

and they do not want insurers turning people away.

In short, Americans are not happy with the status quo. But they are just as concerned, if not more so, with the alternatives that the White House and a handful of Democrats on Capitol Hill are pushing through Congress.

Soon, the last of the five committees involved in this debate will finish its work. After that, a handful of Democratic Senators will get together in a closed conference room somewhere in the Capitol to hash out a final product. Their proceedings may be private, but based on their stated preferences we have got a good sense of the basics.

We know that the bill they send to the Senate floor will cut seniors' Medicare by half a trillion dollars; we know that it will raise taxes on virtually everyone; we know it will limit the health care choices Americans now enjoy. And we know it will be a big government bonanza: a \$1 trillion pricetag and 1,000 pages of indecipherable text.

For the past 2 weeks, Americans have been focused on the Senate Finance Committee. The real focus should be on the conference room where the final bill will be decided. That is because it is in that room that the Democratic leadership from the White House and Congress will attempt to decide the fate of health care for everyone. Their deliberations will be secret. And there is only one direction these Senators plan to take this legislation, and that is to the left.

We have seen what happens in these kinds of closed deliberations before. Over the summer, members of the HELP Committee discovered after a month-long markup that a wellness measure they had agreed to unanimously in front of the cameras in July was mysteriously taken out away from the cameras sometime after a final vote was taken on the bill.

And we all remember how executives at AIG ended up with multimillion dollar bonuses after nearly driving the company off a cliff. Those bonuses were blessed in a closed-door meeting somewhere in the Capitol after a final vote on the stimulus bill had already taken place.

This bill already starts out with a flawed foundation of Medicare cuts, more taxes, more debt, and fewer health care choices. That is reason enough for Americans to oppose it. Now the finishing touches will be added on in secret before a rush to the finish.

Proponents of the administration's health care plan have been working hard over the past 2 weeks to convince the American people their concerns are being heard. We will see if that has just been window dressing. The fact is, the final bill will be worked out, out of sight, by a mere few whose decisions will affect everyone in America. Away from the cameras, they will make decisions that affect every single American and one-sixth of our entire economy.

Americans want commonsense reform. Reshaping the entire economy,

limiting their choices, expanding government control over health care, cutting Medicare, and raising taxes in the middle of the worst economy in memory, and then pushing it through with as little public scrutiny as possible is not what they would call reform.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF THOMAS E. PEREZ TO BE AN ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Thomas E. Perez, of Maryland, to be an Assistant Attorney General.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 12:15 p.m. will be equally divided and controlled between the Senator from Vermont, Mr. LEAHY, and the Senator from Alabama, Mr. SESSIONS, or their designees.

The Senator from Maryland is recognized.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, first let me say how pleased I am that we are now considering Tom Perez to head the Civil Rights Division. We in Maryland are particularly proud because Tom Perez hails from our State. He has had a distinguished record in the State of Maryland in service to the people of our State and also to the people of our Nation.

I am very pleased that we finally have gotten to this moment. The Civil Rights Division is the Nation's moral conscience. It has been important to protect the rights of all Americans against all forms of discrimination whether it is in employment, whether it is in education, whether it is in housing, whether it is in voting, whether it is in personal liberties or hate crimes. It is what Americans turn to to protect their rights. It has had a very proud history, the Civil Rights Division, since its inception, both under Democratic and Republican administrations. It has had a steady course.

There has been one notable exception. I think we all understand that during the previous administration there was an effort made to diminish the importance of the Civil Rights Division. It triggered joint reports by the Office of Personal Responsibility and the Office of the Inspector General. They issued a joint report on January 13, 2009. It found there was consideration of political and ideological affiliations in hiring career attorneys at the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Di-

vision, which was a violation of Federal law. We also know that during the previous administration, the number of cases brought to protect the civil liberties of Americans was greatly diminished, and the Department took a different view, one that compromised the integrity and independence of the Civil Rights Division.

