

Senators to craft an alternative to the “nuclear option”—the partisan and political attempt to force a change in the rules of the Senate to end filibusters against judicial nominations.

The nuclear option is a temporary political fix to a very serious and ongoing problem: The Senate’s failure to confirm more than 60 nominations during the last administration and the filibustering of ten of President Bush’s nominations. To address this problem, I would prefer a permanent rules change to the Senate over a temporary procedural maneuver like the nuclear option that can be reversed if the White House or the Congress changes hands.

The Senate was designed by our Founding Fathers to act as a counter balance to the House of Representatives which represented States based on population. The Senate was the chamber where each State would have equal representation, two Senators and two votes. The intent was to prevent the power in Congress from becoming concentrated in large population States like New York, California, Florida and Texas. In the Senate, a Senator from Nebraska has the same power as a Senator from any other State.

As a former Governor and a firm believer in the power of the executive branch to appoint Cabinet members, judges and other officials, I do not support filibustering nominations. In fact, as Nebraska’s Senator, I have voted against filibustering judicial appointments in every case but one where I was denied access to background information on the nominee. However, I also do not think the nuclear option is the solution to the impasse over judicial nominations.

We have built consensus behind a plan whereby seven Republican Senators pledge to vote against the nuclear option in exchange for an agreement from seven Democrats to allow most of the stalled nominations to get up-or-down votes as well as a pledge to not support filibusters of future nominations except in extraordinary circumstances.

Our compromise would be constructed completely within the existing rules of the Senate; it would prevent the nuclear option and the expected fallout of bringing all Senate business, including the energy bill and other important legislation, to a halt; and would preserve the rights of the Senate minority not only for this Congress but for future Congresses regardless of who is in the majority. Protecting the Senate’s minority rights might seem to go against the concept of democracy and majority rule. In reality and without the spin on this issue that the special interest groups from both extremes put on this matter, the Senate’s minority rights are part of the system of checks and balances that keep any branch of government from dominating the others.

The minority rights aren’t always about party politics either. Many fili-

busters throughout history were conducted by Senators who disagreed with the president or the majority of Senators. Filibusters also give small States such as Nebraska an important tool to protect itself from the will of the larger States.

The debate over these judges has consumed the Senate and all of Washington. When I am in Nebraska most folks do not ask me about the judicial nomination process. Nebraskans tell me they want an energy bill that will boost ethanol production and reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Nebraskans are concerned about the President’s plan to divert Social Security funds to private accounts and a myriad of other important legislative priorities.

Those who do mention judges and nominations express concern about where the Senate seemed to be headed. Many expressed to me the desire to stop the bickering and get on with the Senate’s business. Others offered encouraging words in support of the compromise effort and those comments made me feel that Nebraskans were appreciative of our efforts.

The business, that we as Senators are tasked with carrying out for the American people would cease in the Senate if the majority leader follows through on his threats to employ the nuclear option. Nebraskans waiting for the energy bill, a Federal budget, asbestos litigation reform and even confirmation of future judicial nominations are the ones who will suffer if the nuclear option is detonated.

With our compromise everybody wins. Those seeking to protect minority rights win. Those seeking to confirm judicial nominations win. Small States win.

We accomplished this by working together with common purpose and shared concern for the future of this body. I am proud of what we have accomplished and I will treasure the new friends I made in the process. I thank you, all of you, for working with me, for trusting me, and for joining me in this great challenge.

I would like to include all the names of the signatories on the memorandum of understanding as part of my statement. These brave senators are: Senator JOHN MCCAIN, Senator JOHN WARNER, Senator ROBERT BYRD, Senator MARY LANDRIEU, Senator OLYMPIA SNOWE, Senator KEN SALAZAR, Senator MIKE DEWINE, Senator SUSAN COLLINS, Senator MARK PRYOR, Senator LINCOLN CHAFEE, Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM, Senator JOSEPH LIEBERMAN, and Senator DANIEL INOUE.

#### MEMORIAL DAY 2005

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I would like to pay tribute to those men and women of the U.S. armed services, who have given their lives to defend our Nation and the ideals it represents.

