to comply with the Committee Members' request for supplemental information.

The records from the other firms—more than one of which, you have disclosed, paid you $100,000 or more—are highly relevant to the proper consideration of your nomination. Your letter discloses no affirmative efforts on your part to obtain the needed disclosure, and your lack of effort to provide a substantive response on this issue is deeply troubling.

If it is the case that you personally have received substantial financial remuneration—either directly or indirectly—from foreign governments, sovereign wealth funds,

lobbyists, corporations, or individuals, that information is at the very minimum relevant to this Committee's assessment of your nomination. Such remuneration may be entirely appropriate, but that determination cannot be made without disclosure.

If you have not received remuneration—directly or indirectly—from foreign sources, then proper disclosure will easily demonstrate that fact.

Your refusal to respond to this reasonable request suggests either a lack of respect for the Senate's responsibility to advise and consent or that you are for some reason unwilling to allow this financial disclosure to come to light.

This Committee, and the American people, have a right to know if a nominee for Secretary of Defense has received compensation, directly or indirectly, from foreign sources. Until the Committee receives full and complete answers, it cannot in good faith determine whether you should be confirmed as Secretary of Defense.

Therefore, in the judgment of the undersigned, a Committee vote on your nomination should not occur unless and until you provide the requested information.

Sincerely,

(Signed by 26 Senators).

Mr. INHOFE. This letter is signed by several Senators, but it was promoted, more than by anyone else, by the Senator from Texas. The Senator has repeatedly requested this information. I have personally heard Senator CRUZ request this information, just yesterday, and on several previous occasions.

In a previous letter, he said: We express our concern—several Senators also signed this letter—on the unnecessary rush to force through a vote on Chuck Hagel's nomination before he has been able to respond adequately to multiple requests from members of the Armed Services Committee for additional information.

I'm reading now from the letter: Those requests have included a request to Chuck Hagel for the disclosure of his personal compensation he has received over the past 5 years.

We are talking about Chuck Hagel.

This is information which he controls. He can provide this information. It is there.

The letter also requests the disclosure of foreign funds he may have received indirectly. This is important because some have raised questions of a potential conflict of interest.

Why does he not want to disclose this? Somehow he would like to be confirmed without disclosing this information.

As Senators we have a responsibility here. I do not care if you are a Democrat or Republican. If a member of the Armed Services Committee requests this information and the information is available and he is able to obtain it and does not provide it, we have a process problem.

Mr. President, my primary objection to Chuck Hagel's confirmation is for policy reasons. That is why I think he is not qualified for that job. Others do not agree with that. That is fine. But they have to agree on the process.

In fact, I cannot remember—and I have been on the Armed Services Committee in both the House and Senate for 25 years. I do not remember one time when information that was requested, which was perfectly within the purview of the committee was not provided. This has not happened. This is unprecedented.

I heard some people say: you are filibustering a Cabinet appointee. That is not what we are doing. What we are trying to prevent is an unprecedented event where committee members do not receive information which is important for Members to have in order to consider a nomination.

So I will continue to read the letter.

The letter includes a request for a complete list of his prior public speeches, notably, multiple additional speeches on controversial topics that have been made public by the press.

For example, I understand FOX News is going to run a story tomorrow regarding some speeches made by former Senator Hagel. If so, these speeches would certainly give rise to a lot of interest because, I have been informed, we are talking about speeches which were made and paid for by foreign governments. I have also been told, some of these foreign governments may not be friendly to us.

Therefore, I believe Senators are entitled to review this information. Are we entitled to that? Yes; we are entitled to that.

So this letter includes a request for a complete list of his prior public speeches, notably, additional speeches on controversial topics that have been made public in the press, despite those speeches having been omitted from his own disclosure.

I remember in the early stages of the confirmation process, requests were made of Senator Hagel about information we knew existed because the press had written about it in the past. Some may argue that Senators are not entitled to review these speeches. I disagree. A member of the Armed Services Committee has a responsibility to review that information.

The letter also makes the critical request from the administration for additional information on their precise actions during and immediately following the tragic murder of four Americans in Benghazi, Libya on September 11, 2012.

Regardless, if the administration has answered these questions, the Senate is entitled to review speeches that have been made by the person who is up for confirmation to be Secretary of Defense.

I would say to the majority leader, the request for a 60 vote threshold is based on precedent. It is what the majority leader agreed to on the John Bryson and Kathleen Sebelius nominations. It is what he insisted upon when the Democrats forced cloture to be filed on the Dirk Kempthorne and Stephen Johnson nominations. There are several others. Michael Leavitt was one. John Bolton went through this twice. We all remember Miguel Estrada. We remember ROBERT PORTMAN, now one of our fellow Senators.