So it is important we get back on track, and that is why I am so pleased today that we are considering the confirmation of Tom Perez to be the head of the Civil Rights Division. Tom brings a great background to this important assignment. He was educated at Brown University where he received his undergraduate degree, the John F. Kennedy School of Government, and Harvard Law School. He had experience right out of law school as a prosecutor in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. So from day one Tom Perez knew he had a calling to help improve the civil rights of Americans. Maybe it was because of his family background, the son of an immigrant, maybe it was because of his commitment to the American dream, but he had that passion to help other people, to protect the civil liberties and civil rights of Americans. He rose to become the Deputy Chief in the Division's criminal section. He was a trial attorney for the Department of Justice. He then later took a very important assignment in the Senate. He became special counsel to Senator Ted Kennedy. What a mentor for him. He has commented frequently about his year in the Senate and what a great learning experience it was to understand the importance of the Civil Rights Division from the champion of civil rights in the Senate, Senator Kennedy.

He then became a professor in civil rights law and later returned with an appointment to head the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Health and Human Services, continuously working to promote civil rights. He decided to take on a unique challenge and ran for county council in Montgomery County, MD. I am familiar with all the jurisdictions of Maryland. Perhaps the most challenging is to be a county councilman in Montgomery County, one of our most diverse counties and the largest. He was the first Latino to become president of the county council and took on the great challenges in that county in a professional way and was well respected.

Governor O'Malley appointed him as secretary of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, a critically important part of the O'Malley cabinet. Then, President Obama tapped him to be the head of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. On June 4, the Judiciary Committee recommended, by a 17-to-2 vote, strongly bipartisan, to recommend his confirmation to the entire Senate. As to reservations raised in the committee, after the confirmation vote, we had meetings with Mr. Perez and Members of the Senate to get a

further understanding of their concerns and to understand where Tom Perez would lead the Civil Rights Division. I don't want to comment for my colleagues, but I thought those meetings went extremely well. That is the type of person Tom Perez is. He tries to work things out without compromising the responsibilities of promoting civil rights of all Americans.

With this vote today, we can take a major step forward to restore the integrity, confidence, historical role, and the reputation of the Nation's most important agency to protect the civil rights of all Americans.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD letters of support we have received from the following individuals: Martin O'Malley, Governor of the State of Maryland; Thomas Mike Miller, president of the Maryland Senate; Mike Busch, speaker of the house of the Maryland General Assembly; John McCarthy, States attorney for Montgomery County; along with Anthony O'Donnell, the Republican leader of the Maryland house of delegates; and our colleagues in the Congress, CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, who represents the eighth district; ELIJAH CUMMINGS, who represents the seventh congressional district; DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER, who represents the second congressional district; STENY HOYER, majority leader of the house from the fifth congressional district; and ERIK PAULSEN, who represents the third congressional district of Minnesota.

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

STATE OF MARYLAND,
Annapolis, MD, April 21, 2009.

Hon. PATRICK LEAHY,
Chairman, U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. ARLEN SPECTER,
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY AND RANKING MEMBER SPECTER: I am writing to express my strong support for the nomination of Thomas Perez to be Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the Department of Justice. Tom is a committed public servant who has devoted his entire career to the people of Maryland and this nation, and he is highly qualified to lead the revitalization of the Civil Rights Division.

The Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) has 1600 employees and wide ranging jurisdiction. Its responsibilities range from enforcement of labor laws to the oversight of our state banking system and regulation of certain mortgage originators, to the administration of Unemployment Insurance and workforce development programs. The Department has additional consumer protection responsibilities, and the job requires a person with a wide breadth and depth of knowledge and experience.

When I asked Tom to serve as Secretary of DLLR in 2007, I frankly had no idea that the issues within his agency's jurisdiction would occupy such a prominent role in my administration so soon. Shortly after I assumed office, we were immediately confronted by the foreclosure crisis and the national recession.

Tom immediately rose to the occasion, and has been especially instrumental in leading the charge to combat the foreclosure crisis, and in helping me craft an economic security package to assist straggling Marylanders. In 2007 he co-chaired the Homeownership Preservation Task Force, and by working with all stakeholders, including both consumer groups and banking representatives, he was able to craft consensus reforms that gained broad bipartisan support in the General Assembly. Those reforms, which lengthened the foreclosure process, strengthened lending and licensing standards and created new tools to combat fraud, have been recognized as some of the most sweeping in the nation. One of the nation's largest mortgage fraud prosecutions originated in Tom's office, and has been a model of collaboration between the state and federal prosecuting authorities.