Since the birth of our Nation 229 years ago, millions of Americans have

answered the call to serve. They left behind the comfort of home, family and friends, to protect the American way of life and insure that our country would remain free and a land of opportunity for all. On this day I would like to remember those whom did not return.

On this Memorial Day, I am put in mind of the 200th and 515th Costal Artillery units of the New Mexico National Guard, better known as the New Mexico Brigade. The New Mexico Brigade played a prominent and heroic role in the fierce fighting in the Philippines, during those first dark days of the Second World War. For 4 months the men of the 200th and 515th helped hold off the Japanese only to be defeated by disease, starvation and a lack of ammunition.

Tragically the survivors of the Battle of Bataan from the New Mexico Brigade were subjected to the horrors and atrocities of the 65 mile “Death March” and to years of hardship and forced labor in Japanese prisoner of war camps. Sadly, of the 1800 men of the New Mexico Brigade more than 900 lost their lives in that far off place. This day belongs to them and all other Americans such as them.

I believe it is especially important not to forget; the men and women of America’s Armed Forces have given their lives not only in defense of our Nation, but to preserve the freedom of others around the globe. This is almost unquiet in human history, and no praise can be too great for those individuals.

Today I would like to make special mention of those New Mexicans who have given their lives in Operation Iraq Freedom and the global war on terror. I ask that New Mexicans on Memorial Day think of them and their families and give thanks that we are blessed with such heroic men and women.

We must never forget the sacrifices of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. I encourage New Mexican’s and all Americans on Memorial Day to take a moment to remember and honor the brave men and women whom have fallen in our defense. At this moment in America’s history, our men and women in uniform are again furthering the cause of freedom around the world and ensuring the safety of the United States of America. They serve with the same courage and commitment shown by Americans of generations past and they deserve our thoughts and prayers on this Memorial Day as well.

#### 49TH FIGHTER WING

Mr. DOMENICI. Mr. President, I would like to recognize the outstanding men and women of the 49th Fighter Wing at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico.

The 49th has received a deployment order to the Western Pacific region in support of our national defense objectives.

Around 250 personnel from Holloman, along with approximately 15 F-117A

Nighthawks, are preparing to depart for the Republic of Korea. Their 4-month deployment is part of an ongoing measure to maintain a credible deterrent posture and presence in the region and demonstrates the continued U.S. commitment towards fulfilling security responsibilities throughout the Western Pacific.

The F-117A, and the personnel that fly and maintain them, continue to be vital to our national security strategy. This is why I am so pleased the Senate Armed Services Committee included my bill to restrict retirement of any Nighthawks in fiscal year 2006 in the committee passed bill.

We must maintain the ability to deliver precision munitions onto time sensitive, high value targets, wherever and whenever the need arises. And I am so proud of the men and women from New Mexico that take on this very dangerous but important mission in service to their country. They are all superstars that deserve the heartfelt appreciation of a grateful Nation.

#### AFRO-LATINOS

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, I rise today to bring attention to the situation of Afro-Latinos throughout Latin America, in the hopes that we can encourage more action on this issue. From Colombia to Brazil to the Dominican Republic to Ecuador, persons of African descent continue to experience racial discrimination and remain among the poorest and most marginalized groups in the entire region. While recent positive steps have been taken in some areas—for example, giving land titles to Afro-Colombians and passing explicit anti-discrimination legislation in Brazil—much work still needs to be done to ensure that this is the beginning of an ongoing process of reform, not the end.

In places where civil conflict has taken hold, Afro-Latinos are much more likely to become victims of violence or refugees in their own countries. In many areas, Afro-Latinos are also subject to aggression by local police forces at far greater rates than those perceived to be white. Access to health services is another serious concern, and recent studies have shown that Afro-Latino communities are at greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

In the last Congress, there was not one mention in the Senate of the millions of Afro-Latinos who continue to experience this widespread discrimination and socioeconomic marginalization. Now is the time for more action on this issue, not less. Emerging civil society groups are growing stronger throughout many countries in Latin America, and this growth should be encouraged as it presents important opportunities for partnerships and collaboration. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate and House on this critical concern in the coming months, and I believe that together we can and will make a difference.