So there is nothing unusual about this. But there is a problem with the process we are entering now. That process is, we have made requests—I am talking about Members such as Senator CRUZ from Texas and other members of the Senate Armed Services Committee who have made perfectly reasonable requests for information. In this case, it is on speeches reportedly made to foreign audiences. However, these concerns can be clarified in a matter of minutes.

That is why we should not rush. If this information is provided we could resolve this matter tonight. The information is out there. I have personally talked to Senator CRUZ. He said: Look, if they will just give us that information we have been requesting now for weeks, we can have the vote tonight.

That is our reasonable request. We are not talking about merits. We are not talking about substance. We are talking about a process. Never before in my memory has a Senate Armed Services member's reasonable request been denied before someone has come up for a confirmation. It is a simple request. It has been done on a regular basis. A 60-vote margin is not a filibuster. We are merely saying the Senate is entitled to this information. Hopefully, this will jar some of the information loose. Maybe we can get it now. I hope we do.

I want to move this on and move it as rapidly as possible.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 15 minutes.

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

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I am here again to talk about the effects of climate change on the health of our families and our communities. Just as we know that secondhand smoke and too much sun exposure are bad for human health, we know pollution and variations in climate conditions are as well.

I wish to thank our chairman on the Environment and Public Works Committee, Mrs. BOXER, for the briefing she held today with a number of scientists, including one who spoke specifically about the human health effects we can see from climate change. Climate change is threatening to erode the improvements in air quality we have achieved through the Clean Air Act.

EPA-enforced emissions reductions have led to a decline in the number and

severity of bad air days in the United States. These are the days I know the Presiding Officer is familiar with because I am sure they happen in Connecticut as well as in Rhode Island, where the air quality is so poor that it is unhealthy for sensitive individuals: the elderly, infants, people with breathing difficulties to be outdoors. Even healthy people are urged to limit their activities when out-of-doors.

In Rhode Island, about 12 percent of children and 11 percent of adults suffer from asthma. Both are higher than the national average. Our Rhode Island Public Transit Authority runs free buses on bad ozone days to try to keep car traffic down because these days are so dangerous to the public. Of course, the major air pollutant behind bad air days is ozone, commonly known as smog. Ground-level ozone or smog makes it difficult to breathe, causes coughing, inflames airways, aggravates asthma, emphysema and bronchitis and makes lungs more susceptible to infection.

That all means asthma attacks, emergency room visits, hospitalizations, which, in turn, result in missed school and work and a burden not only of worry but also a burden on the economy. Smog, of course, forms more quickly during hot and sunny days. So as climate change drives more heat, it increases the number of warm days and the conditions for smog and for bad air days become more common.

Climate change is also prolonging the allergy season. I am sure there are a number of people listening who suffer from hay fever in the late summer and early fall. Some people suffer from it most acutely. It is most often caused by ragweed pollen. Since 1995, ragweed season has increased across the country. It has increased by 13 days in Madison, WI. It has increased by 20 days in Minneapolis, MN. It has increased by almost 25 days in Fargo, ND. The further north you go, the greater the increase in the ragweed season. So for folks in Fargo, for instance, it is 25 more days of sniffling and sneezing and 25 more days that ragweed pollen might trigger a child's asthma attack.

Not only does more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere mean warmer weather and therefore longer pollen seasons, it also means a higher pollen count. At 280 parts per million, which was the concentration of atmospheric carbon back in the year 1900, each ragweed plant would produce about 5 grams of pollen.

At 370 parts per million, which is where we are now—year 2000 levels to be precise—pollen production more than doubles. It doubles again at 72 parts per million, which is the concentration that is now projected for the year 2075. So as we work to improve air quality and to reduce respiratory illnesses and the allergic conditions that trigger respiratory distress, we need to fight the growing trigger, climate change.

Warming oceans and lakes can also harm our health. Higher water surface temperature is associated with harmful blooms of various species of algae. These blooms are often referred to as ''red tide.'' They deplete oxygen, block sunlight, and they produce toxins. The toxins are very often captured by clams and oysters and other shellfish.

When they are consumed, it can result in neurotoxic shellfish poisoning, which causes debilitating respiratory and gastrointestinal symptoms. A warming climate also is predicted to change the range of disease-spreading parasites, such as ticks and mosquitoes. With longer summers and shorter winters, we will face more exposure to these pests and to the diseases they can carry.