I have been particularly impressed with Tom's leadership and management skills, as well as his ability to work across party lines with the Maryland General Assembly. Tom inherited an agency with great potential that was not firing on all cylinders. He tackled critical management and leadership challenges head on, and transformed DLLR from a second tier to a top tier agency. He has brought the Department recognition it never before received from lawmakers and other officials in the State. Republicans and Democrats alike in the Maryland General Assembly have praised his policy and legal acumen, and his inclusive, engaging style.

While Tom's nomination by President Obama leaves us with the difficult task of finding someone as able and well-respected to fill his shoes, I know he is the right person to lead the Civil Rights Division back to prominence. I strongly support his confirmation, and I urge you to do the same.

Sincerely,

MARTIN O'MALLEY,
Governor.

MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
Annapolis, MD, April 22, 2009.

Senator PATRICK LEAHY,
Committee on the Judiciary, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY: We write to offer an unqualified and unhesitating endorsement of Thomas Perez's nomination to serve as Director of the United States Department of Justice's Office for Civil Rights. We know Mr. Perez to be a passionate and tireless advocate, a dedicated and responsible civil servant, and a thoughtful and respected leader. He will be a tremendous asset to the Department of Justice.

Mr. Perez was appointed to serve as Maryland's Secretary of Labor, Licensing and Regulation in January, 2007. He inherited a historically underfunded agency beset by political challenges and morale problems—a weaker leader could easily have been overwhelmed by the agency's inertia. Where others might have seen problems, Mr. Perez saw opportunity. From his first day as Secretary, Mr. Perez breathed new life into the department with a goal-oriented agenda and a commitment to pro-active, results-driven management.

The Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation supervises job training and match services, unemployment insurance, and many of the State's licensing and regulatory boards. As Secretary, Mr. Perez had to balance the interests of the business community against our State's commitment to consumer protection. That can be a precarious tightrope, but he won praise from business leaders and consumer advocates for his willingness to listen and his ability to forge consensus.

In addition to his responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the agency, Mr.

Perez helped shepherd the Governor's agenda through the General Assembly. He conducted himself with grace and aplomb, confronting skeptics and cynics with his earnest desire to improve the lives of ordinary Marylanders. His work ethic and meticulous attention to the details of policy-making earned him the trust of lawmakers across the political spectrum, and he parlayed that trust into extraordinary legislative success for working families in our state.

Mr. Perez championed Maryland's efforts to combat the foreclosure crisis. He brought the banking industry together with consumer advocates to craft meaningful reform that put Maryland at the forefront of this critical issue. During this year's legislative session, he brought labor organizations together with industry groups to fight fraudulent misclassification of employees as independent contractors. In both instances, he won praise for bringing everyone to the table and crafting compromises which might otherwise have proved elusive.

We would be remiss if we did not raise the time honored cliché: the nation's gain will be the State of Maryland's loss. Mr. Perez's unwavering obligation to the highest ideal of public service will be an asset to the Department of Justice. His untiring commitment to his work will earn him respect and admiration from his colleagues. His innate intelligence and problem-solving abilities will help him move the Office of Civil Rights forward to the benefit of all Americans.

In the plainest and strongest terms possible, we urge you to confirm Mr. Perez as Director of the Office of Civil Rights. He is a remarkable public servant, and he will be an exceptional asset to our nation during this tumultuous period in our history.

Respectfully,

THOMAS V. MIKE MILLER,
Jr.,

President of the Senate.

MICHAEL E. BUSCH,
Speaker of the House.

STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR
MONTGOMERY COUNTY,
Rockville, MD, April 20, 2009.

Chairman PATRICK LEAHY,
U.S. Senate, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY: I am writing to urge the confirmation of Tom Perez as Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice.

Mr. Perez currently holds the position of Secretary of Maryland's Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation. In that capacity, Tom took on the challenge of revamping a state agency that had been long neglected and widely seen as ineffective. Under Tom's leadership, this agency has gained stature and become well respected by lawmakers and other government officials.

Tom has also served as Maryland's leader to combat the mortgage foreclosure crisis. Tom played a key role in helping to craft a legislative package that has been called among the most sweeping in the nation. Tom was the first public official, that I am aware of, that several years before the current mortgage crises became apparent, publicly talked about the danger that lurked ahead in America's housing market due to a crisis in sub-prime mortgages.