#### REACH OUT AND READ

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, today I rise in support of the Reach Out and Read program. Reach Out and Read is a program that promotes early literacy by educating doctors and parents about the importance of reading aloud. Reach Out and Read facilitates reading by giving books to children at pediatric check-ups from six months to five years of age, with a special focus on children growing up in poverty. Children who are exposed to reading in their first years of life learn to love books at an early age—a love that often stays with them throughout their teenage and adult lives. They are also more likely to escape the many problems associated with illiteracy and reading difficulty, including school absenteeism and dropout, juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy.

Reach Out and Read is active in more than 2,300 hospitals and health care centers in 50 States, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico. Two million children participate annually and 3.2 million new, developmentally appropriate books are given to family members.

There are 123 Reach Out and Read clinical locations in my State of Massachusetts. More than 116,000 children participate in Reach Out and Read and more than 200,000 books are distributed annually.

Reach Out and Read is unique. Funded both by both the Federal Government and private donations, it is a program with documented results. In 1998, the National Research Council released the much-acclaimed report, "Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children" which specifically cites Reach Out and Read as a program that effectively encourages young children to read. It is supported by the Department of Pediatrics at the Boston University School of Medicine and is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics. We should all continue to support this very special program.

#### PONTIFICAL VISIT OF HIS HOLINESS KAREKIN II, CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS, TO THE WESTERN DIOCESE

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I take this opportunity to recognize the Pontifical Visit of His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of All Armenians, to the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America during the month of June 2005. The Catholicos will visit the Western Diocese, headquartered in Burbank in my home State of California and travel around California from June 1 through 20. As the 132nd Catholicos of all Armenians, His Holiness Karekin II is spiritual leader to more than 7 million Armenian Apostolic Christians worldwide. I would also like to recognize the Western Diocese Primate, His Eminence Archbishop Hovnan Derderian, for his

good works on behalf of Armenian-Americans in California and the Western U.S.

This momentous occasion marks the second Pontifical visit of the Catholicos to the Western Diocese. The visit has been titled "The Renaissance of Faith" because it marks a source of spiritual inspiration and reawakening for Christian Armenians, whose faith is 1700 years old.

The Diocese of the Armenian Church, established 107 years ago in Worcester, MA, originally served Armenian churches in the United States and Canada. In 1927, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America was established by a directive from the Mother See. The establishment of the Western Diocese was an historic occasion, which marked the growth of a strong Armenian community in California and the Western United States.

The Western Diocese was originally headquartered in Fresno. In 1957, the headquarters were moved to Los Angeles. In 1994, the headquarters were damaged by the Northridge Earthquake. Later that year, the Diocesan Assembly decided to purchase a new Diocesan Headquarters. In 1997, the Western Diocese officially moved into a multipurpose complex located in Burbank, CA, which will be the future site of the Mother Cathedral. This Pontifical visit is even more special because the Catholicos will be there in June to bless the foundation stones at the groundbreaking of the new Mother Cathedral.

The visit is also appropriately timed to coincide with two important anniversaries—the 90th Anniversary of the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide and the 1600th Anniversary of the creation of the Armenian alphabet. Earlier this year, I joined my Armenian friends in commemorating the 90th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, which was the first genocide of the 20th century.

The Armenian alphabet, along with the Armenian language, has contributed immensely to the vibrant continuity of Armenian culture. The Catholicos' visit will highlight these two anniversaries and further empower Armenians in the Western Diocese to continue their long-fought efforts for justice.

I am honored to recognize this historic and joyous visit, which will strengthen ties between Armenia and Armenians in California. I know that His Holiness Karekin II will have a very special visit to California and I wish the Armenian community in California an increased sense of purpose and inspiration.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO LOVELAND, COLORADO, POLICE CHIEF TOM WAGONER

• Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the chief of police of