We in New England and Connecticut and Rhode Island and Massachusetts, of course, are very familiar with lyme disease, which is a tick-borne illness that can have very grave and serious effects.

Slow and steady warming is also causing sea levels to rise, which threatens coastal infrastructure and human safety as well. In South Kingstown, RI, Matunuck Beach Road is the only means of access to approximately 500 homes. That road also covers the public water main. For years, the sand erosion has eaten away at the beach. Now the road is immediately vulnerable to storms. Indeed it has been overwashed in recent storms. A breach in Matunuck Beach Road cuts off those 500 homes from emergency services. If it were damaging enough, it could cut off their water.

Our water quality is also threatened. Many of Rhode Island's wastewater treatment plants are in low-lying areas and flood zones near the coast. It is the story in many other States. In California, for example, the rising sea level has put 29 wastewater treatment plants, responsible for 530 million gallons of sewage processing every day, at increased risk for flooding.

As we know, climate change loads the dice for more extreme weather: heat waves, droughts, storms, all serious threats to human health and safety. Climate change has led to an increase in the likelihood of severe heat waves. Extreme heat causes heat exhaustion. It can cause heat stroke. The need for air-conditioning in heat waves also strains the power infrastructure, which can cause electrical brownouts and blackouts. This hinders emergency services and exacerbates wildfires and drought. These are the kinds of conditions—from extreme heat—that led to literally tens of thousands of deaths in the record-setting Russian heat wave of 2010.

Heavy rainfall can cause physical damage, flooding erosion, and sewage overflow. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 118,000 sanitary sewer overflows occur annually from storms overwashing through combined sewer systems, overloading those systems, and being released directly into the open, releasing up to actually 860 billion gallons of untreated sewage and wastewater. In 2010, heavy rainfall and flooding caused millions of dollars in damage in spilled raw sewage in Warwick, RI, my home State. The flood led to the temporary shutdown of the local wastewater treatment facility. These overflows, like the one in Warwick, can result in beach closures, shellfish bed closures, contamination of drinking water supplies, and other environmental and public health problems.

Extreme rainfall, meaning both way too little and way too much rainfall, promotes waterborne outbreaks of disease. In the northeast United States, heavy rainfall has increased by 74 percent since my childhood in the 1950s.

As we have seen with Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, and Hurricane Katrina, storms can very quickly affect millions of people and require tens of billions of dollars to clean up. The threat gets worse as sea-level rise allows storm surges to reach farther inland and create more damage than just a few decades ago. Much of the east coast was fearful of flooding during Superstorm Sandy last year, including, of course, southern Rhode Island. Because of erosion and sea-level rise, the storm surges on our shores can reach homes that were originally built hundreds of feet from the coastline.

I had the experience of standing with a man who had a childhood home that had been through at least three generations of his family. He was now actually older than me, and that childhood home—which had stood well back from the beach—was canting toward the sea and tumbling into the ocean. The ocean had claimed his home of multiple generations as its victim.

This map shows by ZIP code where the 800,000 people displaced by Hurricane Katrina sought refuge after that terrible storm. Hundreds of thousands of people were strewn across every corner of the country. Hundreds of thousands of lives were disrupted as a result.

Thankfully, not everybody is sleepwalking through these alarming realities. In 2010, Rhode Island created our Climate Change Commission, which has identified risks to key infrastructure and is analyzing data from events such as Hurricane Sandy and the 2010 flood. Other States have formed similar commissions.

I brought last night to our President's State of the Union Address Grover Fugate, who is executive director of our Coastal Resources Management Council, which has to look at and address every day and plan for the effects of our rising sea level, increased storm activity, and the risk that that portends to the shores of our ocean State.

For the past 3 years, Rhode Island has also been part of a regional greenhouse gas initiative nicknamed ReGGie, along with our neighbors in Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire,

New York, and Vermont. Our region caps carbon emissions and sells permits to emit greenhouses gases to powerplants. This has created economic incentives for both the States and our utilities to invest in energy efficiency and in renewable energy development. And consumers have reaped the benefit of lower prices. In 2012, regional emissions were 45 percent below the annual cap, so just last week the State announced an agreement to cap future emissions at the 2012 rate.

I am proud of the work done in my State, and I know the Presiding Officer's home State of Connecticut is working equally hard on this issue. We are working to both slow climate change and to prepare for what are now its inevitable effects. But sadly, when it comes to this particular threat to our national security and our prosperity, Congress is asleep. It is time for us to wake up. The health and safety of Americans and of people all over the world is at risk. We must awaken to what is happening in the world around us and to the fact that the carbon pollution we are emitting is causing it. This is our responsibility. This is our generation's responsibility. It is, indeed, our duty. It is time for us to wake up.

Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nominations, Calendar Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, and all nominations placed on the Secretary's desk in the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy; that the nominations be confirmed en bloc; the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to any of the nominations; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and that the Senate then resume legislative session.

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

The nominations considered and confirmed en bloc are as follows:

IN THE AIR FORCE

The following named Air National Guard of the United States officer for appointment in the Reserve of the Air Force to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. William H. Etter

IN THE ARMY

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601:

To be lieutenant general

Maj. Gen. Kenneth E. Tovo

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army Nurse Corps to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 624 and 3064:

To be brigadier general

Col. Barbara R. Holcomb

The following named officer for appointment in the United States Army Medical Service Corps to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 624 and 3064:

To be brigadier general

Col. Patrick D. Sargent

The following named officers for appointment in the United States Army Medical Corps to the grade indicated under title 10, U.S.C., sections 624 and 3064:

To be major general

Brig. Gen. Brian C. Lein
Brig. Gen. Nadja Y. West

NOMINATIONS PLACED ON THE SECRETARY'S DESK

IN THE AIR FORCE

PN70 AIR FORCE nomination of Kory D. Bingham, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN71 AIR FORCE nominations (3) beginning MICHAEL A. COOPER, and ending SUSAN MICHELLE MILLER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN72 AIR FORCE nominations (4) beginning VICTOR DOUGLAS BROWN, and ending RODNEY M. WAITE, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN73 AIR FORCE nominations (4) beginning WALTER S. ADAMS, and ending CARL E. SUPPLEE, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN74 AIR FORCE nominations (6) beginning JOHN J. BARTRUM, and ending GEORGE L. VALENTINE, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN75 AIR FORCE nominations (8) beginning KIMBERLY L. BARBER, and ending JANET L. SETNOR, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN76 AIR FORCE nominations (11) beginning DINA L. BERNSTEIN, and ending WILLIAM R. YOUNGBLOOD, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN77 AIR FORCE nominations (12) beginning TIMOTHY LEE BRININGER, and ending CHRISTOPHER J. RYAN, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN78 AIR FORCE nominations (198) beginning FRANCIS XAVIER ALTIERI, and ending KEVIN M. ZELLER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

IN THE ARMY

PN79 ARMY nomination of Jonathan A. Foskey, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN80 ARMY nomination of Marion J. Parks, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN81 ARMY nomination of Karen A. Pike, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN82 ARMY nominations (2) beginning Derek S. Reynolds, and ending Brian D. Vogt, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN83 ARMY nominations (2) beginning Edward A. Figueroa, and ending Michael C. Vanhoven, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN84 ARMY nominations (2) beginning JACK C. MASON, and ending TODD B. WAYTASHEK, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN85 ARMY nominations (79) beginning RUTH E. APONTE, and ending MICHAEL J. ZINNO, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN86 ARMY nominations (88) beginning LESLIE E. AKINS, and ending MARC W. ZELNICK, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN87 ARMY nominations (217) beginning TIMOTHY G. ABRELL, and ending JOHN A. ZULFER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN88 ARMY nominations (225) beginning RAFAEL E. ABREU, and ending R010075, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

IN THE MARINE CORPS

PN91 MARINE CORPS nomination of Jackie W. Morgan, Jr., which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN92 MARINE CORPS nomination of Dana R. Fike, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN93 MARINE CORPS nomination of Samuel W. Spencer, III, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN94 MARINE CORPS nomination of Larry Miyamoto, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN97 MARINE CORPS nominations (2) beginning GEORGE L. ROBERTS, and ending PAUL A. SHIRLEY, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN98 MARINE CORPS nominations (2) beginning RICHARD D. KOHLER, and ending GARY J. SPINELLI, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN100 MARINE CORPS nominations (2) beginning ERIC T. CLINE, and ending ROBERT S. SCHMIDT, JR., which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN101 MARINE CORPS nominations (2) beginning JOSE L. SADA, and ending BRIAN J. SPOONER, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN102 MARINE CORPS nominations (3) beginning FREDERICK L. HUNT, and ending CHAD E. TIDWELL, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN103 MARINE CORPS nominations (3) beginning TODD E. LOTSPEICH, and ending DONALD E. WILLIAMS, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the Congressional Record of January 23, 2013.

PN104 MARINE CORPS nominations (3) beginning JASON B. DAVIS, and ending JOHN F. REYNOLDS, JR., which nominations were