Tom is a committed career public servant. Tom spent 12 years in federal public service, the majority as a federal prosecutor for the Civil Rights Division. Tom served as special counsel to Senator Edward Kennedy and was his principal advisor on civil rights and criminal justice. Tom was a law professor at the University of Maryland School of Law from 2001-2007 where he taught a civil rights clinic focusing on employment issues, health law and criminal justice.

Tom is married to Ann Marie Staudenmaier (a public interest lawyer) and father of three. Educated at our nation's finest universities including Brown and Harvard, Tom is a brilliant and articulate man of tremendous depth.

I urge you to act favorably on Tom's nomination and confirm him as Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice.

Very truly yours,

JOHN J. MCCARTHY,
State's Attorney.

THE MARYLAND
HOUSE OF DELEGATES,
Annapolis, MD, April 23, 2009.

Hon. PATRICK LEAHY,
U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY: As Minority Leader of the Maryland House of Delegates, I am pleased to support the nomination of Thomas Perez for the position of Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights.

In my dealings with Secretary Perez, I have always found him to be fair-minded and willing to listen to a variety of views on an issue. While we have not always agreed ultimately, I have been impressed by his willingness to reach across the aisle. That is one reason I believe Tom Perez is an excellent choice to lead the Division of Civil Rights at the Department of Justice.

During Secretary Perez's tenure at the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation, he has convened diverse groups of stakeholders on the foreclosure crisis, adult education and workforce training, and the misclassification of Maryland workers to forge consensus and find common ground. During the legislative session, he regularly seeks input from both Democratic and Republican members of the Maryland General Assembly. He also has been very responsive to my office regarding constituent issues and helping to resolve the same without regard to party.

It is my belief that the reason Tom works so hard to find comprehensive solutions to the everyday problems Americans face because he truly has their best interests at heart. He is a committed public servant. I am confident that Tom will lead the Division with commitment and integrity.

For those reasons, I support his nomination and strongly urge his confirmation.

Sincerely,

ANTHONY J. O'DONNELL,
Minority Leader.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 22, 2009.

Hon. PATRICK LEAHY,
Chairman, U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. ARLEN SPECTER,
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY AND RANKING MEMBER SPECTER: I am writing to offer my wholehearted support for the confirmation of Thomas E. Perez as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. I've known Tom since 2002, and have had both the honor of serving as his representative to Congress and the privilege of having him serve as my representative to the Montgomery County Council.

I have seen firsthand Tom's ability to bridge divides and build coalitions in the interest of advancing the common good. Throughout his service to the people of Montgomery County and Maryland, this ability has gained him strong support from

the business community as well as the non-profit and faith communities. It has also allowed him to successfully spearhead the State's nation-leading efforts to combat the foreclosure crisis. He has a proven track record for making decisions based on input from all stakeholders, and for being open to all opinions even when they differ from his own.

Prior to his service to his community and his state, Tom served this country ably as a career attorney in the Civil Rights Division. His knowledge of the law and his respect for the Department of Justice as an institution guarantee that he will lead the Division with integrity and with respect for the career staff and their tireless work. His talent for building coalitions makes him a natural to reinvigorate the Division.

Tom is an outstanding citizen and a devoted public official who has served his county, his state and his country with distinction. I am honored to ask you to support his nomination.

Sincerely,

CHRIS VAN HOLLEN.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 20, 2009.

Hon. PATRICK LEAHY,
Chairman, U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY: I write to express my strong, unqualified support for the confirmation of Thomas Perez as Assistant Attorney General for the Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice.

The urgent need for strong, experienced and motivated leadership of the Civil Rights Division cannot be overstated.

The historic ascension of our first African American President and Attorney General reflect progress that is both substantive and lasting. As far too many Americans are painfully aware, however, this progress does not mean that our nation's long journey toward becoming a truly just and inclusive society is at an end.

President Obama and Attorney General Holder need the most qualified and determined leadership in the Civil Rights Division that America's legal community can provide. I am firmly convinced that Thomas Perez exemplifies the character, experience and dedication that will be required.

Tom Perez is gifted with a penetrating intellect honed at Brown, The Harvard Law School and The John F. Kennedy School of Government. His professional work has coupled that intellectual acumen with an exemplary record of public service and dedication to civil rights.

He has consistently advanced and defended civil rights as a federal prosecutor for the Civil Rights Division, Special Counsel for Senator Edward Kennedy, Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights under former Attorney General Janet Reno, Director of the Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Health and Human Services and, currently, as Maryland Secretary of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.

In addition, Tom Perez taught at the University of Maryland School of Law from 2001 until 2007, where he advanced the school's nationally recognized clinical law and health program—and he currently serves on the faculty of the George Washington School of Public Health.

On a personal note, I have been privileged to work with Thomas Perez in his current role as Secretary of Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. He has been a vocal leader in our shared efforts to combat foreclosures and improve workplace protections.

He has shown a great ability to bring parties together and build consensus in impor-

tant policy areas without compromising his commitment to helping people. In these times of great economic distress, Tom has been a true voice for all Marylanders.

Chairman Obama, it is hard to imagine how President Obama and Attorney General Holder could have made a better choice to help them restore the Civil Rights Division as this nation's leading defender of our fundamental freedoms. While I acknowledge proper deference to the Senate's constitutional power and responsibility in this matter, I also believe that it is essential—and appropriate—to add my personal voice in support of this nomination.

Tom Perez has committed his entire career to advancing civil rights and serving the public good. He is uniquely qualified to repair what has been broken at the Civil Rights Division—and I urge his speedy confirmation.

Sincerely,

ELIJAH CUMMINGS,
Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 27, 2009.

Hon. PATRICK J. LEAHY,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Dirksen Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. ARLEN SPECTER,
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Dirksen Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY AND RANKING MEMBER SPECTER: I am writing to express my strong support for the nomination of Thomas Perez for Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice and urge his confirmation.

Secretary Perez's qualifications and credentials are exceptional. He is a nationally recognized civil rights lawyer whose breadth and depth of experience makes him an ideal choice to lead the Civil Rights Division. He knows the Division inside and out, because he worked there for almost a decade in a variety of critical positions. As a prosecutor in the Division, he was lead attorney in some of the Department's most high profile and complex civil rights cases. As Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, he oversaw complex litigation in the employment and education areas. As a member of the nonpartisan Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured and the former Director of the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, he has a keen understanding of health care issues that are front and center in our national dialogue.

In Maryland, Secretary Perez, in his current capacity as Secretary of Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, has been a principal architect of Governor Martin O'Malley's wide ranging, successful foreclosure prevention initiative. Secretary Perez led the legislative effort that resulted in the passage of a package of reforms that were comprehensive and consensus. He negotiated written agreements with six major mortgage servicing companies to provide meaningful relief to Maryland homeowners in danger of foreclosure. One of the largest ongoing mortgage fraud prosecutions in the nation originated in Secretary Perez's office.

He has held leadership positions in federal, state and local government, and has worked in all three branches of the federal government. As such, he has an acute understanding of the need for the federal government to work in partnership with state and local governments to safeguard the civil rights of all Americans.

Leading the Civil Rights Division, like running an Attorney General's office, requires extensive legal, management and

leadership skills, as well as extensive experience in building coalitions. Secretary Perez has led important agencies. He currently heads a Department of roughly 1600 employees, and has held other leadership positions in the federal government. He has a well earned reputation as a consensus builder.

Mr. Perez's distinguished career demonstrates his vast leadership ability, integrity and commitment to public service. I am confident that Mr. Perez would make an exceptional Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division and urge you to confirm his nomination.

Sincerely,

ERIK PAULSEN,
Member of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 27, 2009.

Hon. PATRICK LEAHY,
Chairman, U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. ARLEN SPECTER,
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY AND SENATOR SPECTER: I wish to add my strong support for the nomination of Thomas Perez to be Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Tom has dedicated his life to public service, to the citizens of Maryland and to the nation. He has a breadth of experience in the law, public policy and management, and, he is known as a fair minded, knowledgeable and agreeable advocate for his clients, his law students and the public at large.

I was impressed that after Tom's service in very important posts in the Administration of President Bill Clinton, he worked to put into practice the policies he advocated. He chose to work in local government, winning election to the Montgomery County Council in Maryland and earning the support of his constituents and confidence of his colleagues on the Council when they elected Tom their President. At the same time, Tom commuted to Baltimore and taught public service advocacy to law students at the University of Maryland, Baltimore Law School.

Most recently, Tom demonstrated his management skills as the Secretary of Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. He energized the agency and put it at the forefront of the effort to help Maryland homeowners facing foreclosure, along with many other reforms to help protect consumers. He was well respected by legislators in Annapolis from both sides of the aisle serving in the Maryland General Assembly.

I believe Tom possesses the talents and skills to make the Civil Rights Division an outstanding performer in the Justice Department. I hope your Committee will act favorably and expeditiously on the President's nomination for Tom to serve our Country again.

Respectfully,

C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 21, 2009.

Hon. PATRICK J. LEAHY,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Dirksen Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. ARLEN SPECTER,
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Dirksen Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN LEAHY AND RANKING MEMBER SPECTER: I strongly support for the nomination of Thomas Perez for Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, and. I urge his speedy confirmation. Currently leading

Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, Secretary Perez has shown outstanding leadership throughout his career at all levels of government.

I have worked with Secretary Perez on many critical issues, and I consider him an excellent choice for the Civil Rights Division. He has already served there in a variety of key positions. As a prosecutor in the Division, he was the lead attorney in many high-profile civil rights cases. As Deputy Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, he oversaw complex litigation in the employment and education areas. As a member of the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, as well as the former Director of the Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Health and Human Services, Secretary Perez would also bring to his new role a deep understanding of health care disparities. In my state of Maryland, Secretary Perez led a 1,600-employee department and was the principal architect of Governor O'Malley's wide-ranging foreclosure prevention initiative. Secretary Perez also negotiated written agreements with major mortgage servicing companies to provide relief to homeowners facing foreclosure.

Leading the Civil Rights Division requires high-level management and consensus-building skills. I am confident that Secretary Perez possesses those skills, and I urge you to confirm his nomination.

With warmest personal regards, I am
Sincerely yours,

STENY H. HOYER.

Mr. CARDIN. I ask unanimous consent that time during quorum calls be equally charged to both Democrats and Republicans.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CARDIN. I suggest the absence of quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MERKLEY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, this morning I rise to make a few remarks in support of the nomination of Tom Perez as Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. Mr. Perez is an exceptionally qualified nominee. His nomination was reported out of the Judiciary Committee on a strong bipartisan vote of 17 to 2. He has the backing of a bipartisan group of former heads of the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, the backing of State attorneys general, and the backing of other elected officials. His varied experience will serve him well in many aspects of this position.

He was a career employee with the Civil Rights Division for 10 years and understands the importance of enforcing the law without regard to politics. He has taken on racially motivated crime through the prosecution of White supremacists who went on a fatal crime spree in Lubbock, TX, and the perpetrators of cross burning designed to intimidate an interracial family.

Mr. Perez served as Director of the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. De-

partment of Health and Human Services, where he worked to expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities to receive care and treatment in community-based settings rather than institutions and helped develop landmark medical records privacy regulation. He was a special counselor to Senator Ted Kennedy. Currently, Mr. Perez serves as Maryland's Secretary of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation. In this position, he enforces workplace safety laws, protects consumers through the enforcement of a wide range of consumer rights laws, and collaborates with businesses and workers to address critical workforce development needs. It is hard to imagine anyone better prepared to serve as the Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division.

Mr. Perez has firsthand experience fighting racially motivated crimes. Mr. Perez has firsthand experience standing up for the disabled and patient privacy. He has firsthand experience protecting the rights of workers and consumers.

I urge my colleagues to move expeditiously to confirm this nomination and put a man of rare and extensive experience in charge of the Civil Rights Division for the benefit of all of our citizens.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. GILLIBRAND). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. BURRIS. Madam President, as we debate this Defense appropriations bill, many of my colleagues have discussed the commitment we make to those who serve this country in uniform. It is a commitment that begins on the day they volunteer for military service, and it extends through their retirement and beyond.

Just as we have an obligation to servicemembers who work in harm's way, we need to offer strong support for those who are left here at home.

Military families bear a burden that must not be forgotten. They deserve our utmost gratitude. And their stability and well-being affect the readiness of our Armed Forces. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines cannot afford to be distracted by worries about those they leave at home. We need to address the needs of these families, not only to honor the sacrifices they make, but also to provide stability. Quality